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## The Church of Atlántida (Uruguay) No 1612

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### Official name as proposed by the State Party

The work of engineer Eladio Dieste: Church of Atlántida

### Location

Department of Canelones  
Estación Atlántida  
Uruguay

### Brief description

The Church of Atlántida with its belfry and underground baptistery is located in Estación Atlántida, a low-density locality, 45 km away from Montevideo. Inspired by Italian paleo-Christian and medieval religious architecture, the Church complex, all built in exposed brick, exhibits forms dictated by the effort to achieve greater robustness with limited resistant sections and use of material. The Church has a rectangular plan and one single hall, with lateral undulating walls supporting an equally undulating roof, composed of a sequence of Gaussian vaults, all in reinforced brickwork. The cylindrical bell-tower rises on the right of the main façade, 7m apart, and is built in openwork exposed brick masonry. The underground baptistery is located on the left side of the *parvis*, accessible from a triangular prismatic entrance and illuminated via a central oculus.

### Category of property

In terms of categories of cultural property set out in Article I of the 1972 World Heritage Convention, this is a *group of buildings*.

## 1 Basic data

### Included in the Tentative List

6 May 2010

### Background

This is a new nomination.

### Consultations and Technical Evaluation Mission

Desk reviews have been provided by ICOMOS International Scientific Committees, members and independent experts.

An ICOMOS Technical Evaluation mission visited the property from 10 to 13 September 2019.

### Additional information received by ICOMOS

A letter was sent to the State Party on 12 September 2019 requesting further information about the justification of the proposed Outstanding Universal Value, management of the property, and development projects.

An Interim Report was provided to the State Party on 20 December 2019 summarising the issues identified by the ICOMOS World Heritage Panel.

Further information was requested in the Interim Report on the following points: nomination strategy; justification for inscription, criteria and attributes; comparative analysis; documentation; integrity and boundaries; buffer zone; development projects and financial support.

Additional information was received from the State Party on 18 October 2019, and on 18 February 2020, and has been incorporated into the relevant sections of this evaluation report.

### Date of ICOMOS approval of this report

12 March 2020

## 2 Description of the property

Note: The nomination dossier and additional information contain detailed descriptions of this property, its history and its state of conservation. Due to limitations on the length of evaluation reports, this report only provides a short summary of the most relevant aspects.

### Description and history

The nominated property is located in Estación Atlántida, a village on the outskirts of the sea resort town of Atlántida, some 45 km from the capital city of Montevideo.

It consists of a church, whose ground plan is approximately rectangular, a circular underground baptistery, and a cylindrical bell tower.

Atlántida was established in 1911; at that time the connection with Montevideo was only by train and the surroundings of the railway station became the area of residence for the labourers who worked in the construction of the buildings of the sea resort. Estación Atlántida continued to be the place of residence of workers and farmers. Since then, the village has preserved its characteristic of a lower middle-class housing area, currently housing some 3,000 inhabitants.

The consolidation of Estación Atlántida as a permanent suburban neighbourhood made necessary to build a church to serve the spiritual needs of the inhabitants, most of them Roman Catholics. The first chapel, dedicated to *Cristo Obrero* (Labourer Christ) was erected in 1942: the building was quite small and modest, with some Neo-Colonial features on the main façade. By 1957, the project of constructing a new, larger church emerged. A couple of benefactors, Alberto

Giudice and Adela Urioste, donated the plot and provided funds, and the engineer Eladio Dieste accepted the task of overseeing the design and the direction of the construction works.

Dieste conceived the church as an ensemble of separate components: the church itself, the baptistery, and the belfry, an idea inspired mainly by Italian medieval religious ensembles. Dieste's basic idea for the church was drawn from warehouses covered by vaults, a type of building that the firm Dieste-Monteñez had already designed and constructed. The Church project, however, allowed Dieste to experiment with innovative structural solutions, including the use of reinforced ceramic (*cerámica armada*) and the undulating lateral walls marrying structural necessities and aesthetic effects.

Reinforced ceramic is a component of reinforced brick masonry. The bricks are joined by structural mortar of sand and cement. The structural reinforcement of the composite material is made via steel bars placed in the mortar joints. Although Dieste is not the only engineer to have used this system, he managed to take it to unprecedented limits, by combining them with the use of catenary curves and external tensors that absorb forces and balance the system.

#### Church

The church has just one nave. Its footprint, approximately rectangular, is 33m long and 16m wide. A continuous set of surfaces curving both vertically and horizontally create vaults of reinforced bricks covering the nave. The vaults' shape is defined by the catenary curve resulting from the distribution of the weight of the ceiling. The material used is reinforced brick, with steel bars inserted in the joints. The weight of the vaults is supported by the lateral walls, whilst two horizontal curved beams receive and transfer the horizontal forces to steel bars, which are lodged within the vaults.

Both side walls – made out of two contiguous solid masonry layers joined by structural mortar - are generated by the movement of a *generatrix* along a horizontal straight line at ground level and an undulating line at the top of the wall. Reinforcement steel bars are placed in the horizontal joints of the walls and in the inner mortar filling. At the upper zone of the walls small rectangular windows with coloured glass let natural light in towards the altar.

