
Memorial sites of the Genocide (Rwanda) No 1586

1 Basic information

Official name as proposed by the State Party

Memorial sites of the Genocide: Nyamata, Murambi, Gisozi and Bisesero

Location

Nyamata, Bugesera District, Eastern Province
Murambi, Nyamagabe District, Southern Province
Gisozi, Gasabo District, Kigali City
Bisesero, Karongi District, Western Province
Republic of Rwanda

Brief description

Between April and July 1994, an estimated one million people were killed across Rwanda by armed militias called *Interahamwe* that targeted Tutsi, but also executed moderate Hutu and Twa people. The victims of the Genocide are commemorated in the nominated serial property composed of four memorial sites. Two of the serial component parts were scenes of massacres: a Catholic church built in the hill of Nyamata in 1980 in the Eastern Province and a technical school built in the hill of Murambi in 1990 in the Southern Province. The hill of Gisozi in Kigali City hosts the Kigali Genocide Memorial built in 1999, where more than 250,000 victims have been buried, while the hill of Bisesero in the Western Province hosts a memorial built in 1998 to remember the fight of those who resisted their perpetrators for over two months before being exterminated.

Category of property

In terms of categories of cultural property set out in Article I of the 1972 World Heritage Convention, this is a serial nomination of four *sites*.

Included in the Tentative List

15 June 2012 as “*Sites mémoriaux du génocide: Nyamata, Murambi, Bisesero et Gisozi*”

Background

This nomination dossier has been submitted in January 2019. Further to the World Heritage Committee decision 42 COM 8B.24 (2018) that launched a reflection on “*whether and how sites associated with recent conflicts and other negative and divisive memories might relate to the purpose and scope of the World Heritage Convention and its Operational Guidelines*”, the evaluation of this nomination did not start.

An open-ended Working Group was established upon decision 44 COM 8 of the World Heritage Committee

(2021); the group elaborated *Guiding principles for the preparation of nominations concerning sites of memory associated with recent conflicts (Guiding Principles)*, which have been adopted by the Committee at its 18th Extraordinary Session (2023). In line with decision 18 EXT.COM. 4, the Committee also lifted “*the moratorium on the evaluation of sites of memory associated with recent conflicts*”.

Decision: 18 EXT.COM. 4

The World Heritage Committee, [...]

8. Decides to lift the moratorium on the evaluation of sites of memory associated with recent conflicts and also decides that the nominations of such sites for inscription on the World Heritage List may be evaluated on a case-by-case basis;

9. Further decides that nominations of sites of memory associated with recent conflicts, submitted by 1 February 2022 and considered complete, will be processed under the procedures and criteria applicable at the time of their submission;

The State Party sent a letter to the World Heritage Centre on 24 January 2023 requesting that ICOMOS resume the evaluation of this nomination in view of its presentation at the extended 45th World Heritage Committee session.

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 serial property from 4 to 12 March 2023.

Additional information received by ICOMOS

A letter was sent to the State Party on 17 February 2023 requesting further information about memorialisation, comparative analysis, selection of the component parts, buffer zones, factors affecting the nominated property and potential development projects, conservation and research, interpretation, and management.

Additional information was received from the State Party on 24 March 2023.

A second letter was sent to the State Party on 17 May 2023 summarising the issues identified by the ICOMOS World Heritage Panel.

Further information was requested in the second letter including: context and historical background, documentation of the reconciliation process, interpretation strategy, attributes, protection, management system and management plan, and conservation.

Additional information was received from the State Party on 12 June 2023.

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

Date of ICOMOS approval of this report

5 May 2023

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

In 1994, during a period of around hundred days, between April and July, an estimated one million people were killed across Rwanda by armed militias called *Interahamwe* that targeted Tutsi, but also executed moderate Hutu and Twa people.

The Genocide happened in the context of a civil war initiated in 1990 with the invasion of north Rwanda by an armed group of Tutsi refugees based in Uganda, the Rwandan Patriotic Front (RPF), who claimed their right to return to Rwanda and be part of the government. In 1993, the Arusha Accord peace agreement mediated by the Organisation of African Unity (later replaced by the African Union) was signed by the Rwandan government and the RPF to establish a shared transitional government that would lead to general elections. The immediate trigger for the Genocide is seen to have been the shooting down of the plane of the Rwandan President, Juvénal Habyarimana, a Hutu leader of the National Revolutionary Movement for Development, as it attempted to land at Kigali airport on April 6, 1994.

The nomination dossier mentions that the Genocide of 1994 was preceded by large-scale massacres in 1960, 1963, 1966, 1973, 1990 and 1992. An estimated 20,000 were killed in what is called the Bahutu Revolution of 1959-1962 following which large numbers of Tutsi, estimated between 150,000 to 300,000, fled the country, mainly to neighbouring Uganda. The Bahutu Revolution prompted the transfer of power from the Tutsi, who had effectively ruled Rwanda from at least the 18th century, to a Hutu government that declared Rwanda independent in 1962. It also explains that since the abolition of the monarchy and the accession of Rwanda to independence (1959-1962), the Tutsi people from the region of Gikongoro where Murambi hill is located, were subject to persecution. Massacres took place already in 1960 and 1963. This situation only aggravated during the Second Republic (1973-1994).

The complex context of the Genocide is nevertheless not described in the nomination dossier, in terms of the history of Rwanda in the decades leading up to 1994, and almost no information is provided for the longer-term historical context of the pre-colonial and colonial periods.

During the Genocide, places of worship, schools, and other public buildings that Tutsi people used as refuge, became scenes of massacres. Thousands of people, including children and elderly, were also killed at their homes, in their villages, in the streets, escaping or fighting, by militias, neighbours and friends who used

machetes, knives, grenades and rifles. Women and girls were raped and slaughtered.

While the whole country was affected by the Genocide and hundreds of memorials have been established commemorating the victims, the nominated serial property consists of four memorial sites selected by the State Party to represent the totality of places where the killings occurred. The section on history and development of the nomination dossier focuses only on these four sites, while a wider explanation of the events that took place in the whole territory and their impact on the larger region of the African Great Lakes, as well as an explanation of the memorialisation of the Genocide at national and regional levels, are not provided.

Nyamata

This site represents places of worship where Tutsi victims searched for protection and refuge, but which were ultimately used as extermination spaces. It consists of a former Catholic church built in 1980 in the Bugesera district, including a nave below its main hall, in which remains of the victims are displayed, the graves in the surroundings of the building, and a garden of memory. The building walls are made of terracotta bricks and the roof is made of iron sheeting.

A commemoration ceremony is held every 14 April to remember the many thousands of people (numbers vary between 10,000 and 45,000) killed inside the former church in 1994.

