
Rachid Karami International Fair (Lebanon) No 1702

1 Basic information

Official name as proposed by the State Party

Rachid Karami International Fair-Tripoli

Location

Tripoli

North Lebanon

Brief description

Erected in Tripoli, the second largest city in Lebanon and the capital of the Northern Governorate, the Rachid Karami International Fair-Tripoli was designed by Oscar Niemeyer between 1962-1967. It occupies an elliptical area not far from the coast to the west of the Mamluk historic core of the city and to the south-southeast of El-Mina Ottoman historic district. The main featuring building of the fairground is a huge bent, oblong and covered exhibition space, complemented by a series of smaller "sculptural" structures, which accommodate educational, recreational, and cultural functions. The buildings are connected by water ponds, passages and green areas and are completed by housing and administrative zones and service infrastructures.

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*.

Included in the Tentative List

11 July 2019 as "La foire internationale Rachid Karameh de Tripoli-Liban"

Background

The nomination was submitted to the World Heritage Centre by the State Party on 8 April 2022 to be evaluated under emergency evaluation procedure as set out in paragraphs 161 and 162 of the *Operational Guidelines for the Implementation of the World Heritage Convention*. It was transmitted to ICOMOS on the same date.

The nomination was submitted by the State Party as an emergency nomination because of the alarming conservation conditions, the lack of financial resources at the national level due to the country's unprecedented economic and financial crisis, and the latent risks of unsympathetic development proposals for the revitalisation of the International Fair. Coherently, the State Party also nominates the Rachid Karami International Fair-Tripoli to be simultaneously inscribed on the List of World Heritage in Danger.

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 nominated property from 18 to 22 July 2022.

Additional information received by ICOMOS

A letter was sent to the State Party on 31 May 2022 requesting further information about the history of the project, the attributes supporting the proposed justification for inscription, and clarification on the reasons for submitting a nomination under the emergency procedure.

Additional information was received from the State Party on 14 July 2022.

All additional information received has been incorporated into the relevant sections of this evaluation report.

Date of ICOMOS approval of this report

9 September 2022

2 Description of the nominated 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 provides only a short summary of the most relevant aspects.

Description and history

The Rachid Karami International Fair-Tripoli is located to the west of the Mamluk historic core of the city and to the south-southeast of El-Mina Ottoman historic district, and it occupies an oval-shaped area not far from the coast, at the time a yet undeveloped land. It was designed by Oscar Niemeyer between 1962 and 1967 and built between 1967 and 1975.

The International Fair was commissioned and built in Tripoli, and not in Beirut, as a statement of post-independence modernisation, social liberalisation, and a pivotal programmatic action to reduce regional inequalities and promote multipolar development.

To implement these ambitions, the Lebanese government sought to hire an internationally renowned architect and the choice fell on Oscar Niemeyer. The Brazilian architect arrived in Lebanon in July 1962 and spent two months in the country where he drafted a proposal for the overall plan of the International Fair.

The initial idea of the architect was to integrate the plan of the International Fair into a larger urban development plan for the area between the fairground and the coast, to act as a third modern urban pole. The layout of the International Fair complex was to act as the matrix of a new radial neighbourhood of social housing, interspersed

with vegetation. An international highway toward Northern Syria was supposed to cross the oval-shaped area of the fairground to ensure good accessibility and strategic positioning.

The main concept of the fairground layout was already laid down in this initial draft plan: a large-scale, curved and rectangular canopy to house national exhibition spaces and smaller structures dedicated to complementary functions, and interconnected by ponds and gardens.

Upon ICOMOS' request, the State Party further detailed the historical development of the nominated property and provided scanned copies of historic drawings.

The Lebanese authorities discarded the idea of the larger urban plan and the design for the fairground project implementation was modified. The international highway was built tangentially to the fairground area, which lost its egg shape and became an ellipse, and the orientation of the curved covered canopy was mirrored along its longer axis, thus showing the concavity toward the old Mamluk city instead of the coast. Furthermore, the authorities asked Niemeyer to fence the fairground area for security reasons. Despite initial objections, Niemeyer proposed a few sketches for a fence in concrete panels and vertical openings, to preserve partly the sense of openness that he sought for the area of the International Fair.

Niemeyer chose a bare reinforced concrete as the construction material for all the buildings and the fence itself, as it offered exceptional structural capacity and wide aesthetic potential, which he experimented already in Brasilia.

Visitors could access the complex from the south, through a large ramp conducting to a portico, which is reflected in an adjacent water pond and from which it is possible to enjoy an open view over the International Fair complex.

The structuring element of the fairground is the Grand Canopy, an immense bent, covered and cantilevered structure of 70 metres wide and 640 metres long. Two rows of columns carry the inverted beams that support the roof. The covered structure was designed to gather all national pavilions, giving unity to the fairground, which would otherwise result in a fragmentary layout.

The Guest House is situated near the entrance. Originally conceived as a luxury hotel, it is a squared inward-looking, one-storey building with an inner open-air atrium, inspired by the traditional *hosh*.

Most structures of the International Fair are located east of the Grand Canopy, connected by passages, and organised around reflecting pools.

Inspired by the Palácio do Itamaraty in Brasilia, the Lebanese Pavilion is a squared porched building with pointed arches, echoing elements of the Lebanese traditional architecture.

The Experimental Theatre is housed under a dome that measures sixty metres in diameter: it was conceived as a flexible stage with a rotating circular scene. The concrete shell was finished in 1975 but the equipment was never installed.

A Space Museum and a helipad are located on the opposite side of the Experimental Theatre. The exhibition spaces were planned underground, whilst the helipad is conceived as a circular sculptural element rising from the basement.

A conic pavilion with a star-shaped plan, named Miniature "Manège", stands near the secondary entrance (opened in the 1990s) probably intended for children as there were a playground and a labyrinth nearby which are now lost.