The front wall has straight and curved stretches placed under the choir level (mezzanine). Wall openings filled with onyx allow diffused sunlight into the church. Inside, the interior is a simple rectangular space featuring undulating un-plastered brick walls, the chancel area defined by independent enclosing walls. Daylight comes in from windows in the side walls and is directed into the chancel.

#### Baptistery

The baptistery is an underground construction placed outside the church. A circular wall (diameter 4.52m, height 2.26m) is covered by a spherical dome of reinforced brick. On the top of the dome a cylindrical skylight lets the natural light fall on the baptismal font. The structure is founded on small concrete pilings placed under the round wall. The baptistery is reached via a staircase and an underground corridor. From the baptistery a second corridor and stair lead to the inside of the church.

#### Bell-tower

The bell-tower is a pierced reinforced brick tower (diameter 2.80m, 15m high) and is crowned by a depressed conical dome from which the bell hangs. In the inside, a spiral staircase with floating brick steps leads to the bell.

The belfry was inspired by Dieste's previous designs for water tanks, consisting of slim cylindrical brick towers.

Dieste imagined the possibility of demolishing the previous chapel to provide further open space to the ensemble, however this did not occur. The construction of a school was already envisaged on the neighbouring plot and Dieste devised that the building could be integrated with the ensemble as a sort of religious, educational and social core of Estación Atlántida.

There was an additional element, the parish house, which no longer exists.

ICOMOS requested additional information about this element in its Interim Report. The State Party has explained that the small building was erected at the back of the complex and it was not included in the project itself nor in earlier plans; it was built in 1962 but it was not directly overseen by Dieste. Never used for its original function, a few years after construction (1965) it was demolished to build a catholic school and residences. Its characteristics in terms of typology and construction can be seen in Dieste's house built in the same period, as well as in some rural schools.

At the same time, Dieste conceived the ensemble as a sort of plaza, where the component parts would be separated by green spaces.

The church was constructed between 1958 and 1960 and inaugurated with some details still missing. Throughout the first decade after construction, the building was not properly maintained and was the target of some actions of vandalism, e.g., the breaking of the coloured glass in the windows and the rail of the choir. During this first period, the original marble onyx 'windows' were also destroyed.

After a period of some decay, works of maintenance and repair started, in part due to the direct participation of Dieste's family, especially his son Esteban, an architect himself. At the same time, the building started to be

acknowledged as a fine piece of architecture, especially because of the conjunction of structural design, shape and space, and published in books and architectural magazines at international level; it also became a popular destination for architects, engineers, students and the general public from all over the world. The church was designated as a Historic Monument in 1997, being the first example of Dieste's work to reach the maximum degree of heritage protection in the country; the belfry attained the same designation in 2018.

### **Boundaries**

The nominated property had an initial area of 0.42 ha, and a buffer zone of 44.98 ha. Following the modifications which occurred throughout the evaluation process the updated size of the nominated property is now 0.54 ha, whilst the size of the buffer zone has increased to 69.5 ha.

The nominated property covers two distinct cadastral parcels: no.208 and no.19. The church and the baptistery are located in parcel no.208, whilst the belfry stands in plot no.19, where also the School of the Congregation of Our Lady of the Rosary was later built. All the identified attributes proposed by the State Party to convey the potential Outstanding Universal Value of the property are included within the boundaries of the nominated area.

For ease of management ICOMOS considered it advisable that: a solution be devised so as to ensure that the belfry be transferred to the ownership of the Bishopric or, at least, under its management responsibility; and that the plot of land corresponding to parcel no.17 be included within the perimeter of the nominated property.

The proposed buffer zone encompasses 9 urban blocks of the village of Estación Atlántida, surrounding the nominated area, at the edge between urban and rural areas. Beyond Route 11, the original buffer zone included only a strip of land 150m wide running parallel to the highway.

The buffer zone has been established by Decree of the Government of Canelones within the framework of the Costa de Oro territorial arrangement plan and was approved by Act L48-P2-10 in 2016 which includes management arrangements.

The boundaries of the buffer zone are clearly delineated in the area corresponding to the urban sector. Conversely, in the semi-rural area beyond the highway, ICOMOS considered it advisable to modify its perimeter to coincide with that of the rural plots. A request in this regard was made in the Interim Report, alongside clarification on the protection mechanisms in place in the buffer zone.

The State Party replied positively to the above-mentioned points: it has submitted the ministerial decision Res. 094/020 to protect under the national legislation parcel no.17 to guarantee the necessary protection; it has taken

steps in order to integrate the belfry portion of parcel no.19 into parcel no.208, and it has informed that the government of Canelones has issued a decree (no. 20/00692 of 7 February 2020) establishing that all parcels adjacent to Route 11 are included in the buffer zone.

An added layer of protection is provided by their inclusion in the management plan for urban control and risk for the nominated property (*Plan de gestion pour l'environnement de l'église*).

### **State of conservation**

Based on the information provided by the State Party and the observations of the ICOMOS Technical Evaluation mission, ICOMOS considers that the state of conservation of the nominated property is overall acceptable. However, even if the main body of the church exhibits a very good state of conservation, a few conservation problems have been detected in the outside part of the niche containing the image of Our Lady of Lourdes, caused by humidity, organic agents and deposits. Repairs are planned to be carried out in the near future.