Murambi

This site represents all public places where Tutsi were killed during the Genocide, such as public administration buildings, stadiums, court buildings, schools, military and gendarmerie camps. It consists of a technical secondary school located in Nyamagabe district that was under construction since 1990 at the time of the Genocide, ancillary buildings, in some of which the mummified bodies and skulls and bones of victims are displayed, the graves of the victims who perished at this site, and a garden of memory surrounding the buildings. One of the mass graves that were discovered has been left visible.

All buildings are made of terracotta bricks with roofs of iron sheeting, except of the oval part of the administration building that is covered in self-supporting sheeting roof.

Every 21 April, a commemoration ceremony is held to remember the 50,000 people killed on this site.

Gisozi

A memorial was built on this site in 1999, as a burial place for the victims of the city of Kigali, and as an educational space to raise awareness and promote reconciliation. The site consists of a group of buildings including graves, an amphitheatre, rooms to relieve traumatised people, the place of the flame of hope and the garden of memory.

The central building is a terracotta bricks construction with a polygonal shape. In a memorial wall, 2.000 names of victims have been recorded, while around 300.000 victims have been buried in fourteen tombs. The graves of the victims of the genocide are seen to testify to “[hu]man’s intolerance towards his fellow [hu]man”, and to be a symbol of reconciliation between peoples.

During the period of national mourning held every year from April 7 to July 15, the flame of hope is lit. The opening and closure of the commemoration period are held in this memorial site every year.

Bisesero

A memorial was built on Bisesero hill, in Karongi District, in 1998. It is composed of tombs built at the top of the hill containing the bodies of victims from the region and three buildings, each with three rooms, symbolising the nine former communities of the Kibuye Prefecture. The displays include human skulls and bones. Monuments are found in the garden of memory, including one composed of spears used by the victims to defend themselves, and others with stones that they used as weapons. A designed path going from the entrance of the site to the top of the hill recalls the fight of the victims.

This component part is seen as a symbol of the resistance of the Tutsi people of the Kibuye region, both during the killings of the Bahutu revolution of 1959 and of the Genocide of 1994, during which they were completely annihilated. It also represents all places where victims perished while resisting their perpetrators. A commemoration ceremony is held every 27 June.

The area of the four component parts totals 24.65 ha, with buffer zones totalling 160.81 ha. The boundaries are defined by the limits of the plots of land where the four memorial sites are located. The component parts are surrounded by residential houses, forests, green areas and village fields, as well as unpaved roads. The component part of Gisozi is cut in two pieces by a main road that runs from the city centre to the Free University of Kigali. Each component part has a buffer zone.

While Gisozi and Bisesero memorial sites were built in the aftermath of the Genocide to bury and commemorate the victims of Kigali City and Kibuye Prefecture respectively, the former church of Nyamata underwent a process of negotiation with the Catholic Church before becoming a memorial site. Graves were built in 1995, and a new church was built in the vicinity to replace it. Murambi became a memorial site immediately after the Genocide and the graves were built in 1996. All four memorial sites are open to the public serving as cemeteries for the victims, spaces of reflection, commemoration and education.

The nomination dossier does not provide any further details on the cessation of the Genocide when the RPF eventually took control of the country, nor on the subsequent historical development in the context of the

construction of the post-colonial nation-state of Rwanda, nor does it provide information on how the reconciliation process developed, who was involved and the role of the memorial sites in this process.

In its second letter sent to the State Party in May 2023, ICOMOS noted that the context and historical background of the Genocide was missing in the nomination dossier, as well as documentation on the process of reconciliation. In the additional information provided in June 2023, the State Party expanded on the historical background and explained that the population of Rwanda was traditionally composed of three social categories called Tutsi, Hutu and Twa that used the same language, Kinyarwanda, and which follow the same belief systems and culture with a common history. It considers that the occupation and colonisation of Rwanda during the 19th and 20th centuries, first by the German Empire (1898-1916) and then by the Belgian Empire (1916-1962) introduced the theory of race inequality transforming these social categories into ethnic groups within which the Tutsi were seen as a privileged and superior group. While German and Belgian colonisers initially supported the Tutsi group that was in power at the time of occupation, Belgians then turned their support to the Hutu group. This triggered the Bahutu Revolution in 1959, when the Tutsi elite, educated in the context of the Belgian colonisation, started to claim its independence. One aspect of the colonisation process under the Belgian Empire was the introduction of identity cards in 1933 which designated the different groups as “races”: Mututsi, Muhutu and Mutwa. These identity cards are considered by the State Party to be the main instrument that led to a division within the Rwandan people. They were used to discriminate against one group or another in education, from administrative responsibilities, and later, in 1994, these were used by *génocidaires* to identify their targets.

The State Party explained that the Genocide ended on 4 July 1994, when the RPF took Kigali City, and from then, the United Nations created the International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda to judge the massacres that were qualified as genocide in 1998. ICOMOS acknowledges the additional information provided by the State Party but considers that a broader description of the historical context which led to the Genocide, beyond the national context, and the four memorial sites selected, should be formulated in order to place the event in the global context, to better understand its outcomes and impacts beyond Rwanda, and to define the rationale for the serial approach.

Regarding the reconciliation process, the State Party provided additional details in June 2023, explaining the functioning of the Gacaca courts that were established as a foundation for the transitional justice, as ordinary criminal tribunals, to judge perpetrators of the Genocide.

According to the State Party, the reparations provided to the victims by the State have so far consisted of symbolic reparations through the construction of monuments, memorial sites and the organisation commemorative events in honour of the victims of the Genocide. The

nominated serial property forms part of this process aiming at promoting reconciliation and resilience, providing a space for reflection for survivors, families of victims, perpetrators and visitors. ICOMOS notes the efforts of the State Party, and considers that further documentation and description of the transitional justice, reconciliation and memorialisation processes undertaken in the aftermath of the Genocide are needed to better understand the identification and selection of the nominated component parts.

State of conservation

In the case of Nyamata and Murambi, the buildings have suffered damages during the Genocide which are reflected in the walls and iron-sheet roofs pierced by bullets and grenades shrapnel. These damages have been maintained as evidence of the massacres and require to be conserved as they are. Metal doors and windows have been restored while respecting the original state of the damage to serve as evidence of the destruction. The structures of the buildings are in good state of conservation.

In Nyamata, metal doors, windows, roof, and walls were severely damaged, and the large gate was broken off. Sheets with bullet and grenade holes were covered in 1995 with transparent plastic sheets in order to preserve the original metal with all traces of the impacts of bullets and grenades and to prevent leakages into the rooms containing the personal objects of the victims and other movable artefacts, as well as human skulls which are evidence of the Genocide. In 1995, graves have been accommodated around the former church where victims have been buried while the building was restored. Graves have been restored in 2016.

