

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/1663/IR

Charenton-le-Pont, 20 December 2021

H. E. Mr Francisco Roberto Gross
Hernandez-Kramer
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Plenipotentiary of Guatemala to France,
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Ambassade du Guatemala
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World Heritage List 2022

National Archaeological Park Tak'alik Ab'aj (Guatemala) – 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 “National Archaeological Park Tak'alik Ab'aj” was carried out by Ms. Maria Ifigenia Quintanilla (Costa Rica) from 8 to 15 August 2021. The mission expert highly appreciated the availabilities and support provided by the experts in your country for the organization and implementation of the mission.

On 27 September 2021, a letter was sent by ICOMOS to request further information regarding the area of nominated property and proposed buffer zone, Site Museum Tak'alik Ab'aj “El Caracol del Tiempo”, and participation and free, prior and informed consent. 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 25 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.

While the ICOMOS Panel considered that the “National Archaeological Park Tak’alik Ab’aj” might have the potential to meet the requirements for Outstanding Universal Value, this has not yet been demonstrated.

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

Integrity

The integrity of the nominated property was the main focus of discussions during the ICOMOS panel meeting in November 2021. It was noted that some elements of importance (for example, elements of the hydraulic system at El Escondite) are outside the nominated area. The nomination dossier declares that the nominated property represents the whole archaeological site, but there is very little information on the elements related to the archaeological site outside the nominated area to corroborate this.

ICOMOS would be pleased if the State Party could supply further information on the archaeological remains located outside the nominated area (e.g. maps, photos and concise descriptions). ICOMOS also wishes to understand the relationship of these remains with the proposed Outstanding Universal Value. What was the rationale behind the delineation of the boundaries of the nominated area as presented in the nomination dossier?

ICOMOS recognizes that the negotiations with the property owners are challenging and that they are ongoing. The proposal of an "Initial Protection Zone" as the basis for a potential future buffer zone and the "Protection Islands" presented in the additional information provided in November 2021 is a promising step. However, ICOMOS would appreciate if the State Party could consider providing further details on the following issues:

- What was the rationale behind the delineation of the Initial Protection Zone and the selection of the Protection Islands? What will their legal status be and how will it be different from the nominated area and the rest of the archaeological site in terms of protection measures?
- What is the (potential) impact of the pig-farm on the nominated property?
- Is there a timeframe for the finalization of the discussion on the buffer zone with the owners?

Research activities

From the detailed description in the nomination dossier and the very complete bibliography, it appears that a lot of research, specifically archaeological surveys and excavations, have been conducted. Much of it is described or mentioned in the nomination dossier. ICOMOS would be pleased if the State Party could provide maps that indicate the locations of these interventions, as well as of the conservation / restoration activities. ICOMOS would also be interested in knowing if research is planned for the future and whether there is a clear Research Strategy/Framework related to sustaining the proposed Outstanding Universal Value. Could the State Party please indicate whether there is a Conservation Plan (beyond the description of the threats presented in Annex III.2) for the nominated property and the entire archaeological site?

Site museum

ICOMOS acknowledges that the legal problems holding up the termination of the site museum are resolved and that funds are allocated for the construction to be terminated in 2023. ICOMOS would be interested in understanding what are the steps still necessary to be completed before the construction can resume? Could the State Party please indicate what part of the museum is already constructed, and what part is still missing? ICOMOS would also appreciate if the State Party could provide further information on what the building will include besides the museum installations: spaces for storage, laboratories, archives etc. Will older research and visitor infrastructure at the property be removed, once

