

LUMBINI: The Birthplace of Lord Buddha-World Heritage Property
Report on the State of Conservation of the property

February 2022



Government of Nepal
Ministry of Culture, Tourism and Civil Aviation
Department of Archaeology
in Coordination with
Lumbini Development Trust

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Introduction

Lumbini is a peerless landmark of the Buddhist world. This is the only active religious place that has been listed in the World Heritage Site by the UNESCO in 1997. Lumbini symbolized ultimate peace and harmony. The eyes of Buddha are the emblem of love, worship; kindness and compassion are the synonym of Buddhism. Lumbini, was inscribed on the List of World Heritage at the 21st session of the World Heritage Committee in 1997 under criteria (iii) and (vi):

Criterion (iii): As the birthplace of the Lord Buddha, testified by the inscription on the Asoka pillar, the sacred area in Lumbini is one of the most holy and significant places for one of the world's great religions.

Criterion (vi): The archaeological remains of the Buddhist *viharas* (monasteries) and *stupas* (memorial shrines) from the 6th century BC to the 15th century AD, provide important evidence about the nature of Buddhist pilgrimage centers from a very early period.

Integrity:

The integrity of Lumbini has been achieved by means of preserving the archaeological remains that give the property its outstanding universal value within the boundaries. The significant attributes and elements of the property have been preserved. The buffer zone gives the property a further layer of protection. Further excavations of potential archaeological sites and appropriate protection of the archaeological remains are a high priority for the integrity of the site. The boundaries however do not include the entire archaeological site and various areas are found in the buffer zone. The entire property is owned by the Government of Nepal and is being managed by the Lumbini Development Trust and therefore there is little threats of development or neglect. However, the effects of industrial development in the region have been identified as a threat to the integrity of the property.

Authenticity:

The authenticity of the archaeological remains within the boundaries has been confirmed through a series of excavations since the discovery of the Asoka pillar in 1896. The remains of viharas, stupas and numerous layers of brick structures from the 6th century BCE to the present century at the site of the Maya Devi Temple are proof of Lumbini having been a center of pilgrimage already from early times. The archaeological remains require active conservation and monitoring to ensure that the impact of natural degradation, influence of humidity and the impact of the visitors are kept under control.

Management:

The main archaeological site is protected as per the Ancient Monument Preservation Act 1956. The site management is carried out by the Lumbini Development Trust, an autonomous and non-profit making organization as a Government Authority. The entire site is owned by the Government of Nepal. The site falls within the center of the Master Plan area, the planning of which was initiated together with the United Nations and carried out by Prof. Kenzo Tange between 1972 and 1978. The long-term challenges for the protection and management of the property would be to control the impact of the visitors, of natural impacts such as humidity and the industrial development in the region. A Management Plan is in the process of being developed to ensure the long-term safeguarding of the archaeological

vestiges of the property while allowing for the property to continue being visited by pilgrims and tourists from around the world.

This report has been prepared as requested by the World Heritage Committee during their 44th Session. It has mentioned about the information of the researches and different activities done in Lumbini World Heritage Property and surroundings.

We would like to express gratitude to the World Heritage Center for the concern they have shown and their encouragement and funding of the project through the Japanese Funds-in-Trust.

World Heritage Committee

Extended 44th session (Fuzhou (China)/Online meeting, 2021)

Lumbini, the Birthplace of the Lord Buddha (Nepal) (C 666rev)