The inner space of the church is in a very good state of conservation.

The underground baptistery exhibits a poor state of conservation, due to leakages from the water table, which has changed its level, possibly due to the deforestation of the land in front of the church. This effect increases on occasions of heavy rain. The vaulted roof of the baptistery also exhibits some damage; in this case crevasses and cracks, apparently caused by the ingress of water from outside but also by the high degree of interior humidity. Conservation works to remedy the current situation are planned for execution in the near future and include a project to remove water from the baptistery via a pumped drainage system.

The outer surface of the tower is affected by grime and some biological agents. Some of the slabs are in a poor state of conservation, due to the corrosion of the metallic bars that anchor the slabs to the tower's structure.

The open spaces of the plots exhibit different states of conservation. The entrance terrace in front of the church, brick-floored, is in a good state of conservation. The lateral and rear open spaces are overgrown with grass and not enough maintained.

However, the conservation problems have been identified and recorded and are included in the conservation management plan among the works to be executed to improve the state of conservation of the property.

### **Factors affecting the property**

Based on the information provided by the State Party and the observations of the ICOMOS Technical Evaluation mission, ICOMOS considers that the main factors affecting the property include decay phenomena

on the architectural structures caused by moisture and rising damp (especially in the baptistery). Potential development pressures along Route 11 might be induced by the expanding conurbation of Montevideo.

Whilst the decay factors of the architectural elements have been identified and measures, to reduce their effects or to repair damaged components, have been undertaken or planned, the potential effects of development pressures require the establishment of mechanisms to assess impacts on the nominated property. In particular, ICOMOS considers that the views from the church's entrance terrace to the rural landscape beyond the highway should be kept unobstructed.

The region where the property is located is subject to the possibility of heavy rains or storms that could increase in frequency and strength due to the impact of global climate change. Recent studies include an assessment of the structural reaction of the nominated property against strong winds, using a virtual wind tunnel.

### 3 Proposed justification for inscription

#### Proposed justification

The nominated property is considered by the State Party to be of Outstanding Universal Value as a cultural property for the following reasons:

- Eladio Dieste's work offered to humanity a construction innovation based on reinforced brickwork, collecting and reinterpreting a millenary tradition of brick construction through an updated scientific and technological knowledge;
- The Church of Atlántida may be considered as one of the best artistic-architectural expressions attained through the application of this technique;
- The Church of Atlántida demonstrates in an exceptional manner that appropriating a building tradition implies not only knowing and practicing it well but also revisiting and innovating it to achieve new spatial, plastic and construction accomplishments.

#### Comparative analysis

The comparative analysis has been elaborated on the basis of the main attributes identified by the State Party of the nominated property - the reinforced brickwork, the resistant form - and of the following parameters: the parallel with Antoni Gaudí's work; the updating of ecclesiastical architecture, with a special focus on Niemeyer's Church of St. Francis in Pampulha and on Le Corbusier's Notre Dame du Haut in Ronchamp; and, finally, the positioning of the nominated property within the national context.

For each attribute and parameter the comparative analysis discusses Dieste's work antecedents and successors and highlights the commonalities with others' work and Dieste's work specificities.

ICOMOS observes that the comparative analysis offers an interesting insight into the structural, architectural and spatial quests emerging between the late 19<sup>th</sup> and the 20<sup>th</sup> century in the Americas and in Europe, and the responses from engineers and architects of the time.

However, ICOMOS considers that the comparison with the *Escuelas* of the Sagrada Família by Antoni Gaudí is only partially appropriate as this building appears formally similar but is in fact very different structurally and geometrically.

In its Interim Report, ICOMOS requested the State Party provide additional arguments for the selection of this property among Eladio Dieste's work, and to present an expanded comparative analysis focusing on Eladio Dieste's surviving works.

The State Party has expanded the comparative analysis of the nominated property with six more of Dieste's works which have received state protection as heritage buildings: two exemplify the structural system of the Gaussian vault; one represents the use of the free-standing vault; one tower exemplifies the same building principle as the belfry at Atlántida; his house, representing the construction system adopted for the parish house; and one church, the result of a rehabilitation project for a damaged building.

The State Party concludes that the nominated property is the only one where Eladio Dieste was fully engaged from the architectural and structural design to the implementation phases, the one which best illustrates the construction system invented by Dieste.

ICOMOS concurs with the State Party's conclusion of the expanded comparative analysis.

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ICOMOS considers that the expanded comparative analysis justifies consideration of this property for the World Heritage List.

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#### Criteria under which inscription is proposed

The property is nominated on the basis of cultural criterion (iv).

Criterion (iv): *be an outstanding example of a type of building, architectural or technological ensemble or landscape which illustrates (a) significant stage(s) in human history;*

This criterion is justified by the State Party on the grounds that Eladio Dieste's work implies a construction and technological innovation – the reinforced brickwork coupled with the mobile formwork – that opens up structural and formal opportunities in architecture impossible to conceive and achieve up to that date with traditional masonry. It is an architecture that draws from tradition, whilst reinterpreting and innovating it. The Church of Atlántida represents the highest spatial and aesthetic expression of this innovative building technique. The nominated property embodies the post-

war search for a renewed architectural language, expressing a modernity rooted in tradition and in the vernacular. It also reflects the locale and its people, who built it. The church illustrates the confluence of geometry, of the static conception of the building, of the form expressed by the chosen building material.

