

# ICOMOS

INTERNATIONAL COUNCIL ON MONUMENTS AND SITES  
CONSEIL INTERNATIONAL DES MONUMENTS ET DES SITES  
CONSEJO INTERNACIONAL DE MONUMENTOS Y SITIOS  
МЕЖДУНАРОДНЫЙ СОВЕТ ПО ВОПРОСАМ ПАМЯТНИКОВ И ДОСТОПРИМЕЧАТЕЛЬНЫХ МЕСТ

Our Ref. GB/AS/EG/1641/IR

Charenton-le-Pont, 20 December 2021

H. E. Mr Henok Teferra Shawl  
Ambassador extraordinary and  
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Permanent Delegate  
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Délégation Permanente de l'Éthiopie  
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## World Heritage List 2022

### The Gedeo Cultural Landscape (Ethiopia) – Interim report and additional information request

Dear Ambassador,

As prescribed by the revised *Operational Guidelines for the Implementation of the World Heritage Convention* and its Annex 6, the Advisory Bodies have been requested to submit a short interim report for each nomination by 31 January 2022. We are therefore pleased to provide you with the relevant information outlining issues related to the evaluation process.

The ICOMOS technical evaluation mission to “The Gedeo Cultural Landscape” was carried out by Mr. Menno Welling (Malawi) from 19 September to 1 October 2021. The mission expert highly appreciated the availabilities and support provided by the experts in your country for the organisation and implementation of the mission.

On 5 October 2021, a letter was sent by ICOMOS to request further information regarding the maps, comparative analysis and boundaries, megalithic monuments, justification for the criteria, Gedeo cultivation, protection, management, and documentation. Please convey our thanks to all the officials and experts for the additional information you provided on 12 November 2021 and for their continued cooperation in this process.

At the end of November 2021, the ICOMOS World Heritage Panel evaluated the cultural and mixed properties nominated for inscription on the World Heritage List in 2022. The additional information provided by the State Party, together with mission and desk review reports were carefully examined by the Panel members. This process will conclude in March 2022.

We thank you for the availability of your Delegation to the meeting held on 27 November 2021 with some representatives of the ICOMOS Panel. The exchanges during this meeting were of great help for the third part of the ICOMOS Panel meeting. During the last part of the meeting, the Panel has identified areas where it considers that further information is needed.

Therefore, we would be pleased if the State Party could consider the following points:

### **Agroforestry practices**

In order to have a clearer understanding of why the Gedeo landscape area has been selected for nomination, the ICOMOS Panel would welcome further background information on Gedeo history and traditions and the history of coffee cultivation, as it is still not precisely clear what makes the Gedeo nominated area stand out from other similar neighbouring agroforestry areas that produce coffee which, like the Gedeo area, are also underpinned by traditional practices. From the supplementary information provided in November 2021, the Gedeo agroforestry practices are only seen as slightly different from those in the Sidama Zone, and elsewhere in south-west Ethiopia, in relation to steeper cultivated slopes in the Gedeo area and for the way the area supports a higher density of population. However, these factors have not been related to history or to the development of cultural communities.

While coffee originated in the south-west highlands of Ethiopia, the ICOMOS Panel understands that most was gathered from wild coffee forests until the early years of the 20<sup>th</sup> century when the 1920s communities were obliged by landowners to cultivate coffee as a valuable cash crop. Over the past one hundred years, the percentage of coffee cultivated alongside food crops has increased in forest areas. ICOMOS would appreciate if the State Party could provide a clearer understanding of how these changes related specifically to the Gedeo area and whether the impact there is, in any way, different from the impact of similar changes in neighbouring regions.

It would also be helpful to understand the recent history of the area. While the Gedeo are indigenous to Ethiopia and have been associated with the cultivation of *enset* for perhaps a few thousand years, they appear to have moved to the south-west from the north sometime during the last two millennia, and, since their arrival, have migrated around the area including in the recent past, in response to population growth. In order to be as precise as possible, ICOMOS would welcome clarification on these processes and on whether certain Gedeo communities have long standing associations with the nominated area, whether others have arrived more recently, and whether the communities within the nominated area might be seen as a cultural group that is in some way distinct from others in the wider Gedeo area.

Overall, it would be helpful to have greater clarity on how and why the nominated Gedeo area has come to be seen as a defined cultural area that is somehow exceptional when compared to its neighbouring areas.