The water tower with its roof restaurant is a landmark of the fairground and forms a counterpoint to the grandiose arch of the Open-Air Theatre. It consists of an ascending ceremonial ramp, the Grand Arch, marking the entrance of the theatre, a trapezoidal parterre descending toward the floating island of the scene, which is covered by an acoustic concrete shell.

Niemeyer also conceived a housing section, which included a Housing Museum, an Individual Residence Prototype, experimenting with the free plan, and a Collective Housing Prototype, which consists of a series of duplexes with double-height terraced gardens.

Service and administrative buildings were situated on the west, facing the convex side of the Grand Canopy.

Niemeyer was responsible for the architectural design, whilst the executive and tendering documents were prepared by Lebanese engineering firms with experience in large-scale projects in Lebanon or in the Arab world. The construction works were in an advanced state of implementation, with most of the concrete structures completed and some buildings already finished with furniture and equipment, when they were suddenly interrupted in 1975 due to the outbreak of the war. The site became a military camp, and the structures were damaged by firefights and looted.

After the end of the war, the International Fair was the object of two major recovery interventions, in 1993 and 1997. The latter implied the installation of glass façades and the construction of cement walls on the southern wing of the canopy, betraying the transparency and openness sought by Niemeyer for this structure.

The most invasive intervention occurred in the Collective Housing Prototype, which was converted into a hotel in 2000 and from which the duplexes and the loggias, which were featuring elements of the prototype, were removed.

A project proposal for the creation of a theme park on the fairground was rejected by civil society and was hence abandoned. A further proposal in 2006 was to turn the International Fair into a permanent fair for Chinese

product imports but conflicts in Lebanon and then in Syria stopped the project.

Attempts to revive the nominated property continued and, in 2016, a project of adaptive reuse was implemented at the Guest House to be used as a furniture cluster.

In 2019, the Lebanese government initiated a project for the creation of a “Knowledge and Innovation Centre” (KIC) at the western end of the fairground, including Niemeyer’s International Fair administration and service buildings. An international competition was launched, and the winning project selected by the jury was a scheme proposing an underground intervention. However, due to the economic crisis, this project has been suspended.

The nominated property covers 72ha of the elliptical area set aside for the fairground. No buffer zone, as per paragraphs 103 to 105 of the *Operational Guidelines for the Implementation of the World Heritage Convention*, has been proposed.

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 attributes supporting the proposed justification for inscription have greatly suffered from damages caused by firefights, their use by military forces, looting, lack of maintenance, and neglect and they are for the most part in bad to critical conditions and urgently need emergency stabilisation measures. The nomination dossier provides a synthetic yet complete overview of the state of conservation of the nominated property and of each building and structure that was part of Niemeyer’s design. Only the Guest House, rehabilitated in 2016, the southern part of the Grand Canopy, restored to function between 1993 and 1997, and the front part of the open spaces and landscaping are judged in satisfactory conditions.

Factors affecting the nominated 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 attributes of the nominated property are advanced and severe structural deterioration of the concrete, subject to carbonatation, corrosion of steel reinforcements, causing structural instability and localised collapses. Despite the sensitisation campaigns and the mobilisation of the civil society and the heritage community to preserve the complex, interventions to recover and use it have been minimal and the International Fair has turned into an inaccessible and unused island within the city. Furthermore, over the years, large-scale projects to introduce new, incompatible uses were proposed and fortunately stopped by protests or unfavourable economic or geopolitical instability. The lack of an overall vision for the future of the Rachid Karami International Fair-Tripoli and a comprehensive urban policy to guide the reuse and rehabilitation of the International Fair and its surroundings in a coherent manner is a critical issue, due to the fact that separate land use plans for Tripoli and El-Mina are

proposing differing regulations for the International Fair area.

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:

- The Rachid Karami International Fair-Tripoli is an outstanding example of urban planning and architecture of the 20th century.
- The vibrant Niemeyer’s Brazilian modernist architecture, integrated with elements inspired by the local traditional architecture, was meant to convey the aspirations of the newly independent peoples to participate in the global process of modernisation in the Arab Region.
- The masterful use of reinforced concrete to create sculptural elements, the scale of the undertaking, the innovative typology of the design of the International Fair, based on a large-scale structure organising the whole fairground and providing order to the exhibition pavilions, counterpointed by smaller structures for socio-cultural functions serving social-reformative and educational aims, make the nominated property one of the most representative architectural works of the 20th century in the Arab States.

Based on the nomination dossier and the additional information, the key attributes of the nominated property include the fairground layout, with the curved large-scale Grand Canopy, as a space-generating element; the sequence of smaller sculptural structures, shaped by the masterful use of reinforced concrete, connected by reflecting pools, passageways as well as ascending and descending vast ramps, offering sweeping views over the complex and a dynamic experience of the space, the tropical flavour of the green area. Specific attributes reflecting the infusion of Niemeyer’s “Brazilian modernism” with Lebanese architectural tradition include the entrance portico, the former Guest House with its introverted space and the use of natural local limestone, the square shape, the screening perimeter porch, and the pointed arches of the Lebanese Pavilion. The double loggias in the duplex and the organisation of its ground floor of the Collective Housing Prototype were featuring attributes of this building but have been lost.