ICOMOS considers that the justification is adequate and reflects the wording of the selected criterion, which is well grounded and argued.

ICOMOS noted that the criterion (iv) chosen for this nomination, does not correspond to the initial Tentative List entry, which was focused around Eladio Dieste's work and presented on the basis of criteria (i) and (ii).

ICOMOS requested additional clarification from the State Party on this point in its Interim Report.

The State Party responded that the shift from criteria (i) and (ii) to criterion (iv) is motivated by the reconsideration of the potential of an individual nomination to justify the originally chosen criteria. The State Party has deemed criterion (iv) is the most appropriate for the Church of *Cristo Obrero* in Atlántida because it is an eminent example of a type of construction illustrating a significant period of the history of architecture in Latin America, which expresses the search for social equality, austerity in the use of resources and has resulted in a remarkably rich *oeuvre* in terms of form and space.

Following careful assessment, ICOMOS concurs with the State Party's view.

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ICOMOS considers that the nominated property meets criterion (iv).

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### **Integrity and authenticity**

#### **Integrity**

The nomination dossier explains that the main elements of the ensemble designed by Eladio Dieste remain intact. Nevertheless, it admits that the parish house, a humble building erected in the plot near the church was demolished only a few years later to give space to the construction of the school. The nomination dossier also reports that in the first decade after its construction, the church suffered from lack of proper maintenance and some acts of vandalism (destruction of the coloured glass and of the onyx elements of the openings of the baptistery, of the niche and of the back entrance). Only in the 1990's and 2000's, the first restoration works were planned and carried out carefully on the basis of adequate documentation. The adaptation of the presbytery to the norms established by the 2<sup>nd</sup> Vatican Council has not affected the expressivity of the Church.

The nomination dossier maintains that the property has retained its essential elements able to express its original values.

In September 2019, ICOMOS requested clarification as regards to the decision of nominating one individual property against a serial nomination, as envisaged in Uruguay's Tentative List entry. The State Party explained that the present nomination has to be considered as a standalone project. However, Uruguay did not exclude the possibility of extending this nomination in the future, on the basis of paragraph 139 of the *Operational Guidelines*, if considered necessary.

In its Interim Report, ICOMOS asked for further clarification on this point and in response, the State Party confirmed that the present nomination will not be subject to extension in the future. However, the State Party will continue the study and the improvement of the conditions of protection for Dieste's works which have been designated at the national level.

ICOMOS observes that the nominated property was conceived as a complex, including also a baptistery, a bell tower, a parish house, demolished soon after its construction, and a plaza which was not built. ICOMOS considers that the loss of the parish house has had a minor impact on the integrity of the ensemble in relation to the proposed justification for inscription.

ICOMOS further notes that the presence of the remains of the former chapel have some impact on Dieste's conception of the layout of the ensemble, as the belfry was meant to stand isolated. However, this was also the original conditions in which the complex was built.

ICOMOS considers that all identified attributes supporting the proposed justification for inscription are included within the perimeter of the nominated property, which exhibits an acceptable state of conservation, the factors affecting it being known and mainly under control.

#### **Authenticity**

The nomination dossier explains that the comparison between the rich archival documentation preserved for the conception and execution of the work, and the results of recent investigations on the church, demonstrates that the church was realised respecting the initial conception, with only some modest dimensional variations.

The church still performs its original function: even though created before the changes in the rite introduced by the 2<sup>nd</sup> Vatican Council, it already reflected in its internal layout the aspirations of a more communitarian Church. The setting of the nominated property remains almost unmodified, both in physical and social terms.

The construction and technical methods and their link with the brick building tradition can be read in the work and the effort to optimise the utilized resources can be appreciated.

The Church of Atlántida expresses in a synthetic and synchronic manner the philosophy of its 'creator' and the specific conditions under which it was conceived, designed and built.

ICOMOS considers that only limited changes have occurred to the nominated property and to the original complex as implemented by Dieste. Most of its original substance has been preserved and the archival documentation attests to the consistency of the conception and implementation of the project. The degraded condition of the baptistery currently make it impossible to use it, which brings some change in the use of the church, but plans exist to bring the baptistery back into use. All attributes identified by the State Party bear credible witness to the proposed justification for inscription.

Overall, ICOMOS concurs with the State Party that the conditions of authenticity of the nominated property are met, despite the loss of the parish house.

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In conclusion, ICOMOS considers that the conditions of integrity and authenticity have been met.

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#### **Evaluation of the proposed justification for inscription**

The Church of Atlántida with its baptistery and bell-tower has been nominated as an individual property under criterion (iv) because it illustrates a construction and technological innovation which has been used to achieve an architectural work inscribed in the European tradition of brick construction and religious architecture, whilst at the same time interpreting the needs and aspirations of the regional and local context.

