

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/EG/1714/IR

Charenton-le-Pont, 19 December 2023

Mr. Ying Wang
Minister Counsellor, Deputy Permanent
Delegate
Permanent Delegation of the People's
Republic of China to UNESCO
Maison de l'UNESCO
1, rue Miollis
75732 PARIS Cedex 15

World Heritage List 2024

Beijing Central Axis: A Building Ensemble Exhibiting the Ideal Order of the Chinese Capital (China) – Interim report and additional information request

Dear Minister Counsellor,

As prescribed by the *Operational Guidelines for the Implementation of the World Heritage Convention* and its Annex 6, the Advisory Bodies are requested to submit a short interim report for each nomination by 31 January 2024. We are therefore pleased to provide you with the relevant information outlining issues related to the evaluation procedure.

The ICOMOS technical evaluation mission to “Beijing Central Axis: A Building Ensemble Exhibiting the Ideal Order of the Chinese Capital” was carried out by Mr. Kian Boon Tiong (Malaysia) in August 2023. 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 4 October 2023, an additional information letter was sent by ICOMOS to request further information regarding the justification for inscription, the comparative analysis, conservation, factors affecting the nominated property, management, and interpretation and presentation. Please convey our thanks to all the officials and experts for the additional information you provided on 10 November 2023 and for their continued cooperation in this process.

At the end of November 2023, the ICOMOS World Heritage Panel evaluated the cultural and mixed properties nominated for inscription on the World Heritage List in 2024. 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 2024.

We thank you and your Delegation for your availability and your participation in the meeting held on 24 November 2023 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 this 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:

Historical and conceptual background

ICOMOS understands that the establishment of a central axis in the capital city obeys Chinese philosophical concepts based on Confucianism. Nonetheless, ICOMOS would appreciate further if the State Party could provide some details about the concepts of “neutrality and harmony” and how these are tangibly reflected in the nominated property.

ICOMOS notes with interest the additional information explaining the Kaogongji, its contents and context, and its use as a basis for the design of the ideal capital city, including a ritual and ceremonial dimension connected to the figure of the Emperor. ICOMOS would like to better understand how the axis was used by the Emperor, and his role in the conception of the city siting and layout. ICOMOS would also be interested to better understand the uses of the axis and how these uses evolved during the Yuan, Ming and Qing Dynasties.

In addition, ICOMOS notes that the description of the nominated property has been based on a division of the axis into northern, northern-central, southern-central and southern sections. Building on the information already provided, it would be appreciated if additional explanation could be provided about how the layers of the axis evolved during its different stages of development from a historical point of view.

Role of communities in reconstruction and rehabilitation projects

ICOMOS appreciates the additional information clarifying the reconstruction process of the Yongdingmen Gate. ICOMOS notes that other reconstruction and rehabilitation projects have been conducted throughout the years.

In particular, ICOMOS has taken note that the State Party mentioned in the additional information provided in November 2023 that the reconstruction project of the Yongdingmen Gate received widespread support from citizens. ICOMOS would therefore be interested to receive additional details on how residents and communities associated with the nominated property were involved in decision-making processes in the reconstruction of the Yongdingmen Gate, as well as in other reconstruction and rehabilitation projects.

Involvement of residents in the management of the nominated property

ICOMOS acknowledges the additional information provided regarding the involvement of communities in the nomination process and management of the nominated property. Considering the urban and tourism pressures existing in the nominated property, and being aware of the threat of gentrification, ICOMOS would like to know more about how residents are engaged in decision-making processes regarding the management of the nominated property, and how they will be involved in the implementation of the management plan. Could the State Party explain whether there are specific instances or platforms, such as associations, committees, commissions, advisory groups, that would enable residents to participate in the governance of the nominated property?

Tourism impacts

ICOMOS notes the existing tourism pressures in the nominated property, and is concerned that a potential inscription on the World Heritage List may increase them.

ICOMOS acknowledges the tourism infrastructure and visitor management measures already in place to control tourism pressures and would like to know more about current measures to mitigate negative tourism impacts, especially in relation to impacts on residents, and other rightsholders and stakeholders within the nominated property and its buffer zone.

Interpretation

ICOMOS understands that an interpretation strategy is being developed for the nominated property that is coordinated with the interpretation of the three World Heritage properties that are included in the nominated area. Could the State Party provide an update and additional details about this process?

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

We would be grateful if you could provide **ICOMOS** and the **World Heritage Centre** with the above requested information by **28 February 2024 at the latest**, the deadline set out in paragraph 148 of the *Operational Guidelines for the Implementation of the World Heritage Convention* concerning additional information on nominations to be received. Please note that any information submitted after this statutory deadline 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 additional information submitted within the statutory deadline, it will not be possible to properly evaluate a completely revised nomination or a large amount of new information submitted at the last minute. ICOMOS would therefore 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 procedure.

Yours faithfully,



Gwenaëlle Bourdin
Director
ICOMOS Evaluation Unit

Copy to National Culture Heritage Administration of the People's Republic of China
 Beijing Municipal Cultural Heritage Bureau
 General Office, Committee for the Conservation of Beijing Historical and Cultural City
 UNESCO World Heritage Centre