In Murambi, some of the buildings were unfinished at the time of the Genocide. Works on roofs, walls, doors and windows have been done to protect the buildings. Victims were removed from mass graves since 1995 in order to provide them with a decent burial. Graves have been accommodated in the gardens surrounding the buildings. One of the mass graves has been left open as a testimony. The site has undergone three main phases of restoration in 1996, 2000 and 2016, especially the main administration building.

The memorials of Bisesero and Gisozi, having been built after the Genocide, are in good state of conservation.

Because all structures are made of sensitive materials such as terracotta, iron and wood, ICOMOS considers that preventive measures are necessary in order to address material decay.

ICOMOS notes that the collections of movable heritage contained and exhibited in the memorial sites which consist of mummified human remains, skulls, clothes and personal belongings of victims, as well as the weapons used by the *génocidaires* are in a vulnerable state of conservation. ICOMOS acknowledges that the State Party is working on partnerships with specialised foreign

institutions, such as the University of Pennsylvania, USA, and the University of Hamburg, Germany, for the adequate handling, conservation and presentation of the evidence of the Genocide, as well as capacity building. ICOMOS considers that displaying human remains of victims is highly sensitive and therefore would recommend that the State Party consider that these remains receive a decent burial.

Based on the information provided by the State Party and the observations of the ICOMOS technical evaluation mission, ICOMOS considers that the state of conservation of the built structures is good, whereas the display of human remains and personal artefacts belonging to the victims is highly vulnerable.

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 nominated property are environmental, development and potential tourism pressures.

In general terms, all four memorial sites are exposed to environmental pressures due to their building materials (terracotta, metal and wood) vulnerable to the tropical mountain climate. Cracking walls, dust, herb and the growth of trees roots require a regular maintenance. Furthermore, the component parts are exposed to termites, bats and bird droppings which also require monitoring and regular cleaning. Natural decay of earthen materials at Nyamata and Murambi requires a preventive assessment.

In terms of development, in the case of Nyamata, the building of the former church is currently surrounded by the new church, the houses of the priests and three schools. The memorial site has been protected by a fence to control the pressure of onlookers. At present, negotiations are on-going between the government and the Catholic Church to add the adjacent cemetery as an extension to the component part.

The Gisozi site is divided in two by a road, the northern part being under heavy development pressure with houses adjacent to the site. Since the component part is located in a semi-industrial zone, it faces issues of rainwater evacuation and waste management. A relocation of the industrial units is envisaged in order to improve the environment of the Nybugogo marshland, part of which lies within the boundary of the nominated property and the other in the buffer zone.

In Bisesero, unregulated mining of cassiterite (ore containing tin) in the valley separating the neighbouring hills of Bisesero and Nyakigugu represents a long-term threat. Mining activities need to be strictly regulated and contained, and environmental measures should be developed and implemented in order to protect the site from pollution and erosion. In addition, the Bisesero hill is exposed to lightning strikes. To mitigate this issue, a lightning conductor system was installed in all four

component parts. ICOMOS considers that this installation has an important visual impact and would recommend that it be replaced an alternative that generates less visual pollution.

Even though tourism pressures do not currently pose a threat, preventive measures should to be taken in view of a potential development of infrastructure in the surroundings of the nominated serial property, and a potential increase in influx of visitors to the memorial sites which are vulnerable due to their size, construction materials and the collections of movable heritage contained and exhibited within the buildings.

ICOMOS considers that the state of conservation of the built fabric is good, whereas the display of human remains and personal artefacts which belonged to the victims is highly vulnerable to environmental factors. Alternative solutions would need to be found rapidly, including the burial of human remains. The main external factors affecting the nominated serial property are mining development in the setting of Bisesero and industrial units in the setting of Gisozi, together with a potential of tourism pressure.

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 four component memorial sites bear witness to the Genocide targeting Tutsi people that occurred in the whole territory of Rwanda in 1994, and symbolise one of the worse crimes against humanity. The buildings on two sites have been safeguarded as they were during the Genocide.
- The component memorial sites are monuments associated with the Genocide and evoke a massacre that unfolded in hundred days killing more than one million civilians, the majority Tutsis, and have become exceptional sanctuaries of memory, places of recollection, gathering and commemorations allowing collective mourning.
- The four component memorial sites bear witness to the cruelty and intolerance of the events, commemorate the victims, and, since, the end of the Genocide represent a symbol of unity and reconciliation and the desire for peace and tolerance to be transmitted to future generations.

ICOMOS notes that the justification for Outstanding Universal Value, as set out in the nomination dossier, is mainly based on the scale and scope of the massacre and the horror, pain and outrage it evokes. However, the wider historical context for the Genocide, the reasons why it happened, who was involved and how it relates to the history of the region have not been set out. Nor does the nomination dossier explain the work undertaken since the

end of the Genocide to develop a shared understanding of its causes as a framework for long-term reconciliation.

The State Party clarified some of these aspects in the additional information provided in June 2023. However, a wider understanding of the historical background of the Genocide in its geocultural context is still needed, particularly one that extends beyond the colonial era and to adjacent countries, in order to fully comprehend the international significance of the nominated serial property. ICOMOS considers that further documentation on the process of reconciliation also should also be provided to better understand the transitional justice and memorialisation processes undertaken in Rwanda and the place of the nominated serial property within this process, as well as the messages upon which it is based. ICOMOS notes that, as a relatively recent event, the understanding and appraisal of the Genocide are still ongoing and its outcomes evolving, and considers that a longer-term perspective for reflection might be needed to fully comprehend the scope and impacts of the event at a global level.

Based on the nomination dossier and the additional information, ICOMOS considers that the key attributes of the proposed Outstanding Universal Value are the buildings and structures damaged during the Genocide in Nyamata and Murambi, and the aspects that convey memories of the events. Collections of movable heritage and evidence of the Genocide contained within these buildings, which include human remains, personal belongings of the victims and other elements can be seen to support the attributes.

According to the *Guiding Principles*, sites of memory are defined as “places where an event happened that a nation and its people (or at least some of them) or communities want to remember. Sites associated with recent conflicts are specific sites with material evidence, in conformity with Articles 1 and 2 of the Convention, or landscape features which can be linked to their memorial aspect and that commemorate the victims of these conflicts. These sites, accessible, or made accessible, to the public, represent a place of reconciliation, remembrance, peaceful reflection, and must play an educational role in order to promote a culture of peace and dialogue”. Hence, only sites with tangible evidence of the events that happened can be understood as “sites of memory” under the World Heritage Convention.