ICOMOS requested additional clarification on several aspects while evaluating the nominated property:

- Reasons for an individual nomination when the Tentative List entry refers to a serial property,
- Reasons for the choice of one nominating criterion (iv) instead of the two identified in the Tentative List – (i) and (ii),
- specifications of the proposed attributes supporting the justification for inscription and the criterion,
- delimitations of the nominated property and of the buffer zone,
- comparative analysis within Dieste's works to understand the choice of this specific work for nomination;

The State Party has responded satisfactorily to all ICOMOS's requests. In particular, the comparative analysis has been augmented and the selection of the Church of Atlántida as an individual nomination made clear; the discussion on the attributes has been supplemented and they are now more clearly related to the nominated property. The boundaries of the nominated property and of the buffer zone have been adjusted according to ICOMOS's recommendations,

and clarification on the protection mechanisms of the buffer zone have also been offered.

#### **Attributes**

The nomination dossier presents as attributes supporting the proposed justification for inscription the following:

- The work of Eladio Dieste implies a technological and constructive innovation: reinforced ceramic.
- The Church of Atlántida expresses its time, place, and the culture of its people.
- The Church of Atlántida is an integration of form, matter and space.
- The Church of Atlántida is a synthesis of modernity and tradition.

ICOMOS considered that only the first attribute was specifically related to, and expressed by, the nominated property, whilst the other three appeared too general.

In its response to the Interim Report, the State Party provided further explanations contributing to make property-specific the three general attributes. In particular, the attribute "*the Church of Atlántida expresses its time, place, and the culture of its people*" has been explained in relation to the search for use of local resources, their optimization, the combination of modernity – the science of construction – with tradition – in terms of building site organization, execution, community involvement, particularly immigrant workers from Europe, who contributed their skills in the realisation.

The attribute "*the Church of Atlántida is an integration of form, matter and space*" rests on Leon Battista Alberti's principles of *firmitas* (solidity), *utilitas* (use, function) and *concininitas* (beauty as harmony/congruity of all parts): the nominated property is the best artistic expression imbued by technical and constructive innovation and by social and spiritual inspiration.

The attribute "*the Church of Atlántida is a synthesis of modernity and tradition*" can be inflected as an interpretation of a thousand-year long tradition of brick construction in the light of the contemporary scientific and technological knowledge to achieve a new composite material with great potential for architectural expression and structural performance.

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ICOMOS considers that the nominated property justifies consideration for the World Heritage List on the basis of criterion (iv) and that it meets the conditions of integrity and authenticity through its attributes, following the expanded explanation. The boundaries of the nominated property and of the buffer zone are now adequate and equipped with the necessary protection mechanisms.

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## 4 Conservation measures and monitoring

### Conservation measures

Active conservation measures have been carried out over the past few years. The most important is represented by the restoration of the roof, in 2017. The work was designed and conducted by professionals of the Dieste y Montañez architectural firm, which is still active. The works were oriented to prevent the roof leaking and to ensure the adequate functioning of the structure. The works were preceded by studies and recorded. ICOMOS is of the opinion that the theoretical and technical approaches have been adequate and satisfied the expected results.

A conservation management plan was elaborated in 2016 with the participation of several experts from the country and abroad. It includes a set of projects to be carried out in the short-, medium- and long-term, according to available technical and financial resources. Further details are given in the management section of this report. The plan envisages a maintenance cycle of the nominated property and identifies actions and responsible organisations and staff.

ICOMOS considers that the conservation management plan is a robust document that can effectively assist the conservation of the nominated property, provided that adequate financial, organisational and human resources are allocated regularly. Additional information on this aspect was requested in ICOMOS's Interim Report.

The State Party replied that financial resources are available based on previous decisions and will be provided in the future. The financial needs are established by the management unit. The main financing bodies include the Ministry of Education and Culture, which will earmark funds through the quinquennial budget law 2021-2026, in force from 1 January 2021, the Bishopric of Canelones, the government of Canelones, through the regional budget 2021-2026, the Eladio Dieste Foundation, as well as other organisations such as the Ministry of Tourism.

ICOMOS considers that an adequate budget is indispensable and should be earmarked for the nominated property and the implementation of its management conservation plan at the national and regional level in the next budgets (period 2021-2026) and steadily after that.

ICOMOS recommends that the historic documentation preserved about the design and construction of the Church of Atlántida be digitized according to international standards for digital archiving and stored in multiple locations as a risk management measure. It is also recommended that the storage place of original documentation be provided with all necessary safety measures and equipment.

### Monitoring

Indicators are envisaged within the management plan, including for means, finances and performance as well as a complex indicator of results, based on other partial ones, e.g. one dealing with the perception of the conservation and appropriation of the values of the Church by visitors. The general indicator is named Index of the Conservation of the Church of Atlántida (ICEDA) and is measured yearly; the financial and achievement indicators are measured when projects are implemented.

ICOMOS considers that this monitoring system covers adequately the effectiveness and efficiency of management but appears not sufficient to monitor the state of conservation of the nominated property, as there is no link with the attributes of the nominated property, and with identified threats. In this regard ICOMOS recommends that a set of indicators related to the attributes and reflecting the questionnaire of the Periodic Reporting might assist in carrying out both state-level monitoring and the Periodic Reporting exercise.

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ICOMOS considers that the programme of conservation measures is well outlined and its implementation should continue. A wealth of original documentation exists and its preservation must be guaranteed through appropriate measures, to avoid its potential loss. The monitoring system needs to be integrated with indicators useful for assessing the state of conservation of the attributes. Streamlining of the monitoring system with the Periodic Reporting questionnaire would also be useful.