Decision: 44 COM7B. 148

The World Heritage Committee,

1. Having examined Document WHC/21/44. COM/7B,
2. Recalling Decision 43 COM 7B. 71, adopted at its 43rd session (Baku, 2019),
3. Notes the finalization of the Integrated Management Framework (IMF) for the property, but regrets that, despite multiple requests, the IMF has not been formally adopted by the State Party, and therefore reiterates its urgent request to the State Party to adopt and implement the IMF as a matter of priority;
4. Notes with concern that development activities continue to be undertaken within the property and its buffer zone prior to notification and submission of documentation to the World Heritage Centre, and also reiterates its request to the State Party to complete Heritage Impact Assessments (HIAs) for any proposed Project, following the 2011 ICOMOS Guidelines on HIAs for Cultural World Heritage Properties, prior to carrying out any further work within the property or in adjacent areas identified as having potential archaeological significance, and to submit these HIAs and relevant project documentation to the World Heritage Centre for review by the Advisory Bodies, in conformity with Paragraph 172 of the Operational Guidelines, as soon as possible and before making any decisions that would be difficult to reverse;
5. Expresses its continuing concern about the Lumbini World Peace City initiative and its potential impacts on the property, the Buddhist Meditation Hall located within the Lumbini Kenzo Tange Master Plan Area, and the ongoing need for a clear strategy and concrete further actions to protect the Greater Lumbini Area and its wider setting, including but not limited to Tilaurakot and Ramagrama, and to reduce the increasing industrial activity in the vicinity of the property;
6. Takes note of different phases of the UNESCO/Japanese Funds-In-Trust project for the preservation of the property particularly progress made in archaeological research, capacity-building and awareness raising activities, together with an International Scientific Committee (ISC) established under the project, strongly encourages the State Party and other partners to take a holistic approach to focus efforts on the protection and management of the sacred site as a priority and to mitigate the potential or ascertained danger to the property's Outstanding Universal Value (OUV) and the wider setting;
7. Requests the State Party to invite a joint World Heritage Centre/ICOMOS Reactive Monitoring mission to the property as requested in Decision 43 COM 7B. 71 to assess its overall state of conservation, review the IMF and all ongoing studies and

development proposals, and consider both the strategic approach to the Greater Lumbini Area, and the implications of the Lumbini World Peace City, in line with the protection of OUV of the property;

8. Also requests the State Party to submit to the World Heritage Centre, by 1 February 2022 an updated report on the state of conservation of the property and the implementation of the above, for examination by the World Heritage Committee at its 45th session.

Section A

General Response to Points made by the World Heritage Committee

Refer 44 COIVI 7B. 148 – State of Conservation

3. *Notes the finalization of the Integrated Management Framework (IMF) for the property, but regrets that, despite multiple requests, the IMF has not been formally adopted by the State Party, and therefore reiterates its urgent request to the State Party to adopt and implement the IMF as a matter of priority;*

The Integrated Management Framework document has been finalized under UNESCO/Japanese Funds-in-Trust Project. The Ministry of Culture, Tourism and Civil Aviation, National Planning Commission of Nepal, the Lumbini Development Trust and the Department of Archaeology of Nepal have been adopted and forwarded to the Cabinet for final adoption of the Government of Nepal, due to the changes of the Government yet to be ratified. The final draft Integrated Management Framework (Nepalese Version) document have been sent along with the previous report.

4. *Notes with concern that development activities continue to be undertaken within the property and its buffer zone prior to notification and submission of documentation to the World Heritage Centre, and also reiterates its request to the State Party to complete Heritage Impact Assessments (HIAs) for any proposed Project, following the 2011 ICOMOS Guidelines on HIAs for Cultural World Heritage Properties, prior to carrying out any further work within the property or in adjacent areas identified as having potential archaeological significance, and to submit these HIAs and relevant project documentation to the World Heritage Centre for review by the Advisory Bodies, in conformity with Paragraph 172 of the Operational Guidelines, as soon as possible and before making any decisions that would be difficult to reverse;*

Development Activities within the Property

Following the conservation guideline by the experts under UNESCO/JFIT, some of the activities have been carried out.

1. Brick Conservation around Marker stone.

As study has proved the underground water table is very high in Lumbini World Heritage Property area. Because of high level water table, specially the area in and around the Marker stone always remain wet and greenish due to fungi. Therefore, as suggested by experts, it is being applied paper pulp with spring water to remove fungous from bricks regularly.



Before conservation



Before conservation



During conservation



During conservation



2. Site conservation within the buffer zone.

In and around the property area every year new tree and bushes grow which could be hazard for underground cultural heritage. Therefore, removing of all unnecessary plants and bushes to protect heritage is a regular activity. Now the Trust is working to remove all those unnecessary grass and bushes from buffer zone under the sacred garden restoration project.



Work on progress



Work on progress

3. Drainage within the buffer zone.

Since long time drainage of core and buffer zone of lumbini world heritage property was not systematic. So, it is being difficult to reduce water level of property area. Experts also have suggested managing systematic drainage to drain out rain and underground water. Therefore, LDT is working on buffer zone to drain out all rain water to the circular pond as a mitigation measure.



