



United Nations  
Educational, Scientific and  
Cultural Organization

Organisation  
des Nations Unies  
pour l'éducation,  
la science et la culture

World Heritage

44 COM

# AMENDMENT

Item of the Agenda	WHC/21/44.COM/INF.8B1
Amended Draft Decision	44 COM 8B.11
Amendment submitted by the Delegation of....	BAHRAIN, AUSTRALIA, EGYPT, HUNGARY, KYRGYZSTAN, MALI, OMAN, RUSSIA, SPAIN, THAILAND
Date	17/07/2021

## TEXT

The World Heritage Committee,

1. Having examined Documents WHC/21/44.COM/8B and WHC/21/44.COM/INF.8B1,

2. ~~Refers the nomination of~~ Inscribes Himā Cultural ~~Rock Arts in Himā Najrān~~ Area, Saudi Arabia, ~~back~~ on the World Heritage List on the basis of criterion (iii);

3. Takes note of the following provisional Statement of Outstanding Universal Value:

### **Brief synthesis**

*Himā Cultural Area is located in southwest Saudi Arabia on one of the ancient caravan routes of the Arabian Peninsula. The region contains some of the most significant desert wells in the Middle East, if not the world. The passage of vast armies and myriad caravans through the region has resulted in an unequalled historical "library on rock", comprising massive numbers of rock inscriptions and petroglyphs that reflect Arabia's history over the duration of the Holocene period. These spectacular petroglyphs cover a period of at least 7000 years, continuing up to the last 30 years. Most are preserved in pristine condition. Inscriptions are in different scripts, including Musnad, Aramaic-Nabatean, South-Arabian, Thamudic, Greek and Arabic.*

**Criterion (iii):** *the property bears a unique testimony to a number of ancient traditions over the span of many millennia, chronicling the history of the Arab people more effectively than any other place and thus representing a massive outdoor library of that history. The property bears an exceptional testimony to a long series of cultural traditions, arguably from the Palaeolithic and at the very least to the Neolithic and stretching from then until the present day. Over this long period the people passing through the region, left a pristine record of their presence and passage in the form of rock inscriptions and rock art, the former in some cases describing their lived context and environment, the themes in the rock art reflecting the changing character of the environment and how they adapted to it.*

### **Integrity**

*The six component parts that comprise the serial property – possibly containing more than 100,000 petroglyphs – encompass the region's largest and most significant concentrations of rock art and rock inscription sites. The great majority of the remaining rock engraving sites are included in the buffer zone. The property is free from development except for site protection works and the small township of Himā. The archaeological resources within the property remain almost totally intact.*

*Due to the highly arid environment of the Himā Cultural Area and the Bedouin custodianship since time immemorial, its Outstanding Universal Values have been exceptionally well preserved. Both the core zones and the buffer zone are of adequate sizes to ensure the continuing integrity of the Property.*

### **Authenticity**

*The rock art and rock inscriptions within the property have retained their original location, setting, materials, ambience, form, and design. To some extent even their traditional function within a cultural tradition has been preserved, through the continuation of traditional use.*

*The authenticity of the petroglyphs is clear from their patinated condition, state of weathering and fractures in rock panels that have been determined to postdate the images. Other scientific work as well as stylistic similarities with direct-dated rock art elsewhere in Saudi Arabia also confirm their authenticity. Some engravings have been “refreshed,” as certain sections have been re-pecked. However, most of these were done in ancient times and could be considered part of their authenticity, as they manifest the active role these images played in the lives of people. The rock inscriptions are fresher and brighter than most of the rock art. There are several different recognizable types of script, the older ones being more patinated. Some of the inscriptions describe events that occurred at known dates. The location, width and depth of*

the wells at Bi'r Himā are original, but the above-ground walling is recent, built to ensure safety. The network of channels linking the five ancient wells is a recent restoration.

### **Protection and management requirements**

The property and the buffer zone are in the ownership of the Government of Saudi Arabia. They are managed and protected by the Saudi Commission for Tourism and National Heritage. The rock art and inscriptions within the property are protected as an archaeological monument. The property is protected at the highest level within its jurisdiction.

For the effective monitoring, conservation, protection and management of the property, it is essential that a database of consistent site records for all sites inventoried within the property and the buffer zone be kept and made internally accessible to staff. The Management Plan (2018) includes clear sets of objectives and responsibilities identified, though there is a need for certain specialized staff. The Tourism Management Plan (2018) addresses the potential growth in tourism in a sensible and practical way. A conservation management strategy should be created, implemented and integrated into the management plan of the property. A monitoring program that identifies measurable key indicators, periodicity and responsible authorities is also required. Capacity building is required in the fields of archaeology, heritage management and rock art conservation in order to implement the monitoring, conservation and management plans and programs.

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4. Recommends that the State Party ~~to allow it to~~ give consideration to the following:

~~a) Provide a map~~ a) Setting up an adequate documentation system and developing an operational and up-to-date database for the property to ensure monitoring of its state of conservation, including:

- updated maps showing the boundaries of the site components, the buffer zone and precise location of the inventoried heritage sites reported from the ~~nominated~~ inscribed areas and buffer zone,
- ~~b) Complete and make internally accessible to staff~~ a database of site records for every known rock art and rock inscription site inventoried in the ~~nominated~~ property and the buffer zone with clear maps, within a GIS,

-b) Compiling a list of attributes of the OUV considering that the list will be indispensable for the site conservation, management and monitoring;

c) Carrying out *Heritage Impact Assessments* for any projects related to tourism activities *and infrastructure* at Najd Khayrān before they are implemented,

~~d) Enlarge the buffer zone to include Jabal alKawbab and parts of Jabal al-Qāra,~~

~~e) Create and implement~~d) *Creating and implementing* a conservation program and engaging additional staff with specialist training in heritage management, archaeology and rock art conservation,

~~f) Create~~e) *Creating and implementing* a monitoring program that identifies measurable key indicators, periodicity and responsible authorities;

~~3. Recommends that the State Party considers undertaking~~f) *Undertaking* restoration of the above-ground walling for the wells and water channels at Himā, based on comprehensive archival and archaeological research;

~~4. Also recommends that the name of the nominated property be changed to become “Himā Cultural area”.~~5. Also recommends the State Party to advance archaeological research in the buffer zone, and to consider the option of extending the property in the future, in case information comes to light that contribute to the understanding of the property;

6. Requests the State Party to submit to the World Heritage Centre, by **1 December 2022**, a report on the implementation of the above-mentioned recommendations, for examination by the World Heritage Committee at its 46th session in 2023.