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## 5 Protection and management

### Documentation

Original plans and photos recording the construction process of the Church of Atlántida form a robust documentation basis for the nominated property, which has also been the subject of inventories and research, since 2014.

The most complete inventory of the nominated property was carried out within the elaboration of the conservation management plan in 2016. This includes extensive documentation of the property; study of materials and their pathologies and structural study; modern techniques of study and recording that have been applied. The documentation is part of the conservation management plan. At the same time, staff of the Dieste y Montañez firm were trained for the conservation of archives and photos.

These inventories and documents have been the basis for elaborating the plan and to define interventions oriented to maintenance and conservation; they constitute an invaluable data baseline for the future.

### Legal protection

The nominated property is protected at both national and local levels. At national level, the building was designated a Historic Monument in 1997 – the highest

protection level in the country – by Decree 455/997 of the Ministry of Education and Culture, in the framework of Law 14040. The belfry achieved the status of Historic Monument by Decree 394/018 of the Ministry of Education and Culture in 2018. Properties declared Historic Monuments are controlled by the Commission for National Cultural Heritage (CNCH), established and regulated by the provisions of Law no. 14040 under the Ministry of Education and Culture. Changes that could impact negatively on the properties' values or incompatible uses are not allowed. At local level, the Government of Canelones, by Decree 15/05040, declared the Department's interest in the valorisation, conservation, social appropriation and tourism promotion of the property.

By Resolution 0010/016, passed on 23 September 2016, the Department Council of Canelones has approved preventive measures which remain valid for the buffer zone until the local territorial arrangement plan is approved, in the framework of Law 18308 on territorial planning and sustainable development. By Act L48-P3-15, dated 6 December 2017, the Department Council has approved the local plan for the micro-region Costa de Oro (Golden Coast), where the town of Atlántida and Estación Atlántida are located.

ICOMOS requested additional information on the protection mechanisms in place for the buffer zone. The State Party responded that the updated buffer zone has been approved by decree and that it has been integrated in the management plan.

Since measures to protect and to regulate the buffer zone are included in Chapter V of the conservation management plan, which has been approved by the Commission on National Cultural Heritage, the national level protection is also guaranteed for the buffer zone.

#### **Management system**

The property is owned by the Diocese of Canelones and, as a Historic Monument, falls under the supervision of the CNCH. In the framework of the process of nomination to the World Heritage List, an agreement between the Bishopric of Canelones and the CNCH, representing the State of Uruguay, was signed on 11 October 2018, establishing the Management Unit for the property. The Management Unit is composed of an Executive Committee, a Technical Executive Committee and a Deliberative Committee.

The Executive Committee is integrated by the Bishop of Canelones and the President of the CNCH; it has decision-making and implementing power for conservation and uses of the property. The Technical Executive Committee includes a representative of the CNCH, a representative of the Diocese of Canelones and a representative of the local government of Canelones; all of them professionals related to architecture and building conservation. It meets regularly once a month, or when required, at Atlántida town hall, and examines projects and plans related to

the conservation and use of the property; it advises the Executive Committee.

The Deliberative Committee includes both local and non-local actors: the Congregation of the Rosarian Nuns, the municipality of Atlántida, the City Council of Atlántida, the government of the Department of Canelones, the Department Council of Canelones and the sport and social institutions of Atlántida, the Eladio Dieste Foundation, universities, and the Dieste y Montañez architectural firm. This committee has an advisory capacity; no regular meetings are envisaged.

Besides those three bodies, the management structure also includes the possibility of participation of other organizations. The co-sponsors include the Ministries of Education and Culture and of Tourism, the Society of Architects of Uruguay and the Episcopal Conference of Uruguay. Facilitating organizations include international organizations that could play a prominent role in the identification of programmes and projects oriented to obtain extraordinary resources for getting advice or for projects related to maintenance and conservation of the property.

In September 2019 ICOMOS requested additional information on the management plan. The State Party has informed that in the framework of the "Keeping it Modern" Getty Foundation Programme, a conservation management plan was elaborated between 2016 and 2017, with the participation of 50 national and international experts. It was approved by the Commission for National Cultural Heritage on 3 May 2017.

The plan includes several projects, which are grouped in different programmes and strategic lines. Strategic line B is related to interventions on the building itself and include: the improvement in the evacuation of rainwater, internal and external lighting, rehabilitation of the window fills in marble onyx, rehabilitation of the baptistery, intervention on the lateral walls of the church, conservation of the niche containing the image of Our Lady of Lourdes, repair of the tower and staircase of the belfry. Training and expertise of professionals and technical staff allow confidence that the projects will be elaborated in the framework of accepted theoretical and operational approaches related to heritage conservation.

Although not specifically related to active conservation measures for the property itself, the portfolio also includes projects related to the buffer zone and, especially, the immediate surroundings of the property: the burying of the system of cables, the closure of the plot containing the property towards the street, the landscape treatment of the free area of the plot, a parking area next to the church, the improvement of the public space between the church and the railway station, the construction of a plaza in the plot facing the church, tree-planting along the highway and streets, signage, regulation of advertising and of use of colours, an



information centre and a cultural centre dedicated to Eladio Dieste. Some projects are planned for implementation in the next 5 years. However, no details were provided either in the nomination dossier or in the conservation management plan.