While the component sites of Nyamata and Murambi can be considered sites of memory under this definition, further information is needed to clarify how the component sites of Gisozi and Bisesero could be considered sites of memory, as they have been built as memorial sites in the aftermath of the Genocide. The nomination dossier explains that all hills in Rwanda have been places of massacres, but it has not been specified what is the material evidence linked to the events preserved in the hills of Gisozi and Bisesero. In June 2023, the State Party mentioned that the hill of Gisozi and the hill of Bisesero have been as well scenes of massacres, where mass

graves and bodies have been found. While narratives associated with the massacres that occurred in the hill of Bisesero have been included in the nomination dossier, material evidence and potential attributes in both Gisozi and Bisesero have not been clearly described or mapped in the nomination dossier or additional information.

Comparative analysis

The comparative analysis has been developed around the concept of sites of memory.

The nomination dossier only examined one property inscribed on the World Heritage List, Robben Island (South Africa, 1999, criteria (iii) and (vi)) with the conclusion that the nominated property differs from Robben Island because of the very nature of the genocide, which is the extermination of part or all of a people, and the resilience of the Rwandan people, which allowed for a rapid reconstruction of the country. ICOMOS notes that even if both properties are linked to events related to crimes against humanity (apartheid, murder and extermination), the nature of both properties is different, the former built as a prison and not the scene of a genocide, and the second consisting of buildings that were not purposefully built to commit a genocide. However, in Robben Island, its original function is directly connected to its Outstanding Universal Value while in the case of the Memorial sites of the Genocide, the original function of the buildings is not directly connected to the Genocide in the cases of Nyamata and Murambi, though the present function of all the nominated component parts is linked to the transmission of the memory of the Genocide.

In February 2023, ICOMOS requested the State Party to expand the comparative analysis to include properties associated with similar events to the Genocide in Rwanda, both inscribed on the World Heritage List, being part of Tentative Lists of States Parties or sites that might present similar values and attributes to the nominated serial property.

In additional information provided in March 2023, the State Party extended the comparative analysis to include the Hiroshima Peace Memorial (Genbaku Dome) (Japan, 1996, criterion (vi)) and the Auschwitz Birkenau German Nazi Concentration and Extermination Camp (1940-1945) (Poland, 1979, criterion (vi)).

For Hiroshima, similarities rather than differences were found in relation to the memorial being the only surviving building of the destruction by atomic bomb and where the buildings do not possess a significant architectural value but a historical value connected to the memories that these evoke.

For Auschwitz, it was concluded that the nominated serial property differed because the victims of the Genocide in Rwanda were murdered by their own fellow compatriots that lived in the same hills and the Genocide was extended to the whole country. In addition, Auschwitz Birkenau was designed and built with the purpose of

being a concentration and later, extermination camp, while two of the Memorial sites of the Genocide are linked to the Genocide as scenes of massacres, but are not connected to it in their function. Furthermore, the memorial sites of Gisozi and Bisesero have been purposefully built to commemorate the Genocide, but in the aftermath of the event.

The Memorial sites of the Genocide were also compared to properties included in Tentative Lists, such as the Funerary and Memory sites of the First World War (Western Front) (Belgium, France, Tentative List), and the ESMA Museum and Site of Memory – Former Clandestine Center of Detention, Torture, and Extermination (Argentina, Tentative List).

For the sites of the First World War (Western Front), although these include graves as does the nominated property, there are distinct differences. In the first case, the graves are those of soldiers whereas in Rwanda the buried people are civilians. In addition, ICOMOS notes that in the case of the sites of the First World War (Western Front), these have been built in the aftermath of the event (First World War) like the component memorial sites of Gisozi and Bisesero, but also notes that the values proposed lie in the architectural design and spatial articulation of the cemeteries and individual graves, whereas in the nominated property, these are collective graves without a systematic and spatial planning design.

In the case of the ESMA Museum and Site of Memory, there seems to be some similarities as people were killed but due to ideological differences, not ethnic or racial differences. ICOMOS notes that in the case of the ESMA Museum and Site of Memory, the property is directly linked to the events as it hosted the clandestine centre of detention and torture, similarly to Nyamata and Murambi, and the buildings of both properties were not conceived for the purpose of extermination, as in the case of Auschwitz Birkenau.

ICOMOS considers that other properties in the Tentative Lists or not included in any Tentative Lists could have been used as comparators, such as the Former M-13 prison/Tuol Sleng Genocide Museum/Choeung Ek Genocidal Centre (former Execution Site of S-21) (Cambodia, Tentative List), the Armenia Genocide Memorial (Armenia), and the Srebrenica Memorial Center (Bosnia and Herzegovina) which also commemorate victims of genocides.

The State Party did not provide comparisons with sites that are not inscribed, or are not on Tentative Lists, and particularly sites associated with related histories and those in the same geocultural region.

ICOMOS requested clarifications to the State Party regarding the selection of the component parts. The State Party explained in additional information that the National Commission for the Fight against Genocide (CNLG) identified, in 2019, 207 memorial sites and 159 cemeteries of the Genocide in thirty districts. The State

Party explained that the four component memorial sites were selected as representative of the others: Nyamata represents all places of worship where killings were committed; Murambi represents public places where Tutsi people were killed; Bisesero represents places where the victims resisted and fought before perishing and was selected because of the long fierce resistance of those who were exterminated in this hill; Gisozi represents the genocide as a crime of state as it stands in the capital city and as well, represents the reconciliation efforts undertaken by the nation. ICOMOS acknowledges this symbolic and representative selection, but considers that more information on the full process and scope of the Genocide and its outcomes is needed to clarify how these four component sites are more representative and/or important than others located in other hills and other areas of the country, and/or how only these four component memorial sites can reflect the memories of the Genocide for present and future generations of humanity as a whole.

ICOMOS considers that more information on the context and historical background of the Genocide in Rwanda would be needed in order to provide a shared understanding of the causes of the massacres and the values and international significance that the nominated serial property could convey, as well as a justification for the serial approach and the selection of the component parts. ICOMOS considers that the comparative analysis does not justify consideration of this property for the World Heritage List at this stage.

Criteria under which inscription is proposed

The property is nominated on the basis of cultural criteria (iii) and (vi).

Criterion (iii): *bear a unique or at least exceptional testimony to a cultural tradition or to a civilization which is living or which has disappeared;*

This criterion is justified by the State Party on the grounds that the buildings of the four component memorial sites are a testimony to a dark period of human history, symbolising the process of extermination undertaken by an extremist and criminal state. The State Party postulates that the four component memorial sites are the result of a genocidal ideology and that their spatial planning provides a comprehensive and immediate understanding of the Genocide as a crime against humanity.

