

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/1014/IR

Charenton-le-Pont, 19 December 2023

H. E. Mr Rosmahyuddin bin Baharuddin
Permanent Delegate
Permanent Delegation of Malaysia to
UNESCO Maison de l'UNESCO
1, rue Miollis
75732 Paris Cedex 15

World Heritage List 2024

The Archaeological Heritage of Niah National Park's Caves Complex (Malaysia) – Interim report and additional information request

Dear Ambassador,

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 “The Archaeological Heritage of Niah National Park's Caves Complex” was carried out by Rima Hooja (India) between the end of September and beginning of October 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 inventory, present state of conservation, protection and management of the nominated property, and visitor facilities and infrastructure. Please convey our thanks to all the officials and experts for the additional information you provided on 6 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 the 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 25 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:

Conservation Management Plan

As indicated in the additional information provided by the State Party on 6 November 2023, “*the final draft of the Conservation Management Plan (CMP) for the Archaeological Heritage of Niah National Park’s Caves Complex will be ready before the end of December 2023*”. ICOMOS would appreciate if a copy of this CMP could be provided as part of the response to this interim report by the State Party. Furthermore, ICOMOS would also be pleased to know which authority is responsible for the approval of this plan and whether this document has a legal statute.

Progress in banning quarrying activities

ICOMOS has some concerns about the quarry encroachment in the southern part of the nominated property and buffer zone and has been informed that the State Party is in the process of banning the quarrying activities and rehabilitating the damaged area. ICOMOS would appreciate further information on the progress that has been made on this matter.

Fading of the rock paintings

ICOMOS has noticed some discrepancies between the information provided by the nomination dossier and the additional information submitted by the State Party in November 2023 on the conditions of the rock paintings in the Painted Cave. While the nomination dossier states that the paintings are fading, the additional information states that the condition of the paintings is stable. ICOMOS would appreciate if the State Party could clarify the information on this matter, and would like to know whether the State Party envisages to conduct a scientific monitoring of these paintings over a period of time.

Algal growth at the excavated sites

As indicated in the additional information provided by the State Party in November 2023, algal growth is one of the main factors that affects the condition of the excavated sites. ICOMOS would appreciate if the State Party could provide detailed information on what preventive measures and technical interventions have been carried out or are envisaged to prevent and mitigate algal growth.

Tourist and interpretation facilities

ICOMOS notes that the construction of the Sungai Niah bridge at Niah National Park Headquarters and the elevated buggy track to the Great Caves has been halted because, based on the outcomes of the third-party Heritage Impact Assessment that has been undertaken, the project is likely to have negative impacts on the value of the nominated property, which outweigh the benefit to the site. ICOMOS welcomes this cautious approach, as well as the Heritage Impact Assessment mechanism in place to preserve the value of the nominated property. ICOMOS considers that, without compromising the values of the nominated property, improving the tourist facilities together with an enhanced *in situ* presentation and interpretation is a positive endeavour. ICOMOS would appreciate if the State Party could provide updated information on the extent of implementation of this project. ICOMOS would also like to know whether the State Party has already planned a new project to replace the current one. If this is the case, ICOMOS would be pleased to receive a copy of the new project plan.

Sustaining local traditions

Tourism could benefit the local communities in many ways, but at the same time, it can affect their traditions and values. Considering the potential increase of tourism activities at the nominated property, ICOMOS would like to know whether there are any policies and measures in place to preserve the local traditions and values from the negative impact of tourism.

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

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| Copy to | Sarawak Forestry Corporation |
| | Ministry of Tourism, Arts and Culture, Department of National Heritage |
| | UNESCO World Heritage Centre |