Cleaning old drain



Maintenance work on progress

5. *Expresses its continuing concern about the Lumbini World Peace City initiative and its potential impacts on the property, the Buddhist Meditation Hall located within the Lumbini Kenzo Tange Master Plan Area, and the ongoing need for a clear strategy and concrete further actions to protect the Greater Lumbini Area and its wider setting, including but not limited to Tilaurakot and Ramagrama, and to reduce the increasing industrial activity in the vicinity of the property;*

The Master plan of the Lumbini World Peace City was principally approved by the Government of Nepal. The Lumbini Development Trust organized an initial discussion for the possible implementation of the plan among concern stakeholders at the central and local level. The Site Managers are desperately working to safeguard the outstanding universal value of Lumbini and fully agree to carry out comprehensive HIA before implementing any significant developmental project. The Government of Nepal are not taking any initiatives for its implementation at the moment.

Regarding the International Buddhist Meditation and Conference Hall, it is under construction. First phase of the construction has been completed and almost 50% of second phase has been completed. As reported from Trust it is planning for the official inauguration at the forthcoming Buddha Jayanti at May 2022. HIA was carried out for the construction latterly and recommended as there would be no significant impact to the World Heritage Property and its bit far away from the property area.



Proposed International Buddhist Meditation and Conference Hall



Progress of the International Buddhist Meditation and Conference Hall

The Government of Nepal is committed to inscribe Tilaurakot, Capital City of Ancient Shakya Kingdom as world heritage property. In this regard, the Department of Archaeology Nepal and the Lumbini Development Trust are vigorously working to prepare nomination dossier. LDT and DoA has organized various level of workshop and interaction at local and national level and prepared a Tilaurakot World Heritage Nomination Initial Projects Report. The Steering Committee has been established with the following members: Vice Chairman LDT (Chair), Members-Joint Secretary Culture Division MoCTCA, Director General DOA, Member Secretary LDT, Mayor Kapilbastu Municipality, Representative UNESCO Kathmandu, World Heritage Section Head DOA and Nomination Dossier Coordinator LDT (Member Secretary).

Recently the Government of Nepal (Cabinet) has principally approved to declared Tilaurakot as a Protected Monument Zone.



Steering Committee Meeting at the Tilaurakot-Kapilavastu



Stakeholders Interaction at Tilaurakot

The State Party fully agrees and has great concern to develop a strategy for the protection of the Greater Lumbini Area. Thus, to understand morphology of the historical sites various researches like archaeological investigation, geophysical survey have been carried out under the UNESCO/Japanese Fund in-Trust project in the year of 2014-2021. Especially phase IV of the project is proposed, which has been designed based on discussions during the International Scientific Committee meetings with stressed the importance to cover conservation, archaeology and overall planning issues related to the three sites -Lumbini, Tilaurakot and Ramagrama, with a specific focus on the ancient Tilaurakot sites and its environs.

To reduce the increasing industrial activity in the vicinity of the property, LDT, in close coordination with Department of Archaeology, is working with the Department of Environment Nepal, International Centre for Integrated Mountain Development (ICIMOD) and WWF Nepal.

6. Takes note of different phases of the UNESCO/Japanese Funds-In-Trust project for the preservation of the property particularly progress made in archaeological research, capacity-building and awareness raising activities, together with an International Scientific Committee (ISC) established under the project, strongly encourages the State Party and other partners to take a holistic approach to focus efforts on the protection and management of the sacred site as a priority and to mitigate the potential or ascertained danger to the property's Outstanding Universal Value (OUV) and the wider setting;

The outcomes of the UNESCO/Japanese Funds-In-Trust project for the preservation of the property are outstanding. The International Scientific Committee (ISC) established under this project is playing instrumental role as think tank on the protection and management of the Greater Lumbini Area. We are committed to focus and utilize this academic forum for the holistic approach to mitigate the potential or ascertained danger to the property's Outstanding Universal Value and the wider setting.

7. Requests the State Party to invite a joint World Heritage Centre/ICOMOS Reactive Monitoring mission to the property as requested in Decision 43 COM 7B. 71 to assess its overall state of conservation, review the IMF and all ongoing studies and development proposals, and consider both the strategic approach to the Greater Lumbini Area, and the implications of the Lumbini World Peace City, in line with the protection of OUV of the property;

With the coordination of Site Managers, the date for the Joint World Heritage Center/ICOMOS Reactive Monitoring Mission has been fixed for 22 March to 28 March 2022. The formal invitation letter will be disseminated soon from the Department of Archaeology.

Public access to the state of conservation report

The State Party has no objection to the uploading of the full report on the World Heritage Centre's State of Conservation Information System

(<http://whc.unesco.org/en/soc>)

1. Signature of the Authority


DAMODAR GAUTAM
DIRECTOR GENERAL

31 January 2022

Director General

Department of Archaeology



31 January 2022