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World Heritage Convention

45COM

AMENDMENT/PROPOSAL

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| Agenda Item | 8B |
| Draft Decision | 45 COM 8B.25 |
| Submitted by the Delegation of.... | Mexico |
| Co-author(s) (if any) | <u>Argentina, India, Nigeria, Zambia</u> |
| Date of submission | 08.09.2023 |

TEXT

The World Heritage Committee,

1. *Having examined Documents WHC/23/45.COM/8B and WHC/23/45.COM/INF.8B1,*
2. *Refers Inscribes the nomination of the **National Archaeological Park Tak'alik Ab'aj, Guatemala**, back to the State Party in order to allow it to: on the World Heritage List on the basis of criteria (ii) and (iii);*
 - a) ~~Analyse the limitations of the legal protection of the nominated property and the surrounding archaeological site caused by the lack of regulations that allow the application of the relevant laws, and put in place these regulations,~~*
 - b) ~~Establish a buffer zone that effectively reduces the threat of land-use in the areas surrounding the nominated property that could affect the property's proposed Outstanding Universal Value in a negative manner and meets the requirements outlined in paragraphs 103-107 of the Operational Guidelines,~~*
 - c) ~~Define the exact location and extension of the "protection islands", as well as the permitted land-uses and their legal status, and consider their inclusion within the boundaries of the buffer zone,~~*
 - d) ~~Update the management plan to include a practical risk management plan, a visitormanagement plan and a detailed conservation plan aligned with the research framework, all aimed at sustaining the proposed Outstanding Universal Value of the nominated property, and make more explicit the connection between the management goals and the proposed Outstanding Universal Value,~~*

To be submitted to the Rapporteur at: wh-rapporteur@unesco.org

e) ~~Ensure Heritage Impact Assessments are included in the management processes and are undertaken as a pre-requisite for any development projects and activities that are planned for implementation within or around the nominated property, as is required under paragraph 118bis of the Operational Guidelines,~~

f) ~~Further include local and Indigenous communities in decision-making processes for the nominated property;~~

3. Adopts the following Declaration of Outstanding Universal Value:

Brief synthesis

Tak'alik Ab'aj is an archaeological site located in the piedmont of the Pacific Coast of Guatemala. Its 1,700-year history spans the years from 800 B.C.E. to 900 C.E. The first half of that period saw the transition from the Olmec civilization to the emergence of the Early Mayan culture.

Tak'alik Ab'aj served as an important protagonist and catalyst in this transition, in part due to the vital role it played in the long-distance trade route connecting the Isthmus of Tehuantepec, in present-day Mexico, with present-day El Salvador. Ideas and customs were widely shared along this route, as indicated by the diversity of sculptural styles found at Tak'alik Ab'aj as at no other site in Mesoamerica, as well as analogous artefacts from sites hundreds of kilometers away.

In the site, sacred spaces and buildings were designed according to cosmological principles, and innovative water management systems, ceramics, lapidary art, and lithic tools are found.

Today, indigenous groups of the 22 different Mayan language affiliations still consider the site a sacred place and visit it to perform rituals.

Criterion (ii)

Tak'alik Ab'aj played a key role in the ancient long-distance trade route. Through the exchange of ideas, materials, and goods, received and disseminated many of the most advanced ideas of urbanism, monumental architecture, sculptural program, and the water management, which attest a high level of urbanism and planning achieved in the Preclassic.

The monumental architecture was based on ancestral cosmological precepts and the space was used as a ritual setting for the public performance of the first kings of the incipient city-kingdoms of the Preclassic. In addition, the quantity and diversity of stone sculptures from the Preclassic period reflect the richness and diversity of cultural expressions resulting from contact with distant people and cultures, and from the transition from Olmec to Mayan cultural expressions. Combined with the evidence of advances in early writing, mathematics and calendrical systems, Tak'alik Ab'aj is considered to be the best exponent of this extraordinary cultural region.

Criterion (iii)

Tak'alik Ab'aj is an outstanding example of the early development and use of many important cultural traditions, some of them considered as representative of Mesoamerica, including the symbolic representation of the astronomical observations, urban design, calendrical system, and hieroglyphic writing. Additionally, the re-use and re-combination of sculptures from different styles and earlier eras, is an outstanding example of the creation of architectural settings for public display of the astronomic and calendric development through time and ancestral history, which is particularly noticeable at Tak'alik Ab'aj and seems to be a central element in its long 1,700-year history.