Comparative analysis

The comparative analysis has been developed along three strands: the Rachid Karami International Fair-Tripoli is an outstanding example of the 20th-century Modern Movement in architecture in the Arab world; it is an inspiring example of “Brazilian modernism” adapted to the Arab region and it is an outstanding example of a new typology for large-scale exhibition complexes. The analysis has first examined World Heritage properties and sites in the Tentative Lists within the Arab States region belonging to the 20th-century heritage theme, concluding

that these sites significantly differ from the nominated property in terms of values and attributes, even though some of them take part in the same historic and cultural period. It has then examined the participation in the modernisation process of the Arab Near East by other international protagonists of the Modern Movement and the resulting outcomes were that none of the works could compete with the nominated property. The nominated property has been then compared with other works designed or realised by Oscar Niemeyer either in Brazil or in Algeria and finally with World Heritage properties linked to the exhibition theme. The comparison concludes by stating that the Rachid Karami International Fair-Tripoli is a unique example of a large-scale innovative modernist exhibition complex typology that relies on a simple layout and powerful large-scale structure to organise the space and the functions to achieve simplicity and harmony.

ICOMOS observes that the comparative analysis would have benefitted from being deepened and expanded in relation to the work undertaken by architects of the Modern Movement in emerging independent states in the Mashreq region; to Niemeyer's body of work globally, by examining the University of Brasília, the Ibirapuera Park in São Paulo; and by taking into account also the quasi-contemporary examples of Damascus international Fair (Syria, 1954), and Baghdad International Fair (Iraq, 1964).

The comparative analysis could have expanded as well on the architectural and urban planning outcomes that resulted from the socio-cultural ferments and modernisation aspirations that pervaded the Arab region and that led to experimentation in architecture with the introduction and adaptation of the principles and language and the involvement of renowned architects of the Modern Movement.

Despite the above-mentioned weaknesses, ICOMOS considers that the comparative analysis has proved the relevance of the nominated property for the World Heritage List.

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

Criteria under which inscription is proposed

The property is nominated on the basis of cultural criteria (i), (ii) and (iv).

Criterion (i): *represent a masterpiece of human creative genius;*

This criterion is justified by the State Party on the grounds that the International Fair complex represents a major creation expressing the principles and ideals of the Modern Movement as interpreted by Niemeyer's "Brazilian modernism" but successfully integrated into the Arab Near East context. The scale and monumentality of the International Fair complex combined with a project of a modern urban core for Tripoli conveys the ambitions for a new development strategy for the country, the search

for modernity, and a new identity of the newly independent peoples in the Arab States.

ICOMOS observes that the initial design of the International Fair, which Niemeyer conceived as the matrix for the expansion of Tripoli toward the sea, was not accepted by the Lebanese authorities and was not implemented.

Hence the urban breath of the original design of the whole International Fair complex, which was an original conception that intended to give a prominent role to the International Fair in orienting the future development of modern Tripoli, could not be achieved.

For the nominated property, Niemeyer used an architectural repertoire which he developed elsewhere with more successful formal outcomes. In this case, technical drawings were developed by Lebanese architects and engineers; even if they were checked by Niemeyer and his office, the architect could not directly supervise the work but only visited the site in 1966-1967.

Therefore, ICOMOS considers that the Rachid Karami International Fair-Tripoli, from its conception to its realisation, also in comparison with other works by Niemeyer, does not meet criterion (i).

Criterion (ii): *exhibit an important interchange of human values, over a span of time or within a cultural area of the world, on developments in architecture or technology, monumental arts, town-planning or landscape design;*

This criterion is justified by the State Party on the grounds that the nominated property expresses the modernisation movement that developed in the Arab Near East after the 1950s. The effective integration of Niemeyer's Brazilian modernist principles into the Lebanese context also reflects an important interchange in the developments of architecture. The close collaboration between Niemeyer and the Lebanese engineers who prepared the technical and executive documentation and supervised the execution demonstrates a remarkable exchange of technics across continents. A whole generation of Lebanese architects were inspired by Niemeyer's oeuvre, which is reflected in their works across Lebanon and the region; engineers and contractors acquired a precious experience with the design and execution of challenging reinforced concrete structures.

ICOMOS requested additional information to the State Party with regard to the exchanges between Niemeyer and Lebanese engineers and architects. This information has shed some further light on this collaboration between Niemeyer and the local team of architects and engineers. ICOMOS considers that it is undeniable that Niemeyer's oeuvre influenced Lebanese professionals and their work, and, despite the weaknesses of the comparative analysis, criterion (ii) has been demonstrated.

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 the Rachid Karami International Fair-Tripoli represents an outstanding innovative concept of large-scale modernist exhibition complex that unifies the usually fragmented layout of the fairground. Based on one single main structure hosting all pavilions, the nominated property achieves simplicity and discipline in its composition. This new architectural concept powerfully reflects the aspiration of the newly independent Lebanese people to participate in the global modernisation process through an architectural language more suitable to the Arab Near East context.

ICOMOS considers that this criterion is justified as the concept proposed for the layout of the fairground was innovative in bringing together under one large covered space all countries' exhibition pavilions and complementing it with sculptural elements hosting cultural, educational, and recreational functions. The design of the International Fair tangibly reflects the people's aspirations of emerging new independent states in the Arab Near East to find their way into modernity through societal and economic development and principles of equality, solidarity, and spiritual uplifting.

ICOMOS considers that the nominated property meets criteria (ii) and (iv), but that criterion (i) has not been demonstrated.

Integrity and authenticity

Integrity

The integrity of the Rachid Karami International Fair-Tripoli relies on the overall layout of the fairground, the elliptical area set aside for its construction, the recognisability of Niemeyer's design of the spatial organisation of major and smaller structures of the International Fair, the rhythm and monumental dynamicity offered to the composition by the height differences of passages and large ramps, of the architectural forms generated by the skilful use of bare reinforced concrete and of its texture.

According to the nomination dossier, the nominated property includes within its boundaries the entirety of the fairground area with all Niemeyer's designed buildings and structures and the attributes supporting the proposed justification for inscription.

