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Peace Independence Democracy Unity Prosperity

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Ministry of Information Culture and Tourism
Department of Information Culture and Tourism of Champassak Province
Vat Phou Champasak World Heritage Site Unit

Report on the State of Conservation
of the World Heritage Property of Vat Phou and Associated Ancient
Settlements within the Champasak Cultural Landscape
(C 481)

Response of the LAO State Party to the World Heritage Committee's decision

[WHC/21/44.COM/7B](http://whc/21/44.COM/7B)

February 27th, 2023

This report has been realized by the Vat Phou Champasak World Heritage Site Unit supervised by the Department of Information Culture and Tourism, Champasak Province, for the National Commission for UNESCO to establish the response of the Lao State Party to the World Heritage Committee's decision **44 COM 7B.146**, Decisions adopted during the extended 44th session of the World Heritage Committee (Fuzhou (China) / Online meeting, 2021).

Having considered and examined the above decision, the Lao State Party, would like to clarify each item as follows:

Decision	Lao PDR Report on the State of Conservation
1. Notes that the updating of the Management Plan has been progressing and requests the State Party to provide by 1 February 2022 a final draft to the World Heritage Centre, with a more mission/challenge - oriented approach, to inform all activities concerning the property and for review by the Advisory Bodies;	<ul style="list-style-type: none">An updated World Heritage Management Plan for Vat Phou has been completed and submitted to the World Heritage Centre in February 2022, along with updated topographic maps, in line with the requests of the World Heritage Committee. The updating was undertaken with a financial contribution from the French Ministry of Culture in combination with

additional technical support from UNESCO and AFD.

- The plan referred to the structure of the original Management Plan, and added new elements to the Management Plan to reflect the growing range of issues facing Vat Phou Champasak. For instance, the issues related to sustainable development, cultural landscape management, natural environmental conservation and tourism management have been included in a more visible manner

- CHAPTER 1: DESCRIPTION AND SIGNIFICANCE
- CHAPTER 2: VISION FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT
- CHAPTER 3: ISSUES / PROBLEMS AT THE SITES
- CHAPTER 4: CHAMPASAK CULTURAL LANDSCAPE MANAGEMENT
- CHAPTER 5: WORLD HERITAGE ZONING AND LAND USE REGULATION
- CHAPTER 6: DATA, ARCHAEOLOGICAL AND MONUMENTAL CONSERVATION
- CHAPTER 7: NATURAL ENVIRONMENTAL CONSERVATION
- CHAPTER 8: TOURISM MANAGEMENT
- CHAPTER 9: COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT
- CHAPTER 10: IMPLEMENTATION ARRANGEMENTS
- CHAPTER 11: ACTION PLAN (2022-2026)

- In response to previous World Heritage Committee decisions which recommended to take a landscape approach to the management plan, the updated plan incorporates provisions from the Champasak Cultural Landscape Plan which was produced in 2016 and adopted by the Champasak Provincial Government.

- The plan was drafted by a team of Laotian and resident foreign experts (covering the disciplines of urban planning, architecture, environment, disaster risk management, tourism/community development, archaeology and mapping) along with the Vat Phou World Heritage Site Office, under coordination from UNESCO Bangkok. The drafting committee was

	<p>headed by the former Deputy Director General of the national Department of Heritage. The substantial involvement of the Lao side demonstrates the capacity of the World Heritage site management authorities in Vat Phou, which has been built up over 20 years as a World Heritage site.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The team has undertaken assessments of management challenges, natural hazards, competence gaps and other related issues. This assessment process has been informed by heritage guidance such as the Enhancing our Heritage toolkit and the UNESCO Competence Framework for Cultural Heritage Management, along with global frameworks such as the Sustainable Development Goals and the Sendai Framework on Disaster Risk Management. • Technical review comments from ICOMOS were transmitted by UNESCO World Heritage Centre in November 2022 to the State Party. The comments are under review by the heritage authorities. • The heritage authorities are now looking into the possibility to request additional funds, such as from AFD, to finalize the updated management plan in line with ICOMOS comments and in consultation with necessary experts and national authorities. • In response to the concerns from the ICOMOS review that the “building control regulation (2016) which is currently in use is not effective enough. Specific regulation is not in existence for detailed zoning”, the heritage authorities are planning a more detailed elaboration of the Building Code and urban control guidelines, to be funded by additional funds from AFD. This will result in urban planning and zoning maps (at 1:50, 1:25 scale), which will help to strengthen the control of new building activities in the site.
<p>2. Notes with concern the reported lack of funds for the implementation of the road network, including Roads 14A and 14B, and encourages the State Party to keep exploring options to mobilise</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Champasak Province has been trying to propose for the budget to undertake the road works. However, so far, the authorities have not been able to procure the funds, particularly as the by-pass road would be very costly.