ICOMOS requested additional information in its Interim Report.

The State Party responded that the projects under approval are two: the “Use plan for the public use of the Church” and the lighting system for the interior of the Church – funded by the Bishopric – and for the exterior – funded by the regional government of Canelones.

ICOMOS recommends that, once the projects are elaborated, the State Party informs the World Heritage Centre providing relevant documentation. ICOMOS also recommends that a Heritage Impact Assessment mechanism be adopted for the evaluation of their potential impacts on the Outstanding Universal Value, integrity and authenticity of the nominated property.

The national and local governments and the Diocese of Canelones can count upon human resources that ensure the possibility of appropriate maintenance and conservation of the property. The Commission for National Cultural Heritage includes a Department of Architecture, whose staff has the required capacity to deal with heritage buildings and ensembles. The Department of Canelones employs staff specialised in urban and territorial planning, important for the management of the buffer zone and the wider setting of the church.

Neither the nomination dossier nor the conservation management Plan seem to address how potential risks for the nominated property will be managed.

#### **Visitor management**

The Diocese of Canelones considers that the Church of Atlántida is primarily a religious space, habilitated for Catholic religious practices and, only secondarily, a tourist attraction.

Guided tours are available twice a week. There is also the possibility of self-guided tours and the Department of Canelones proposes tours to other examples of Dieste’s work located in the territory of the Department. There is no shop or information office next to the church. Restrooms are available at the nearby parish hall that can be used by visitors when the church is open. Besides this, there are no other facilities or services for visitors.

According to available statistics, the property received 737 visitors in 2017, 1,478 in 2018 and 673 in the first 7 months of 2019.

The nomination dossier informs that the Management Unit will approve a plan for public use of the nominated property in agreement with all parties, in order to address the most urgent needs.

ICOMOS welcomes the focus given to the religious function of the nominated property; however it notes that potential increase of tourists following inscription might occur anyway and needs to be actively managed, to avoid negative consequences that may derive from unmanaged visitation. It is therefore suggested that some simple facilities be provided (e.g. waste bins, toilets, information on the Church, on opening hours and visitors expected behaviour, etc.).

#### **Community involvement**

The nomination dossier mentions that surveys among different sectors of the local population have been carried out and the results will inform the actions within the Management Plan. Educational material on Eladio Dieste’s work was prepared in 2014 – 2015, within a UNESCO programme for participation.

#### **Evaluation of the effectiveness of the protection and management of nominated property**

Overall ICOMOS considers that the protection measures in place for the nominated property and the buffer zone are adequate and effective, provided that impact assessment mechanisms are established and implemented before any project is approved and carried out.

At the executive and technical executive levels, the composition of the management unit can be considered adequate; the roles and responsibilities are clearly defined and the possibility of getting advice from members of the Deliberative Committee enhances the guarantee of an appropriate management of the property. The members of the Deliberative Committee are invited to the yearly presentation of the annual report of the management Unit.

However, ICOMOS notes that the role of the Deliberative Committee and the scope of its advice could be better defined to ensure its active participation in the management structure.

ICOMOS considers that the staffing levels, expertise and training are sufficient to ensure the appropriate conservation of the property.

The required financial resources for implementing the management conservation plan in the short- and medium-term have been calculated. The additional information received in February 2020 clarifies that funds are allocated through the State and regional government budget laws for the quinquennium 2021-2026, the bishopric of Canelones, and the Eladio Dieste Foundation.

ICOMOS considers it essential that actors responsible at the different levels for the protection and management of the nominated property make all efforts to guarantee a regular flow of financial resources for the implementation of the management conservation plan, beginning with the next budget period (2021-026).

Despite the local community being somehow represented by social and sports organizations, there is no formal inclusion of the local community in the management structure. Since the property is closely linked to the history and memories of the local community, it should be given a more active and formal role in the management structures and processes.

Therefore, it is recommended that the State Party introduces mechanisms for formalising the participation of local communities in the protection and management structures.

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ICOMOS considers that the legal protection in place is adequate, provided that Heritage Impact Assessment mechanisms are established and regularly implemented. The management system can be considered adequate, although a clearer role for the Deliberative Committee and mechanisms for regular participation of local communities in the management process would be recommended. A steady flow of financial resources is necessary to ensure the possibility of implementing the conservation management plan, beginning with the next budget period (2021-2026).

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## 6 Conclusion

The Church of Atlántida has been nominated for inclusion in the World Heritage List on the basis of criterion (iv) as it may be considered one of the best artistic-architectural expressions attained through the application of the innovative reinforced brickwork construction technique, and demonstrates in an exceptional manner that appropriating a building tradition implies also revisiting and innovating it to achieve new spatial, plastic and construction accomplishments, while taking into account the specific context.

ICOMOS commends the State Party for nominating the Church of Atlántida and acknowledges the efforts deployed by the State Party in responding to the several requests made by ICOMOS to strengthen the nomination and the protection of the nominated property.

The boundaries of the nominated property and of the buffer zone are now adequate to ensure the integrity of the Church of Atlántida and its effective protection; the attributes of the Church have been further refined and will therefore be a robust basis for its protection and management. The comparative analysis has fully

justified the selection of this individual work among many that survive by Dieste.