Although culture is a notion that does not cover only the positive aspects of how human beings stay in the world and relate to each other but is more general in nature, ICOMOS does not consider that it is possible to celebrate or commemorate an extermination process or the genocidal ideology as a cultural tradition in regard to expressing heritage values. ICOMOS does not consider that the way in which the criterion was phrased in the *Operational Guidelines for the Implementation of the World Heritage Convention* accommodates the interpretation of the notion of cultural tradition as put

forward by the State Party. While some of the buildings are testimonies to the Genocide massacres, these do not reflect in their design, forms and structures, a genocidal ideology as they have not been purposefully planned to commit exterminations. The component memorial sites of Nyamata and Murambi have been built for different purposes (a place of worship and a school respectively), and they circumstantially became scenes of massacres, while Gisozi and Bisesero have been built as burial and commemoration sites for the victims in the aftermath of the event.

ICOMOS considers that this criterion has not been justified.

Criterion (vi): *be directly or tangibly associated with events or living traditions, with ideas, or with beliefs, with artistic and literary works of outstanding universal significance;*

This criterion is justified by the State Party on the grounds that the component memorial sites are associated with the massacres committed during the Genocide and represent places of remembrance while recalling the cruelty and intolerance of the events. At the same time, the State Party postulates that the component memorial sites are a symbol of unity and reconciliation and of triumph of the desire of peace and tolerance, that awareness about the potential threat of extremist ideology to future generations.

ICOMOS recognises the importance of the Genocide against the Tutsi in Rwanda. In order to remember this event, the United Nations General Assembly has established the International Day of Reflection on the 1994 Genocide against the Tutsi in Rwanda on April 7, recalling the importance of early warning and prevention of mass atrocities and the need to intervene in situations of genocide. Furthermore, the Genocide in Rwanda led to the establishment of the International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda (1994-2015) which contributed to the process of creation of the International Criminal Court (2002). However, ICOMOS notes that, in order to apply criterion (vi) in light of the *Guiding Principles*, additional information is needed on the context and causes of the massacres, as the Genocide did not happen in isolation; it was not a spontaneous event but rather was preceded by a long-related history that needs to be presented in order to understand the values and messages that the nominated property could convey. In the additional information provided in June 2023, the State Party presented some information on the background of the Genocide and its historical context, however, ICOMOS considers that more information is needed, in particular to place this event in a longer-term historical context and within its geocultural region to better understand its global significance and the justification for the serial approach as well as the selection of the component parts. Further information on the memorialisation and reconciliation processes – including how memories have been gathered and collated and how they might be seen to contribute to and reflect an ongoing reconciliation process – is needed to establish the

universal significance of the nominated serial property, based on a shared understanding of why the Genocide happened with a reflection of how similar pre-conditions can be prevented in the future. ICOMOS observes that, as a recent event, a longer-term perspective would be necessary for a historical appraisal of the event to settle, and understands that a process of reflection on the outcomes of the event is still ongoing as its impacts are still evolving. ICOMOS considers that fixate values and meanings as requested by the World Heritage Convention at this stage, might bring difficulties.

ICOMOS considers that, although this criterion has the potential to be justified when a wider contextualisation of the event would be provided, it has not been demonstrated at this stage.

ICOMOS considers that the global significance of the event needs to be justified by providing a comprehensive description of the context and historical background of the Genocide and its outcomes to clarify the serial approach and to base a rationale for the selection of the component parts; that criterion (iii) has not been justified; and that criterion (vi) has potential to be justified but has not been demonstrated at this stage.

Integrity and authenticity

Integrity

The integrity of the nominated serial property is based on the extent to which the wholeness and intactness of the attributes that transmit the memories of the Genocide with which the component parts are associated have been preserved and on whether all the attributes necessary to express the proposed Outstanding Universal Value are present within the boundaries of the nominated property.

ICOMOS considers that more information is necessary to understand how integrity, as defined in the *Operational Guidelines for the Implementation of the World Heritage Convention*, can be demonstrated for the nominated property as a whole, as the context and causes of the Genocide have not been presented comprehensively in the nomination dossier. At present, the conditions of integrity required are not fully met to justify the selection of the component parts, namely, whether these are all the sites needed and whether these selected sites enable a complete understanding of the events.

Furthermore, the restorations and modifications to the sites in Nyamata and Murambi have not been documented to understand the extent of its potential impacts on the integrity of these individual component parts. ICOMOS requested further information on the restorations undertaken at these component parts in May 2023, and, in its response provided in June 2023, the State Party indicated that in 2017, restoration works have been done in both sites and that these have been documented. Architectural plans have been attached to this additional information; however, in terms of the works undertaken in 1995 and 2016 for Nyamata, and

undertaken in 1996, 2000 and 2016 for Murambi, mentioned in the nomination dossier, additional information has not been provided.

ICOMOS considers that the integrity of the main building of the former church of Nyamata, which has been preserved in the state it was in immediately after the massacres, is vulnerable to natural deterioration because of the building materials, and vulnerable to urban development because of its location.

ICOMOS considers that the integrity of the school of Murambi, which was under construction during the Genocide, has been affected by the works undertaken in the aftermath of the massacres, both in the buildings and the surrounding gardens where new graves have been built, but more information remains needed to assess its integrity conditions.

The integrity of the collections of movable heritage and evidence of the Genocide contained within the buildings allocated in the component parts, including the mummified bodies, skulls, personal belongings of the victims are highly vulnerable to environmental factors and require prompt actions for protection.

Authenticity

The authenticity of the nominated serial property is based on how well the attributes convey the proposed Outstanding Universal Value which relates to the Genocide, to memories of the Genocide and to messages of reconciliation. Therefore, the buildings, in their materials, form and design need to testify to the massacres that occurred in 1994. In the case of Nyamata, the materials, form and design of the building of the former church have been maintained and the restorations have focused on the accommodation of graves in the garden of memory, and an exhibition in the underground of the main hall of the building, as well as the provision visitor facilities. A high degree of authenticity is still preserved in the interior and exterior of the main building of the former church, even though its use and function have changed from a place of worship to a place of commemoration.

In the case of Murambi, the main administration building has been modified with works undertaken in 1996 to transform the place into a memorial site potentially impacting on its authenticity. Graves have been accommodated in the garden of memory. As the site was under construction during the Genocide, and later partially completed and restored, more information was needed in order to assess its authenticity. ICOMOS requested further information from the State Party in May 2023, which replied in June 2023 that the works undertaken in 2017 have not affected the authenticity of the site. However, more information is still needed regarding the restorations and other works undertaken in 1996, 2000 and 2016.

In terms of memories and narratives of the events associated with the nominated serial property, ICOMOS

considers that more information on how these memories and narratives have been gathered and selected is necessary to understand the links between the proposed attributes and the proposed Outstanding Universal Value and to effectively assess the conditions of authenticity as set out in the *Operational Guidelines for the Implementation of the World Heritage Convention*.