<p>the necessary resources and complete the pending work;</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Currently, the suspended section of Route 14A use for heavy vehicles like trucks; trailers, and is still not regularly in use for normal vehicles.
<p>3. Reiterates its requests that the State Party submit to the World Heritage Centre an updated topographic map of the property as inscribed in 2001, for its subsequent examination by the Committee, by 1 February 2022;</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The updated topographic map of the World Heritage property was already prepared and transmitted by the State Party in February 2022 by email. However, it is noted that the map has not yet been uploaded in the WHC website yet. Therefore, the State Party would like to request an update from World Heritage Centre.
<p>4. Notes with regret that the water supply extension project undertaken by Champasak Water Supply State Enterprise was not halted, but instead completed in 2019 without the Heritage Impact Assessment (HIA) requested in its previous decision; also notes that there has been no report on the full application of the mitigation measures suggested in the HIA for the Champasak Water Supply project (WSP) submitted in 2018; and therefore, requests the State Party to:</p> <p>a) Provide the report on the state of implementation of the mitigation measures suggested in the HIA on the WSP,</p> <p>b) Consider the formal establishment of a legal framework requiring that appropriate Impact Assessments be carried out proactively for all development projects that could have potential impacts on the Outstanding Universal Value of World Heritage properties in the Lao PDR;</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • As reported in the previous SOC report in 2020, the following mitigation measures were implemented, in line with the mitigation measures from the HIA report submitted in 2018. • The HIA report recommended that for mitigation, “the main requirement is to supervise the excavation works of the trenches intended to accommodate the water pipes in the archaeological zones (and in particular the Ancient City)”. In this respect, the State Party is pleased to report that all excavation works were fully monitored by authorized archaeologist from the World Heritage site office. Per the HIA report, the recommended mitigation measure to undertake “necessary survey and documentation” was carried out. The World Heritage site office took photographs of the excavated area, produced drawings of the recovered archaeological objects, and took GPS location of each found object. Mainly pot sherds and pieces of ceramic bowl were found. No foundations, no decorative objects and no objects of high value were found. • Regarding the archaeological mitigation recommendation for “trenches were provisioned alongside the roads, encroached onto it, to limit the newly sacrificed area to its minimum”. The State Party has followed this recommendation, by ensuring that the water pipelines were installed immediately next to the road, to use the existing right of way, and to minimize any archaeological impact from further encroachment to the sides of the road. • The State Party has also taken action regarding the Committee’s recommendation to strengthen national legislation regarding HIAs. The national Heritage Law was revised and adopted by the National Assembly in 2021. This revised Heritage Law has integrated new

	<p>provisions for HIA (see attached law, annexed) in articles 65 and 66. This applies to Vat Phou Champasak, other World Heritage sites, and all heritage properties in Lao PDR of cultural, natural and historic significance.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Article 65 requires that all development projects with potential impact need to undergo HIA. Article 66 requires that the HIAs must be reviewed by the Ministry of Information, Culture and Tourism.
<p>5. Further requests the State Party to submit to the World Heritage Centre, by 1 December 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 46th session.</p>	
<p>6. Additional</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Regarding the Champa Garden, recently, most of the trees have been dead or are dying, especially along the ceremonial road where there is a risk of impact on the structure
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Updating on the progress of Phou Ngoy Dam, based on the minute of the meeting on the progress report held on 27th February 2023, hosted by the Ministry of Energy and Mines as detailed below: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The project developer "Charoen Energy and Water Asia Co, Ltd (CEWA)" signed MOU on 02/04/2008 and PDA on 07/12/2010 the contract is valid for 24 months. Renew contract for the fourth time on 26/04/2021 and expired on 26/04/2023 - In the meeting, the project developer requests to renew the contract for the fifth time after they finished their presentation. <p>As a result, the quorum agreed that the developer is able to extend the PDA contract for the fifth time by following the condition:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Requested the developer to attach the progress report as supporting documents and submit it to the Department of Energy Business, Ministry of Energy and Mine, for the consideration of project PDA renewal. 2. The developer shall continue to study the potential impact in the territory

and also crossing the border, including the heritage impact assessment HIA as per the request of the Champasak authorities as the project location is close to the world heritage area about 10km. Furthermore, the developer shall work directly and closely with the Department of Heritage, Ministry of Information Culture and Tourism.

Additional information: the previous progress that has been done by the developer

- Approval of Feasibility Study (FS): The Project Developer hired **Kunming Engineering Corporation Limited** to conduct FS then the Government hired CNR as a consultant to review this FS and approved the final FS as the official letter number 081/MEM.DEPP on 31/01/2023.
- Approval of the Environmental and Social Impact Assessment (ESIA): the developer hired TEAM Consulting Engineering and Management Co., Ltd and TEAM Lao Co., Ltd to implement the ESIA and the final edition has already been approved and transferred to the Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment and currently on its consideration
- Basic Design: Department of Energy Business, Ministry of Energy and Mine has commented on the report on basic designing as referred on letter number 0177/MEM.DEM on 24/02/2020

Director



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