The State Party clearly explains that most of the structures have suffered damages and looting during the 1975-1990 war, neglect, and lack of maintenance, leading to a critical state of their conservation. Some interventions that occurred after the war made possible the reuse of some parts of the International Fair but have also negatively impacted the integrity of the design, such as

the delimitation of spaces with concrete walls under the canopy. The refurbishment of the Collective Housing Prototype, which has drastically altered the fabric to the extent that the design is no longer legible, has been particularly severe.

ICOMOS notes that the original architectural and urban design by Niemeyer has suffered alterations since its inception. The urban plan that was envisaged for the residential area toward the coast was abandoned, the initial orientation toward the sea of the Grand Canopy was modified, the final elliptical shape of the fairground differs from the initial design, the highway that was supposed to be integrated into the fairground was built tangent to it. Further changes and degradations have occurred, as clearly explained in the nomination dossier.

However, despite the many losses, alterations, and degradations, ICOMOS considers that the nominated property and its main attributes retain their fundamental integrity, although extremely vulnerable, and that a conservation programme can assist to recover it further.

Authenticity

According to the nomination dossier, attributes supporting the authenticity of the property under the proposed justification for inscription include its location, which made the International Fair the focal point of the new urban development of Tripoli; the form and design of the layout and of the individual structures, which have been executed according to Niemeyer's design, with little loss of their authenticity despite the decay and some changes that can be removed, with the exception of the substantial transformation of the Collective Housing Prototype. Reinforced concrete has been harnessed skilfully to achieve architectural form through sophisticated structures and shells and this is still clearly perceivable despite the suffered degradations. In terms of its use, the nomination dossier notes that the International Fair was never used for its intended purpose and today, restoring the complex to host only that function does not appear feasible. Therefore, new compatible uses will have to be identified, ensuring that the proposed Outstanding Universal Value of the nominated property is sustained, and the spirit of its original design respected.

ICOMOS considers that, despite the changes and degradations suffered, the authenticity of the nominated property has been demonstrated. However, due to the abandonment of the plan initially proposed for urban development that accompanied the design of the fairground, the Rachid Karami International Fair-Tripoli cannot be considered an example of an urban project, as the subsequent development around the International Fair was not based on an overall design linked to the International Fair. Due to the current advanced decay of the structures forming the Rachid Karami International Fair-Tripoli, its authenticity is extremely vulnerable.

Boundaries

The nomination dossier states that the entirety of the 72ha-elliptical area of the fairground comprises the nominated property. However, it also explains that the Law N°274-10/03/2022 adopted in March 2022 by the Lebanese Parliament establishes a “core zone” – a 500x800-metre rectangle encompassing all buildings, structures, and arrangements designed by Niemeyer – and the extant part of the ellipse acts as a “buffer zone”.

ICOMOS notes that these definitions may be confusing as the wording is similar to those used in the World Heritage context. However, ICOMOS considers that, for the purpose of providing an additional layer of protection to the Rachid Karami International Fair-Tripoli, no buffer zone according to the *Operational Guidelines for the Implementation of the World Heritage Convention* has been proposed. ICOMOS observes that consideration should be given to defining a buffer zone encircling the nominated oval-shaped area.

Evaluation of the proposed justification for inscription

In summary, ICOMOS considers that the Rachid Karami International Fair-Tripoli can be considered an outstanding example of a specialised architectural complex reflecting the embrace of modernity by emerging independent nations in the Arab world in the important, although short-lived “Renaissance” period. The choice of Niemeyer for this project reflects Lebanon’s intention to take part in the larger modernisation process occurring globally through economic and social reforms inspired by principles of equity and attentive to educational and social needs. The urban dimension of Niemeyer’s initial project proposal was not retained by the Lebanese authorities and the Rachid Karami International Fair-Tripoli remained isolated from the neighbourhood that grew around it. Despite weaknesses in the comparative analysis, ICOMOS considers that the nominated property justifies consideration for the World Heritage List under criteria (ii) and (iv). The Rachid Karami International Fair-Tripoli can be seen as a prominent example of cultural exchange both in terms of the collaboration, despite the distance, between Niemeyer and the Lebanese professionals who implemented his architectural design, but more importantly for Niemeyer’s long-lasting influence to which Lebanese professionals were exposed to, thanks to this large-scale project. The innovative concept of the International Fair, bringing together under one single canopy the exhibition pavilions of all states and complementing this unitary design with cultural and recreational functions housed in buildings connected by paths, squares and ponds is an outstanding example of a fair complex reflecting the ambitions of independent Lebanon and a renaissance period that invested the whole Arab Region and emerging independent nations. The integrity and authenticity of the attributes supporting the proposed justification for inscription are extremely vulnerable due to the advanced decay and structural failure of several structures, as well as abandonment, the inconsistent planning provisions, and the lack of an overall vision for the future reuse and rehabilitation of the nominated property. The boundaries of the nominated

property, covering the whole oval-shaped fairground, can be considered adequate; on the other hand, a reflection on the need for a buffer zone for the nominated property is needed.

4 Conservation measures and monitoring

Documentation

The documentation concerning the nominated property consists mainly of the archival material that has been produced during the project and its implementation. No systematic geometric and technical survey and documentation of the as-built structures has been prepared so far, nor is a detailed condition assessment available.

It would be of utmost importance that a programme for carrying out such surveys and assessments of the buildings be elaborated, funded, and implemented as a basis for conservation and further research.

Archives conserving documents of the nominated property are found in different places: at the Arab Centre for Architecture, at the Fair Administration Archive, at Rice University in Houston (Texas, USA), where an archival fund on Niemeyer in Tripoli is preserved, in the Oscar Niemeyer Foundation, Rio de Janeiro (Brazil), in the private archives of the contractors and engineers who worked on the project and of collectors.

It would be an important contribution to the knowledge and the conservation of the International Fair complex if a digitation project could be funded and digital documentation preserved at the various publicly accessible archives, to promote research and ensure that original project documentation is not lost due to disasters or accidents.