In conclusion, ICOMOS considers that the conditions of integrity and authenticity, as defined by the *Operational Guidelines for the Implementation of the World Heritage Convention*, have only been partially met at this stage, and that more information on the context and historical background is needed to assess the integrity of the nominated serial property as a whole. ICOMOS considers as well that more information is needed on restorations and construction of the memorial sites of Nyamata in 1995 and 2016, and Murambi in 1996, 2000 and 2016 in order to understand their impacts on the integrity and authenticity of these individual component parts.

Boundaries

There are no permanent inhabitants within the nominated serial property and 1.443 inhabit the totality of the four buffer zones. The boundaries have been defined based on the plots of land where the memorial sites are located. ICOMOS notes that the component part of Gisozi is divided in two parts, and considers that these two parts should be merged by including the road currently dividing the component part.

Buffer zones have been designed based on planning instruments and include plots of land that are in the ownership of the State or that are in negotiations with the government. In Nyamata, the inclusion of the cemetery of the former church within the boundaries of the component part is being negotiated.

ICOMOS considers that the planning mechanisms in place in the buffer zones should ensure an added layer of protection to the component parts, in particular for the component part of Nyamata which is vulnerable to development pressures due to its size and location.

Evaluation of the proposed justification for inscription

In summary, ICOMOS considers that a comparative analysis should be developed as regards the selection of the component parts, within the hundreds of memorial sites existing in Rwanda. The comparative framework should be based on a comprehensive explanation of the events, their context and historical background, in order to provide a shared understanding of the causes of the massacres and the values that the nominated serial property could convey, and that could serve to justify the serial approach. Criterion (iii) has not been justified and criterion (vi) has the potential to be justified but has not been demonstrated at this stage. The conditions of integrity and authenticity have not been fully demonstrated at this stage.

4 Conservation measures and monitoring

Documentation

The nomination dossier provides maps and layouts of the four component memorial sites. However, for the buildings of the component parts of Nyamata and Murambi that were scenes of massacres, there is no documentation provided on their conditions right after the Genocide. Due to the circumstances of the Genocide and its aftermath, it is unclear whether a survey was undertaken in these two sites to assess their state of conservation. Restoration works on these buildings have been undertaken in 1995, 1996, 2000 and 2016 but details have not been provided in the nomination dossier. In June 2023, the State Party provided additional information on the restoration works undertaken in 2017.

In order to create a baseline that can serve for the adequate management, conservation and monitoring of the nominated serial property, ICOMOS considers that it would be necessary to document in detail the present state of conservation, as there was no assessment of the buildings in 1994-1995 before restoration works were undertaken. For the component parts of Gisozi and Biseseo, ICOMOS considers that assessing their current state of conservation and document it in order to establish a baseline for management, conservation and monitoring is necessary.

Conservation measures

The approach to conservation required for the component parts is not homogenous, since the buildings in Nyamata and Murambi are tangible testimonies to the Genocide, while Gisozi and Biseseo were built after the Genocide.

Restorations and remodelling works have been undertaken in the component parts of Nyamata and Murambi in order to protect the evidence of the damage in the buildings during the Genocide, and to accommodate graves for the victims. The component parts of Gisozi and Biseseo have been recently built, 1999 and 1998 respectively, and have not undergone any particular damage. Maintenance works are being performed regularly.

In February 2023, ICOMOS requested further information regarding the conservation strategy for the nominated serial property. The State Party responded in March 2023 that since 1994, conservation of evidence of the Genocide has been carried out in partnership with associations of survivors, authorities at all levels and the local population. It further explained that conservation is carried out at three levels: a) Regular maintenance of the memorial site by the site managers in collaboration with the population and local authorities, especially through community work; b) Processing of the material evidence of the Genocide by the technicians of the Ministry of National Unity and Civic Engagement; and c) Scientific processing and conservation by experts in collaboration with the technicians of the Ministry of National Unity and Civic Engagement as part of a transfer of knowledge strategy. The Ministry facilitates and provides all necessary support

to those involved in the conservation of evidence of the Genocide. ICOMOS notes that the conservation strategy is generally focused on the collections of movable heritage consisting of human remains, textiles from the clothing as well as other personal belongings of victims, and weapons used both by the *génocidaires* to kill the victims and by the victims to defend themselves. However, a conservation strategy for the attributes of the proposed Outstanding Universal Value has not been developed. ICOMOS considers that a baseline for the conservation of the component parts of Nyamata and Murambi needs to be developed, in particular for the former church of Nyamata and for the buildings of the school in Murambi, in order to maintain the material evidence of the Genocide in its physical fabric. This baseline should also consider the setting of the memorial sites in order to assess any potential impacts on the heritage values of the nominated component parts.

Establishing a baseline for the component parts of Gisozi and Bisesero will be also important for developing a long-term conservation strategy of these memorial sites and their setting.

ICOMOS noted that all the component parts include exhibition of human remains of the victims and areas with graves where the victims were buried, which appear to have been progressively enlarged. ICOMOS noted as well that the exhibitions are vulnerable to the environment pressures and that human remains would potentially be buried in the medium or longer term. In addition, ICOMOS noted that the graves could potentially need works of expansion to accommodate for more bodies and tombs. In May 2023, ICOMOS requested additional information from the State Party regarding its approach to the conservation of human remains and potential expansion of graves located within the nominated serial property. In June 2023, the State Party responded that there would be no new burials or graves in the serial nominated property.

Monitoring

The monitoring process for the four component parts relies on four indicators which focus on the maintenance of the gardens, the conservation of doors and windows, the maintenance of the graves and the extent and number of areas affected by rainwater stagnation. Several actors are in charge of different aspects of the monitoring, including the Ministry of National Unity and Civic Engagement, the districts of Bugesera, Nyamagabe, Karongi and Gasabo, the associations of survivors and the representatives of local population.

ICOMOS considers that the monitoring system needs to be designed to monitor the attributes of the proposed Outstanding Universal Value. ICOMOS notes that a baseline needs to be established, as well as key indicators that would address the main threats to the conservation of the nominated property, which are principally related to the environment and urban development. ICOMOS considers that this needs to be designed in accordance to the clarifications required in terms of the selection of the

component parts and the attributes of the proposed Outstanding Universal Value.

ICOMOS considers that documenting the state of conservation of the nominated serial property is necessary, as well as establishing a baseline that would guide the conservation, management and monitoring of the nominated serial property. ICOMOS considers that the monitoring system needs to be developed based on the attributes of the proposed Outstanding Universal Value.

5 Protection and management

Legal protection

The four nominated memorial sites have been registered in the national inventory of cultural heritage elaborated in 2004. A designation of the four memorial sites on the list of national heritage, to be issued by the Ministry of Culture, is in process of being adopted, on the basis of article 14 of the Law No 28/2016 of 22/7/2016 on the Preservation of Cultural Heritage and Traditional Knowledge. It is foreseen that the boundaries of the four component sites with respective maps will be annexed to the designation order. ICOMOS considers that the adoption of this designation for the legal protection of the component parts as cultural heritage is fundamental. ICOMOS requested further information on this matter in May 2023, and in June 2023, the State Party responded that the designation order will be adopted promptly, as it is currently being considered by the Rwandan Commission on Legislative Reform.