Integrity

The integrity of the property is based on the archaeological evidence being whole and intact, attesting the transition from Olmec to Mayan cultural expressions, the urban layout based on cosmological precepts and astronomical orientations, and the structures and sacred spaces for ritual representations.

The archaeological site is intact and is not subject to great pressures. After its abandonment around 900 C.E., the property was reclaimed by dense vegetation. In more recent times, coffee, rubber and sugar cane plantations were created but do not reach archaeological levels in the soil. The excavations have uncovered largely intact contexts, and the documentation and inventory of the finds have created a very comprehensive archaeological record.

The boundaries of the nominated property have been drawn to encompass features located in the Central Group of the large archaeological site. The Central Group represents par excellence the proposed Outstanding Universal Value, however a possible extension of the site, could be analyzed in the future.

The distribution of sculptures in the site was not random. Most of the monuments were placed in the Central Group on Terraces 2 and 3. The clustered distribution of monuments in the Central Group draws attention to this sector as the ceremonial heart of Tak'alik Ab'aj and the probability that the display of stone monuments is related to this critical function.

Authenticity

The National Archaeological Park Tak'alik Ab'aj is authentic in terms of its ability to express its cultural values truthfully and credibly through its attributes. The archaeological site is authentic in its location and setting, forms and designs, materials and substances as is evidenced by archaeological investigations. The manifestations of living culture and the continuity of the ancestral ritual practices, is an expression of authenticity of its own, bestow and underscore the character of sacred to the place.

The archaeological remains that convey the Outstanding Universal Value (buildings, sculptures, and artifacts) show a high degree of authenticity because they had not been disturbed prior to excavation. A special ecological conservation program is carried out at the site; the conservation and stabilization of the remains is made respectfully, using materials directly from the area. The restored drainage channels are still in use and prevent the accumulation of rain water in the archaeological site. In terms of intangible cultural heritage, the place is subject of pilgrimage for indigenous people led by spiritual guides (Ajg'ijab').

Management and protection requirements

The boundaries have been drawn to encompass the elements located in the Central Group of the archaeological site that primarily represent the Outstanding Universal Value.

A Cooperation Agreement, containing specific measures to constitute and guarantee a buffer zone to increase the protection of the National Archaeological Park Tak'alik Ab'aj was signed and is currently effective. This functional instrument provides an additional layer of protection for the site and helps to avoid possible future uses of the land that may threaten or violate the protection and conservation of the Outstanding Universal Value, as described in paragraphs 103-107 of the Operational Guidelines for the Implementation of the World Heritage Convention.

Administrative procedures have been generated through the Ministry of Culture and Sports, in which the Management Plan and Risk Management Plan are approved, updated, and instructed to update with a priority focus on the patrimony that represents the Outstanding Universal Value, which is part of the general inventory of the nominated property, and is protected.

The management of visitation, study of carrying capacity and internal regulations of the National Archaeological Park Tak'alik Ab'aj, as well as the evaluation of the patrimonial impact, are described in the Management Plan.

Through programs and projects, participation spaces are generated for local and indigenous communities in decision-making processes. This site is one of the best examples of inclusion and community participation in the country, where the different cultural communities converge freely to carry out their traditional practices and promotes tolerance and appreciation of multiculturalism.

f) —

4. Recommends that the name of the nominated property be changed in order to facilitate the differentiation between the nominated property and the entire archaeological site; State Party gives consideration to the following:

a) Analyze the limitations of the legal protection of the nominated property and the surrounding archaeological site caused by the lack of regulations that allow the application of the relevant laws, and put in place these regulations.

b) Further exploring the creation of a non-governmental organization to strengthen the involvement of the population,

3.c) Establishing an independent accounting competency to minimize exposure to budget fragility and limited capacity for implementation.

4.5. Recommends that the State Party give consideration to the following: Requests the State Party to submit to the World Heritage Centre by 1 December 2024, a report on the implementation of the above-mentioned recommendations.

a) Developing quantifiable monitoring indicators that measure the state of conservation of all the attributes of the proposed Outstanding Universal Value, and that take into account the factors affecting the nominated property,

b) Addressing the potential fire hazard at the current storage and archive installations,

c) Establishing an independent accounting competency to minimise exposure to budget fragility and limited capacity for implementation,

d) Further exploring the creation of a non-governmental organisation to strengthen the involvement of the population,

e) Revising the roofing solutions for the protected elements on-site in order to evaluate their effectiveness and visual impact,

f) Improving security measures around open excavations.