Conservation measures

Since the 1990s, measures to recover the nominated property have been lacking or uneven and occasional, addressing unsystematically individual structures or portions of them. Some interventions (e.g., on the Collective Housing Prototype) have also had serious negative impacts on the attributes of the proposed Outstanding Universal Value. Recently, the adaptive reuse of the Guest House has provided new use to this structure whilst safeguarding the design concept. To progressively bring back to function the complex, Lebanese authorities decided to create a “Knowledge and Innovation Centre (KIC)” in an area (7,5ha) west of the Grand Canopy incorporating Niemeyer’s administration and service buildings. In 2019 an international competition was launched to choose the best project solution. The competition brief underlined the need for the urban and architectural concept proposal to ensure the conservation of the International Fair complex building as well as the design concept in order not to compromise the possibility for the complex to be successfully nominated for inscription on the World Heritage List. An international jury selected a project that proposed underground architectural solutions and considered the layout of the International Fair complex.

The approval of the Law N°274-10/03/2022 on the Reorganization of Rachid Karami International Fair in March 2022 set the framework for the protection and the conservation of the nominated property; a Conservation Management Plan (CMP) is under preparation and scheduled for completion by the end of 2022. The structural analysis of the Open-Air Theatre and Grand Arch has been conducted in 2022.

The observations of the technical evaluation mission revealed that no active conservation measure is being implemented. The only action related to conservation is the preparation of the CMP. ICOMOS considers that finalising the CMP is very important to ensure that conservation priorities are set out before any intervention to the International Fair complex. However, an emergency stabilisation programme should be developed and implemented with the utmost urgency, to save the most critically endangered structures.

ICOMOS considers that CMP should achieve a detailed condition assessment of all buildings, structures, and arrangements of the nominated property and should set out policy and guidance to orient in a consistent manner the conservation, rehabilitation, and adaptive reuse of the buildings respecting the key attributes of the nominated property and the way in which each attribute contribute to conveying the proposed Outstanding Universal Value.

Monitoring

Monitoring is not addressed in the nomination dossier.

ICOMOS considers that a monitoring programme must be developed following the implementation of a joint ICOMOS/WHC reactive monitoring mission and the development of a programme of corrective measures to achieve a Desired state of conservation for the nominated property if the World Heritage Committee decides to inscribe the Rachid Karami International Fair-Tripoli on the World Heritage List and simultaneously on the List of World Heritage in Danger as proposed by the State Party.

ICOMOS considers that a comprehensive geometric, architectural and structural survey of all Niemeyer's structures are urgent as a robust updated basis for any conservation programme and emergency stabilisation. Urgent stabilisation measures are also needed to avoid further collapse and loss of authentic fabric at several structures. The completion of the CMP should be pursued with maximum urgency; this plan should include a detailed condition assessment of all buildings and should set out guidelines to orient in a consistent manner the conservation, rehabilitation and adaptive reuse of the various buildings and structures that respect the attributes conveying the proposed justification for inscription. Careful documentation of the green areas and of the paths is also recommended. ICOMOS also considers that, before an overall vision for the future of the Rachid Karami International Fair-Tripoli based on its proposed Outstanding Universal Value is set out, any project addressing only parts of the nominated property should be avoided. In this regard, the halt of the KIC project due

to the country's economic crisis offer the opportunity to appraise the potential impacts of this proposal on the attributes and values of the nominated property.

ICOMOS considers that it would be advisable that a monitoring system is developed based on the attributes of the proposed Outstanding Universal Value, the Desired state of conservation and corrective measures for the property, and is conceived for easy integration of its outcomes into the Periodic Reporting questionnaire.

5 Protection and management

Legal protection

The Rachid Karami International Fair-Tripoli is a public establishment under the authority of the Ministry of Economy; it was created by the Decree-law 4027 issued on 4 May 1960; the land on which it was built was completely expropriated in 1961 and became a public property. The Law N° 274-10/03/2022 adopted in March 2022 on the Reorganization of Rachid Karami International Fair sets up protection mechanisms for the nominated property. All buildings and elements designed by Oscar Niemeyer are enclosed in a rectangular "core zone". In this area, new constructions are forbidden and any rehabilitation, conservation, or work in the interior of the building is subject to the approval of the Ministry of Culture. In the buffer zone new constructions are not forbidden but any intervention must be approved by the Ministry of Culture.

Two different and uncoordinated master plans – one for Tripoli and one for El-Mina – apply to the fairground, which is split into two parts. Furthermore, according to the nomination dossier these are mere land-use plans. Regulations and land use for the area of the International Fair and its surroundings differ from one plan to another. The El-Mina plan forbids fragmentation and new constructions and demands a recovery inspired by the quality of the spaces and buildings of the International Fair. On the other hand, the Tripoli plan allows for new construction on the fairground, if a planovolumetric plan is prepared and approved by the High Council of Urban Planning. The new Law N°274-10/03/2022 sets out the juridical basis for the revision of these two plans to make them coherent with the provisions of the law.

Whilst ICOMOS notes that the current legislation covering the nominated property envisages protection mechanisms targeting the attributes of the nominated property, ICOMOS considers that it would be extremely important that the fairground and the buildings comprised within be declared as cultural heritage according to the legislation on this sector applicable in the country.

ICOMOS further notes that the revision of the master plans of El-Mina and Tripoli is equally important to ensure that the setting of the nominated property is planned in a way that does not negatively affect the nominated property. In this regard, incorporating Heritage Impact Assessment mechanisms into the planning process would be essential

to guarantee that planning provisions are consistent with the protection of the proposed Outstanding Universal Value of the property. Equally, an assessment of the possible impacts of the Knowledge and Innovation Centre (KIC) project on the proposed Outstanding Universal Value would also be helpful, given that, for the time being it cannot be implemented due to the current crisis. In this way, any potential negative impact could be addressed before implementation.