The Church of Atlántida enjoys legal protection and adequate measures for the implementation of this protection, although it is recommended that impact assessment mechanisms are established and implemented before any project is approved and carried out.

At executive and technical levels, the composition of the management unit is adequate; the roles and responsibilities are clearly defined and the possibility of getting advice from members of the Deliberative Committee enhances the guarantee of an appropriate management of the property. Therefore, it might be useful to define more clearly the scope of its advice and its link with the management structure. Similarly, it is suggested that mechanisms for the participation of local communities in the management be sought and applied.

A conservation management plan exists, its action plan identifies the required financial resources for its implementation in the short- and medium-term. ICOMOS considers it essential that a regular flow of financial means be guaranteed to ensure the effectiveness of the management.

## 7 Recommendations

### Recommendations with respect to inscription

ICOMOS recommends that The work of engineer Eladio Dieste: Church of Atlántida, Uruguay, be inscribed on the World Heritage List on the basis of **criterion (iv)**.

### Recommended Statement of Outstanding Universal Value

Brief synthesis

The Church of Atlántida of engineer Eladio Dieste with its belfry and underground baptistery is located in Estación Atlántida, a low-density locality, 45 km away from Montevideo. Inspired by Italian paleo-Christian and medieval religious architecture, the Church with its belfry and baptistery, all built in exposed bricks, exhibit forms dictated by the effort to achieve greater robustness with limited resistant sections and use of material.

The property is an emblematic example of the application of a new building technique, reinforced ceramic, which Dieste developed by drawing on a thousand-year long tradition of brick construction, while applying modern scientific and technological knowledge, and thus opening up new structural and expressive possibilities for architecture.

Designed from the outset to be built with local materials by local people, the Church of Atlántida, located in a lower middle-class semi-rural community, has its roots in long-established building traditions, while embodying the scientific and technical achievements of modernity. The Church of Atlántida reflects efforts to optimise the use of resources and ensure sustainability. The property is imbued with the humanistic principles that constantly guide the spatial and material concepts of engineer Dieste.

**Criterion (iv):** The Church of Atlántida of engineer Eladio Dieste represents the highest spatial and aesthetic expression of a construction and technological innovation – the reinforced brickwork coupled with the mobile formwork – that draws from tradition, whilst reinterpreting and innovating it, and opens up structural and formal opportunities in architecture impossible to conceive and achieve up to that date with traditional masonry. The property embodies the post-war search for a renewed architectural language, expressing a modernity rooted in tradition and in the vernacular in Latin America and worldwide. It also reflects the locale and its people who built it. The church illustrates the confluence of geometry, of the static conception of the building, of the form expressed by the chosen building material.

#### Integrity

The Church of Atlántida includes all the elements linked to the history of the location and the period over which the building has been functioning. Its dimensions are sufficient to provide a comprehensive representation of the characteristics and processes that embody its Outstanding Universal Value. The church, which is in constant use, is currently in a good state of conservation. Thanks to a recent conservation programme, the building does not face any risks, and the pathologies affecting it can be treated.

#### Authenticity

The property is authentic in terms of location, time, construction materials, surroundings, and the substance of its creation and liturgical use.

#### Protection and management requirements

Requirements for the protection of the property are linked to its designation as a National Historic Monument by virtue of Heritage Law no. 10.040 of August 1971, amended in 2008 and 2015, and of Regulatory Decree 536/72. Conservation is the responsibility of the Heritage Commission, under the Ministry of Education and Culture. The Partial Land Use Plan for the commune of Atlántida and Estación Atlántida, which constitutes the legal land use instrument, recognises the heritage property status of the Church of Atlántida. Ownership is currently shared by the Bishopric of Canelones and the Congregation of the Rosarian Nuns, two institutions of the Catholic Church; however, steps have been undertaken to gather

all elements of the property into the Bishopric's ownership.

The Church is administered by the Management Unit, which incorporates an Executive Committee, and a Deliberative Committee consisting of a set of institutional and social stakeholders who ensure the participation of citizens in the management of the heritage property. The Executive Committee, which takes decisions relating to intervention of all types on the property, is composed of the Ministry of Education and Culture, the Heritage Commission and the Bishopric of Canelones. The Deliberative Committee provides direct support to the Executive Committee; it consists of stakeholders involved in the routine management of the church as regards operational and material matters and its surroundings. The technical, administrative and economic resources are provided by State institutions and by the Catholic Church.

#### Additional recommendations

ICOMOS further recommends that the State Party give consideration to the following:

- a) Digitizing according to international requirements the historic archival documentation of the design and construction phases of the property,
- b) Ensuring a steady flow of financial resources for the implementation of the management conservation plan, beginning with the next budget period (2021-2026),
- c) Strengthening the role of the Deliberative Committee within the Management system,
- d) Considering a more direct participation of the local community of Estación Atlántida in the property's management structure,
- e) Including, in the management structure, a heritage impact assessment mechanism for projects that could have an impact on the Outstanding Universal Value of the property and on its integrity and authenticity,
- f) Developing indicators useful for the monitoring of the state of conservation of the property,
- g) Strengthening the visitor management and provide simple facilities for them;