### **Documentation**

The ICOMOS Panel appreciated the maps that were provided on settlements and roads in the additional information but consider that further information is needed to provide a better understanding of how the settlements relate to the overall agroforestry landscape. Currently, almost no details have been provided on the settlements and thus on what would be included in the property if it were to be inscribed. More details are needed to allow understanding of the scope and size of these settlements and how they relate to the agroforestry practices. Please could the State Party provide data on the relative size of these settlements, how they are constrained in terms of area and type of buildings, what services are provided to them and how development is planned for the future? And, overall, what documentation exists for each of the settlements and on their increasing numbers over, say, the past twenty years?

While it is understood that maps cannot be provided to set out detailed land-use within the nominated area as the plot sizes are small, data is needed on what proportion of the overall nominated landscapes still reflect traditional layered agroforestry practices, what proportion has significant areas of cereal crops, and what proportion has exotic trees such as eucalyptus. It would also be helpful to understand

on which parts of the nominated area cultivation is now taking place on high level, potentially unstable steep slopes.

The reason for requesting these details is to understand more clearly the impact of the precise challenges facing the property, in relation to population pressures and trends towards unsustainable cultivation, as a context for how these might be addressed.

### **Sustainable land-use plan**

The ICOMOS Panel appreciates that various government conservation-livelihood-based approach strategies have been introduced in parts of the nominated area that relate to the conservation of the agroforestry system and improving the livelihood of communities. The ICOMOS Panel nevertheless considers that sufficient measures have not yet been defined to ensure that the landscape will continue to reflect distinctive agroforestry practices into the future in a sustainable and meaningful way.

The nomination dossier sets out very clearly the threats that prevail at the property in terms of the weakening of traditional practices, the rapid growth in population, expanding settlements, high level cultivation, expanding cereal crops, and changing value systems. The nomination dossier also states that the site is “reaching beyond its carrying capacity” (page 78) and that “the economic condition of the region and its dependence on coffee could not sustain itself without a sustainable land use plan” being developed and implemented (page 89).

The ICOMOS Panel agrees that a sustainable land use plan developed specifically for the nominated property is urgently needed to address the specific dangers that it is facing, and to frame actions in the short-term as well as in the medium and long-term to ensure that forces for drastic and irreversible change can be contained and their impacts mitigated. There is an urgency for such a document to be defined to demonstrate how the exceedingly fragile conservation of the property might be strengthened and put onto a sustainable basis in order to address acknowledged dangers such as “...environmental degradation if proper conservation and livelihood measures are not taking place” (page 78), and the possibility that “[t]he land Vs population imbalance ...will impact, in the near future the integrity and OUV of the agricultural [land]scape” (page 89).

A sustainable land use plan should also be the key to achieving a balance between the many competing needs such as protecting traditional practices, improving prices for the high-quality organic coffee, raising the overall standard of living of communities, and providing both incentives and appropriate constraints in relation to settlements, the scope of cultivation and the type of crops and trees planted. In other words, such a plan could be seen as a master plan for the nominated property that provides the framework for planning conservation and socio-economic development in the context of sustaining the proposed Outstanding Universal Value and the involvement and support of local communities. The plan could as well provide a roadmap for how necessary changes and transformations will be achieved and within what time period.

The ICOMOS Panel would welcome an understanding of how such sustainable land use plan might be developed for the nominated area and when this could be achieved.

### **Megalithic monuments**

ICOMOS has become aware of an article recently published online in the *Journal of African Archaeology* on *New Dates for Megalithic Stele Monuments of Gedeo, South Ethiopia* by Ashenafi G. Zena *et al.* This suggests, on the basis of advanced radiocarbon dating, that the megalithic stelae at the Sakaro Sodo site were possibly created sometime during the first century CE. ICOMOS would be pleased to receive further details on these investigations and on whether they are to be extended to other megalithic sites.

We look forward to your responses to these points, which will be of great help in our evaluation process.

We would be grateful if you could provide **ICOMOS** and the **World Heritage Centre** with the above information **by 28 February 2022 at the latest**, the deadline set out in paragraph 148 of the *Operational Guidelines* for supplementary information on nominations to be received. Please note that any information submitted after this date will not be considered by ICOMOS in its evaluation for the World Heritage Committee. It should be noted, however, that while ICOMOS will carefully consider any supplementary information submitted, it cannot properly evaluate a completely revised nomination or large amounts of new information submitted at the last minute. So we would be grateful if the State Party could keep its response concise and respond only to the above requests.

We thank you for your support of the World Heritage Convention and the evaluation process.

Yours faithfully,



Gwenaëlle Bourdin  
Director  
ICOMOS Evaluation Unit

Copy to	Gedeo Zone Administration Culture, Tourism and Sport Department
	The Authority for Research and Conservation of Cultural heritage
	Association for the Conservation of Culture
	UNESCO World Heritage Centre