Management system

The Rachid Karami International Fair-Tripoli is managed by a Board of Directors that is appointed by the Lebanese government.

The Law N°274-10/03/2022 regulates all activities at the International Fair and lays down the mission, the legal status of the International Fair, the mandate of the Board of Directors and its Chairman. Further regulations are envisaged to fully implement the provisions of the law.

A Conservation Management Plan (CMP) is under elaboration, launched by the UNESCO Regional Office in Beirut and funded by the Getty Foundation. The CMP intends to set out a framework for a general conservation and development policy of the nominated property before undertaking any intervention.

ICOMOS notes that the legal framework to ensure the management of the nominated property according to the requirements of the World Heritage Convention and the Operational Guidelines for the *Implementation of the World Heritage Convention* is very recent; at the time the mission was carried out, there was no entity in charge of the conservation and the management of the International Fair. Its administration mainly maintains the property and ensures that safe access is provided for occasional visitors and facilitates occasional events that take place in some of the buildings.

ICOMOS observes that the lack of financial resources, the current severe financial and economic crisis in the country, the protracted marginality of the International Fair complex, and its critical conservation conditions are all circumstances that make the nominated property highly vulnerable. The State Party has initiated a path toward the comprehensive recovery of the International Fair however the scope of the undertaking is vast, and it needs urgent support to secure the conservation of the buildings of the International Fair.

ICOMOS also considers that a management committee should be established that extends beyond the representatives of the administration and its decision-making body of the International Fair, and include the Directorate General of Antiquities, representatives of the El-Mina and Tripoli municipalities, representatives of the civil society dedicated to the protection of cultural heritage as well as academics and experts in heritage conservation. Proactive strategies to attract funding would also be needed.

ICOMOS further considers that the CMP should address visitor management as well as strategies to include the inhabitants of the cities in the endeavour to safeguard the nominated property in order to ensure that the recovery process is participatory and can also lead to an increased awareness of the importance of the Rachid Karami International Fair-Tripoli.

Effectiveness of the protection and management of the nominated property

In summary, ICOMOS observes that the nominated property is covered only by the provisions of the Law N°274-10/03/2022 on the Reorganization of Rachid Karami International Fair, but it is not designated as cultural heritage under the national law of the sector. ICOMOS considers that such designation would significantly strengthen the protection status of the nominated property. ICOMOS further considers that there is a need for harmonising the planning provisions of Tripoli and El-Mina and elaborating detailed land-use plans and guidelines to ensure that the nominated property and its immediate setting are planned coherently with the aim of protecting its proposed Outstanding Universal Value. The Rachid Karami International Fair-Tripoli would benefit from the elaboration of one vision for the entire area before partial initiatives, such as the KIC, are brought forward. Since the project is on hold, an assessment of whether it may have potential negative impacts on the nominated property would allow identifying options and mitigation measures to prevent that attributes supporting the proposed Outstanding Universal Value are threatened. Regarding management, ICOMOS notes that the current administration of the nominated property provides basic maintenance but there is not yet an entity responsible for the conservation of the structures of the International Fair. A Board of Directors has been established by the Law N°274-10/03/2022; however, a management committee should be established, and it should also include representatives from heritage protection institutions, professional organisations, academic institutions and civil society. The CMP that is being developed should, in ICOMOS's view, also address visitor management as well as strategies to raise awareness about the importance of the Rachid Karami International Fair-Tripoli among citizens.

6 Threats affecting the nominated property

The State Party has set out the following threats as a reason for requesting an emergency inscription:

- Most of Niemeyer's buildings and structures are in a state of critical conservation conditions and need emergency stabilisation measures.
- Lebanon is facing an unprecedented financial and economic crisis that prevents the Lebanese government to make the necessary public investments to implement a conservation programme of the Rachid Karami International Fair-Tripoli.

- The protracted marginalisation of the International Fair combined with the above-mentioned crisis make the nominated property particularly vulnerable to potential inappropriate developments, despite the efforts deployed by civil society over the years to preserve the nominated property and the recent approval of the Law on the Reorganization of Rachid Karami International Fair.
- The support of the international community is urgently needed to define criteria for the sustainable and compatible revitalisation of the International Fair and limits to acceptable change; international awareness of the outstanding importance of the Rachid Karami International Fair-Tripoli could also help to attract investments.

Based on the analysis of the nomination dossier, the outcomes of the technical evaluation mission, and the additional information provided by the State Party on this matter, ICOMOS considers that the nominated property faces serious and specific dangers as set out in article 11, paragraph 4 of the World Heritage Convention, as well as ascertained and potential dangers as set out in paragraph 179 of the *Operational Guidelines for the Implementation of World Heritage Convention*.

7 Conclusion

In response to the requirements of emergency nomination as set out in the *Operational Guidelines for the Implementation of the World Heritage Convention*, paragraphs 161 and 162, ICOMOS has considered whether:

- The property is in danger, as a result of having suffered damage or facing serious and specific dangers from natural events or human activities, which would constitute an emergency situation;
- An immediate decision by the Committee is necessary to ensure its safeguarding;
- The property may unquestionably justify Outstanding Universal Value.

ICOMOS considers that all the above-mentioned conditions apply to the Rachid Karami International Fair-Tripoli.