All five plots of land where the nominated component parts are located are in the ownership of the state. In addition, the sites are also protected under the Law No 15/2016 of 02/05/2016 regulating the Commemoration Ceremonies of the Genocide against the Tutsi and Organising and Managing the Memorial Sites of the Genocide against the Tutsi; the Law No 09/2007 of 16/02/2007 on the Responsibilities, Organisation and Functioning of the National Commission for the Fight against Genocide that was replaced in 2021 by the Prime Minister's Order No 021/03 of 21/10/2021 determining mission, responsibilities and organisational structure of the Ministry of National Unity and Civic Engagement (MINUBUMWE) that took over the responsibilities of the National Commission for the Fight against Genocide (CNLG); the Organic Law No 04/2004 of 08/04/2005 on the Modality for Protecting, Safeguarding and Promoting the Environment in Rwanda where its article 82 prohibits the dumping of any substances likely to destroy sites and monuments of scientific, cultural, tourist or historical interest; and the National Policy against Genocide, its Ideology and for the Management of its Consequences, developed in 2014. Besides, the State Party clarified in the additional information provided in March 2023 that a National Policy on National Unity and Civic Engagement is under elaboration and will include a section on the preservation of the memory of the Genocide against the Tutsi. ICOMOS requested further information in May 2023 on the contents of this policy and its expected adoption. The State Party explained in the additional information provided in June 2023 that the policy has been

finalised; the process of developing the strategic plan is on the way and expected to be completed during the year 2023. In addition, the State Party clarified that the content of the policy focuses on the preservation of the historical memory of the Genocide against the Tutsi and includes among other important points, the establishment and maintenance of the Memorial sites of the Genocide, as well as the archives including those of the Gacaca courts and the International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda.

ICOMOS requested additional information regarding the rationale used for the delineation of the buffer zones and the regulations in place to provide an added layer of protection to the nominated serial property. In particular, ICOMOS noted that the buffer zone of the Murambi component part was tight that explanations were needed to better understand the reasons for this delineation. The State Party responded that the buffer zones were defined in the Ministerial Order 16/MOJ/AG19 of 09/09/2019 on the Commemoration of the Genocide against the Tutsi. Articles 34 and 35 regulate the maintenance, protection and management of the buffer zones of Memorial sites of the Genocide. For the four component parts, the buffer zones provide an added layer of protection preventing development that is not authorised by the Ministry of National Unity and Civic Engagement, the district where the memorial site is located (Bugesera, Nyamagabe, Gasabo and Karongi) and the security services in charge. The State Party agreed that the buffer zone of Murambi could be expanded in relation to the links of the setting with the protection of the memorial site.

Three of the component parts are also contemplated in the relevant development plans of the towns where they are located, namely Nyamata, Nyamagabe and Kigali. Because Bisesero is located in a rural area, it is contemplated in the development plan of the Twumba sector. According to the nomination dossier, these plans would have been updated between 2018 and 2020. In order to protect the integrity of the nominated component parts, the CNLG was set to participate in the revisions and update of these plans.

Management system

Since the submission of the nomination dossier by the State Party, the institution that was responsible for the four memorial sites, namely the CNLG, has been replaced by the newly established Ministry of National Unity and Civic Engagement. The State Party explained in the additional information provided in March 2023 that the memorial sites at national level, which correspond to the four memorial sites included in the nominated serial property, are managed by this Ministry that assigns managers to each site. In addition, local communities, which include the population living in the vicinities of the sites, the associations of survivors, the schools and the religious groups, support the regular cleaning of the memorial sites through community work. ICOMOS considers that as cultural heritage, the nominated serial property management system should count with the participation of the Ministry of Culture and other heritage related national agencies. In May 2023, ICOMOS

requested further information on the role played by the Ministry of Culture in the management system of the nominated serial property. The State Party responded in June 2023, that in March 2023, the former Ministry of Youth and Culture was changed to be in charge only of Youth, and that the attributions of the Ministry of Culture have been given to the Ministry of National Unity and Civic Engagement (MINUBUMWE). It further clarified that currently the management of the nominated serial property is under the Department of the Memory and Prevention of the Genocide.

A management plan was developed for the timeframe of 2018-2022. It was developed with a participatory approach, including all relevant stakeholders, including the CNLG, the former Ministry of Culture, the districts of Bugesera, Nyamagabe, Karongi and Gasabo, the associations of survivors, the partners in the management of the sites (e.g. AEGIS Trust for Gisozi), and the local population. ICOMOS requested additional information on its implementation, evaluation and update in view of its expiration. The State Party responded that the management plan had been developed by the previous manager, namely the CNLG and that its evaluation is foreseen in the fiscal year 2022-2023 with a task team having been set up to develop the next management plan for the period 2023-2028. The State Party further clarified in the additional information sent in June 2023 that the elaboration of the new management plan will start in July 2023.

ICOMOS considers that the next management plan should be based on a baseline for the conservation of the serial nominated property and that Heritage Impact Assessments need to be incorporated into the planning system to protect the component memorial sites from any adverse development in their buffer zones or wider setting. While the property is not prone to risks, in the context of climate change, disaster risk management protocols should also be incorporated in the management plan, considering risks of fire, heavy rains, droughts and flooding that could impact on the nominated component parts.

Visitor management

The component memorial sites have visitor facilities and guides. Visitor management actions have been developed for the Kigali Genocide Memorial with the implementation of radio guides in different languages. Parking lots have been accommodated for each of the component parts. While a visitor strategy has not been developed for the nominated serial property, the Kigali Genocide Memorial receives a greater number of visitors, both locals and foreigners, than the other memorial sites which are more visited by local residents and students. ICOMOS notes that the component memorial sites play an important role at the local level, for the local population and the people of Rwanda in general, as spaces of commemoration and reconciliation, for visiting, by family members principally, and remembering the victims, and for the future generations to be educated on the history of Rwanda and the prevention of genocide.

ICOMOS requested further information regarding the interpretation of the nominated serial property to clarify which actors are involved in the process and whether multiple perspectives on the events have been taken into account. Furthermore, ICOMOS asked whether the State Party was planning to elaborate an interpretation strategy for the nominated serial property as a World Heritage Site. The State Party clarified in the additional information provided in March 2023, that the interpretation of the memorial sites has been developed based on the testimonies of the survivors and the perpetrators, supported by researchers during the process of elaboration of the nomination dossier. It also mentioned the role of the Gacaca courts, from a legal perspective, which provided testimonies on the events, including testimonies of the perpetrators. ICOMOS considers that further information on these processes is needed to understand the development of the presentation and interpretation of the nominated serial property.