ICOMOS considers that the nominated property meets criteria (ii) and (iv) but not criterion (i). The nominated property suffers from advanced structural deterioration affecting most of the buildings, with consequent corrosion of steel reinforcements, concrete deterioration (carbonation, spalling, and blisters). Reinforced concrete has been key for the conception and realisation of the main featuring element of the International Fair, the Grand Canopy, as well as the sculptural structures and the overall spatial arrangement of the fairground. Hence, integrity and authenticity of the nominated property are extremely vulnerable; key attributes conveying the proposed Outstanding Universal Value are threatened

and in urgent need for emergency stabilisation measures. Furthermore, the lack of a coherent urban policy to guide the development of the International Fair and its surroundings – as Tripoli and El-Mina master plans have different land use and regulations for this area, further threaten the nominated property.

ICOMOS also notes that the whole budget for the rehabilitation of the International Fair significantly exceeds the current capacity for public expenditure in the actual financial situation of the country.

ICOMOS recommends that the Rachid Karami International Fair-Tripoli, Lebanon, should be inscribed on the World Heritage List and, at the same time, on the List of World Heritage in Danger. This recommendation should be seen as a way to ensure that the attributes are not impacted by structural deterioration, lack of maintenance, lack of vision for its future based on its proposed Outstanding Universal Value, lack of coherent policy for its reuse and rehabilitation in accordance with its cultural significance, and that appropriate planning regulations are developed, that resources are mobilised to address the conservation challenges, and that the protection, conservation, management, and monitoring regimes for the property are completed and implemented.

ICOMOS considers that inscription on the World Heritage List in Danger should be the opportunity to gain the attention and support of the international community for the protection and conservation of the property.

ICOMOS considers that the dangers facing the property constitute an emergency situation for which a decision by the Committee is necessary for its safeguarding, and that the Outstanding Universal Value of the property has been demonstrated under criteria (ii) and (iv).

8 Recommendations

Recommendations with respect to inscription

ICOMOS recommends that the Rachid Karami International Fair-Tripoli, Lebanon, be inscribed on an emergency basis on the World Heritage List on the basis of **criteria (ii) and (iv)** and at the same time on the List of World Heritage in Danger.

ICOMOS recommends that a joint ICOMOS/WHC reactive monitoring mission be invited to the property to establish a Desired state of conservation and a programme of corrective measures to remove the property from the List of World Heritage in Danger.

Recommended Statement of Outstanding Universal Value

Brief synthesis

The Rachid Karami International Fair-Tripoli has been erected in Tripoli, the second largest city in Lebanon and the capital of the Northern Governorate, and was

designed by Oscar Niemeyer between 1962-1967 and built until 1975. The main building of the International Fair consists of a huge oblong covered exhibition space, the Grand Canopy, under which the exhibition pavilions of several countries could be freely installed. The entrance to the International Fair complex begins at the southern end of the Grand Canopy: a vast ramp leads to a raised portico from where the visitors can discover the entire composition. A series of educational, recreational and cultural facilities were immersed within a "Brazilian Tropical Garden" and connected by water pools and pedestrian passages. In the northern part, a ceremonial ramp leads to the outdoor amphitheatre, surmounted by a monumental arch forming a symbolic gateway to modernity and a landmark of the city of Tripoli.

The use of traditional elements of local architecture was intended to express the aspirations of the newly independent Arab peoples to take part in the universal process of modernisation. For its scale, its daring structural solutions, its architectural expression, its vast modernist public spaces and gardens, its links to post-independence identity buildings, and despite the deterioration of most of its structures and the endangered integrity of several of its components due to the ageing of the concrete, the Rachid Karami International Fair-Tripoli is one of the most representative works of modern architecture of the 20th century in the Arab States.

Criterion (ii): The Rachid Karami International Fair-Tripoli expresses in an exceptional way the successful integration of Brazilian modernist concepts into the context of the Arab Near East in Tripoli and is a vivid example of cultural exchange in the field of architecture. The collaboration between Oscar Niemeyer, the architect of the complex, and the Lebanese engineers and contractors has given them valuable experience in sophisticated large-scale reinforced concrete structures and concrete shells, while a new generation of Lebanese architects was inspired by Niemeyer's "Brazilian modernism", which is reflected in several of their works, whether in Lebanon or in the Arab Near East.

Criterion (iv): Oscar Niemeyer's monumental International Fair project in Tripoli is an outstanding example of world fairs that emerged in the newly independent Arab countries to express national pride and take part in the universal process of modernisation. It constitutes an outstanding architectural example of a large-scale modernist exhibition complex, which defines an architectural typology characterised by simplicity and discipline where a single main large structure hosts the pavilions; a set of smaller structures serve social-reformative and educational purposes.

Integrity

The Rachid Karami International Fair-Tripoli covers an elliptical area corresponding to the limits of the fairground as it was built and contains all buildings designed by Niemeyer. Almost all buildings and structures were preserved according to Niemeyer's original design but lie

in a state of abandonment, while outdoor and landscaped areas are maintained. Despite the loss of interior finishes, fixtures, glazing, doors and equipment due to the war, the attributes of Outstanding Universal Value have retained sufficient integrity. Some interventions on the Grand Canopy dictated by modern uses are reversible; the transformation of Niemeyer's Collective Housing Prototype has seriously affected its architectural quality and erased the traces of the original design, but attempts have been made to restore the structure to its original conditions. However, the integrity of the property is extremely vulnerable, with the main threat coming from the precarious state of conservation of most buildings, which face serious stability problems due to the severe steel corrosion and the ageing of concrete.

Authenticity

The layout and almost all buildings of the Rachid Karami International Fair-Tripoli have been preserved according to Niemeyer's design. In most of the buildings of the complex, the structure defines their form and volume and is proudly exhibited to the audience. The main original structures of the International Fair complex, most of which are made of authentic materials, credibly reflect their period of construction and the quality of their execution. Despite the loss of interior finishes, fixtures and equipment, the transformation of the collective housing prototype into a hotel, and the interventions to the southern part of the Grand Canopy, the surviving attributes credibly convey the Outstanding Universal Value through the overall layout, the design of the structures, their sculptural conception, and the construction materials. The reflective pools and the hard landscape elements around the buildings are preserved according to Niemeyer's design, the tropical gardens are still present and retain their "Brazilian spirit". The International Fair complex in Tripoli still bears witness to an era of modernisation and social liberalisation in Lebanon and the Arab Near East.

Protection and management requirements

The Law N°274-10/03/2022 on the Reorganization of Rachid Karami International Fair is the main legal instrument that covers the property and includes basic protection mechanisms. The law sets out differentiated protection mechanisms for the rectangular area (800x500 metres) encompassing all Niemeyer designed structures and the extant part of the oval. Most of the buildings on the fairground need immediate stabilisation measures, maintenance, and structural repairs to preserve their integrity; the Conservation Management Plan that is being developed for the entire property should be finalised urgently to guarantee the conservation of its cultural and historical values in any future development processes.

The long-term conservation of the Outstanding Universal Value of the property will benefit from the recognition of its cultural value under the national legislation for heritage protection, beyond the 2022 special law. An inclusive management structure involving heritage protection authorities, professionals and academic organisations

and civil society representatives can guarantee a shared vision for the future of the property and its long-term protection. The systematic application of a Heritage Impact Assessment approach and related mechanisms provides the framework for ensuring compatible conservation, rehabilitation and reuse of the Rachid Karami International Fair-Tripoli.

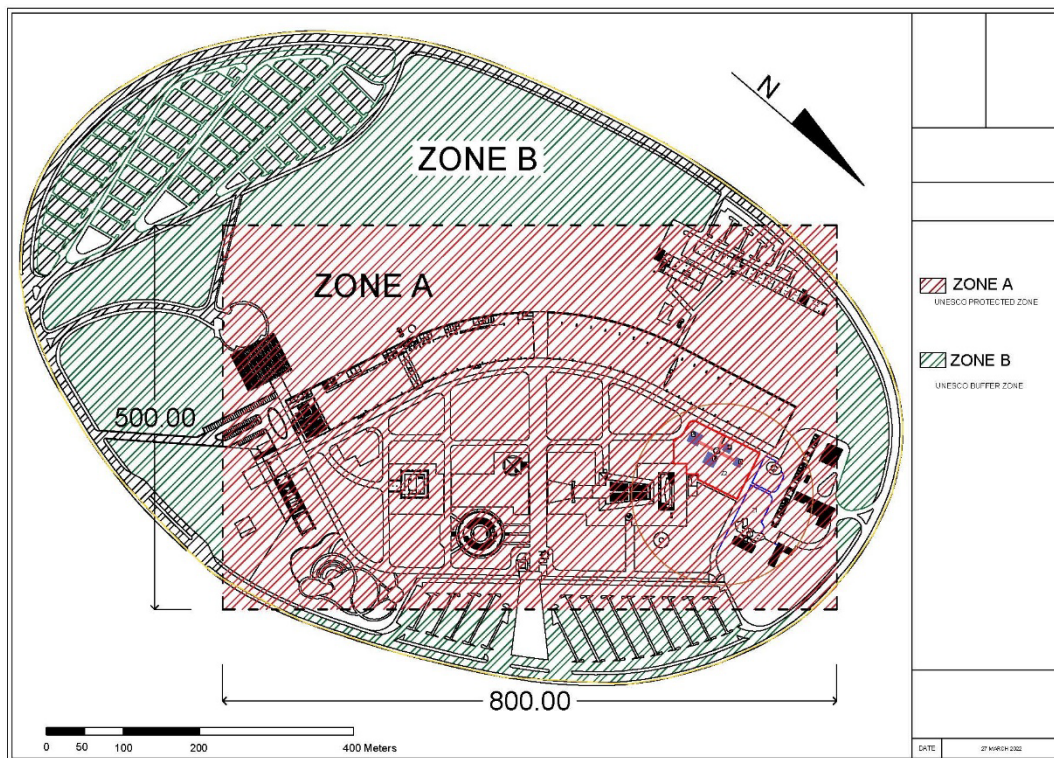
Additional recommendations

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

- a) Providing the exact coordinates of the boundaries of the property,
- b) Considering, with the assistance of the joint ICOMOS/WHC reactive monitoring mission, the establishment of a buffer zone as per paragraphs 103 to 105 of the *Operational Guidelines for the Implementation of the World Heritage Convention* to ensure an added layer of protection to the property,
- c) Developing detailed land-use and zoning guidelines for the planning of the immediate setting of the Rachid Karimi International Fair-Tripoli and of the portion of the oval within the property outside the nationally relevant “core zone”,
- d) Setting up a management structure for the property that also includes among its members representatives of the cultural heritage protection institutions, professionals and academic organisations and the civil society,
- e) Carrying out a geometric and architectural survey and a detailed condition assessment of Niemeyer’s structures as a knowledge basis for emergency stabilisation measures, conservation and structural rehabilitation interventions,
- f) Considering a digital project of the documentation preserved at the various publicly accessible archives, to promote research and ensure that the original project documentation is not lost due to disasters or accidents,
- g) Informing the World Heritage Centre of the intention to undertake or authorise any major projects which may affect the Outstanding Universal Value of the property, in line with paragraph 172 of *Operational Guidelines for the Implementation of the World Heritage Convention*,
- h) Developing and implementing a Heritage Impact Assessment for any project proposals that may have an impact on the Outstanding Universal Value of the property (including the “Knowledge and Innovation Centre” (KIC) project) and for the

revision of the master plans of El-Mina and Tripoli,

- i) Submitting to the World Heritage Centre by 1 February 2024, a report on the implementation of the above-mentioned recommendations for examination by the World Heritage Committee at its 46th session;



Map showing the boundaries of the nominated property