ICOMOS considers that a visitor and interpretation strategy should be further developed to allow a wider understanding of the historical context of the Genocide, based on the documentation of the reconciliation process. Such a strategy should not only embrace the historical past but also its present day meaning. Furthermore, such full interpretation should be available at all the nominated component parts associated with the Genocide.

Community involvement

The local population and associations of survivors (IBUKA) and family members of the victims have been part of the memorialisation process of the four memorial sites included in the nominated serial property. Families visit their relatives in the gardens of memory where graves have been accommodated for the victims. The local population are in charge of regular cleaning of the memorial sites through community work.

In May 2023, ICOMOS requested clarifications on whether the nomination process has been based on an inclusive dialogue involving all relevant stakeholders, based on a shared understanding of the events both nationally and regionally. The State Party responded in June 2023 that the nomination of the serial property is supported by the Rwandan population in general, and that it has been the result of a process which included the local communities living in the surroundings of the nominated component parts, but also the survivors, schools, universities, and Rwandan diaspora communities among other relevant actors.

ICOMOS acknowledges the additional information provided by the State Party and considers that further information is needed to clarify how memories of all those impacted by the conflict have been collected and collated to identify, protect, conserve, present and interpret the nominated serial property, and how these are contributing to the on-going reconciliation process.

Effectiveness of the protection and management of the nominated property

In summary, ICOMOS considers that the legal protection of the nominated serial property as national cultural heritage should be adopted promptly. The management plan should be updated taking into consideration an established baseline for the nominated component parts. Moreover, ICOMOS considers that a visitor and interpretation strategy should be further developed and its content expanded in coordination and with the participation of all relevant actors, in particular local communities, associations of survivors and families of the victims. Furthermore, ICOMOS considers that protocols for disaster risk management should be incorporated in the updated management plan, and Heritage Impact Assessments be integrated in the planning framework.

6 Conclusion

The Genocide in Rwanda in 1994 is a highly notable event due to its intensity – the number of people exterminated in a relatively short period of time –, and its modality – pre-meditated and organised extermination of civilians by neighbours, family members and militias. The Genocide in Rwanda has been influential at a global level in the process of creation of the International Criminal Court (2002), through the establishment of the International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda (1994-2015). In order to remember the Genocide in Rwanda, the United Nations General Assembly has established the International Day of Reflection on the 1994 Genocide against the Tutsi in Rwanda on April 7, recalling the importance of early warning and prevention of mass atrocities and the need for the international community to intervene in situations of genocide.

The nomination dossier and additional information provided by the State Party explain the circumstances of the Genocide in four hills where memorial sites have been erected. However, a wider understanding of the events, both in terms of historical background and spatial impacts has not been presented, nor the outcomes of the Genocide and their influence at a regional or global level have been discussed. ICOMOS understands that as a recent event, its outcomes and influence are still ongoing, and observes that a reflection on its historical impacts requires a longer-term perspective. However, in light of the requirements of the World Heritage Convention, the *Operational Guidelines for the Implementation of the World Heritage Convention* and the *Guiding Principles*, further contextualisation of the event is necessary in order to justify the serial approach, the selection of the four component memorial sites presented in the nomination dossier and criterion (vi), to better understand the global significance of the nominated property.

According to the definition that is provided by the *Guiding Principles*, only sites with tangible evidence of the events that happened can be understood as ‘sites of memory’ under the World Heritage Convention. Two of the four

component parts, Nyamata church and Murambi school, contain tangible evidence of the massacres that were perpetrated there and fully reflect the horrors of this Genocide. As regards the component parts of Gisozi and Bisesero, further information is needed to clarify how they could be considered sites of memory, as they have been built as memorial sites in the aftermath of the Genocide. Even though narratives associated to the event in Bisesero are presented, further clarification on the potential attributes of these two component sites is necessary to demonstrate the proposed Outstanding Universal Value under criterion (vi).

More details need to be provided on the context and historical background of the Genocide, as it was not a spontaneous event, but one linked to tensions that have a long history with regional implications. The nomination dossier has not explored the wider historical and regional context and has tended to concentrate on the massacres and their immediate history in the four particular hills of Nyamata, Murambi, Gisozi and Bisesero. ICOMOS considers that the Genocide against the Tutsi in Rwanda should be placed in a broader historical and geocultural context than the national one to further the understanding of the many factors that led to it, in order to justify how the nominated sites, demonstrate international value.

A broader understanding of the context and history needs to inform the interpretation and presentation of the nominated serial property considering a diversity of voices. Interpretation needs to present a complete history at each of the component parts and to embrace both the historical past and present-day meanings.

A further dimension that needs to be strengthened is how narratives of the event from all sides have been gathered and collated, and how they contribute to ongoing reconciliation processes.

The legal protection as memorial sites is adequate, however, a cultural heritage designation is in process of being adopted. ICOMOS considers that the adoption of this designation is fundamental for the appropriate conservation of the nominated serial property. The management system relies on the Ministry of National Unity and Civic Engagement which collaborates with the districts and with local communities, associations of survivors as well as family members of the victims through memorialisation processes and community works. ICOMOS considers that as cultural heritage, the nominated serial property should also count with the participation of relevant heritage-related national and local agencies in its management system, in particular to provide the technical expertise for heritage conservation and management.

ICOMOS considers that a baseline for conservation, management and monitoring of the nominated component parts should be developed. The management plan has expired and is in the process to be updated for the period 2023-2028. ICOMOS considers that this management plan should focus on the establishment of a

baseline for the conservation and monitoring of the nominated component parts, and that it should incorporate considerations for disaster risk management as well as a visitor and interpretation strategy. Furthermore, ICOMOS considers that Heritage Impact Assessments should be integrated into the planning system for the buffer zones and wider settings of the nominated property.

7 Recommendations

Recommendations with respect to inscription

ICOMOS recommends that the examination of the nomination of the Memorial sites of the Genocide: Nyamata, Murambi, Gisozi and Bisesero, Rwanda, to the World Heritage List be **deferred** in order to allow the State Party, with the advice of ICOMOS and the World Heritage Centre, if requested, to:

- Provide a wider historical and geocultural framework to allow a broader understanding of the context of the Genocide and its impacts and outcomes at regional and global levels, in order to frame and strengthen a justification for Outstanding Universal Value that would support a serial approach and a rationale for the selection of the component parts that would provide a complete understanding of the events;
- Provide further details and documentation on how narratives of the event from all sides have been gathered and collated, and how they are contributing to the ongoing, long-term reconciliation process.
- Develop an interpretation and presentation plan for the component parts that embraces a diversity of voices, with the complete history explained at each nominated component site and their present-day meaning;

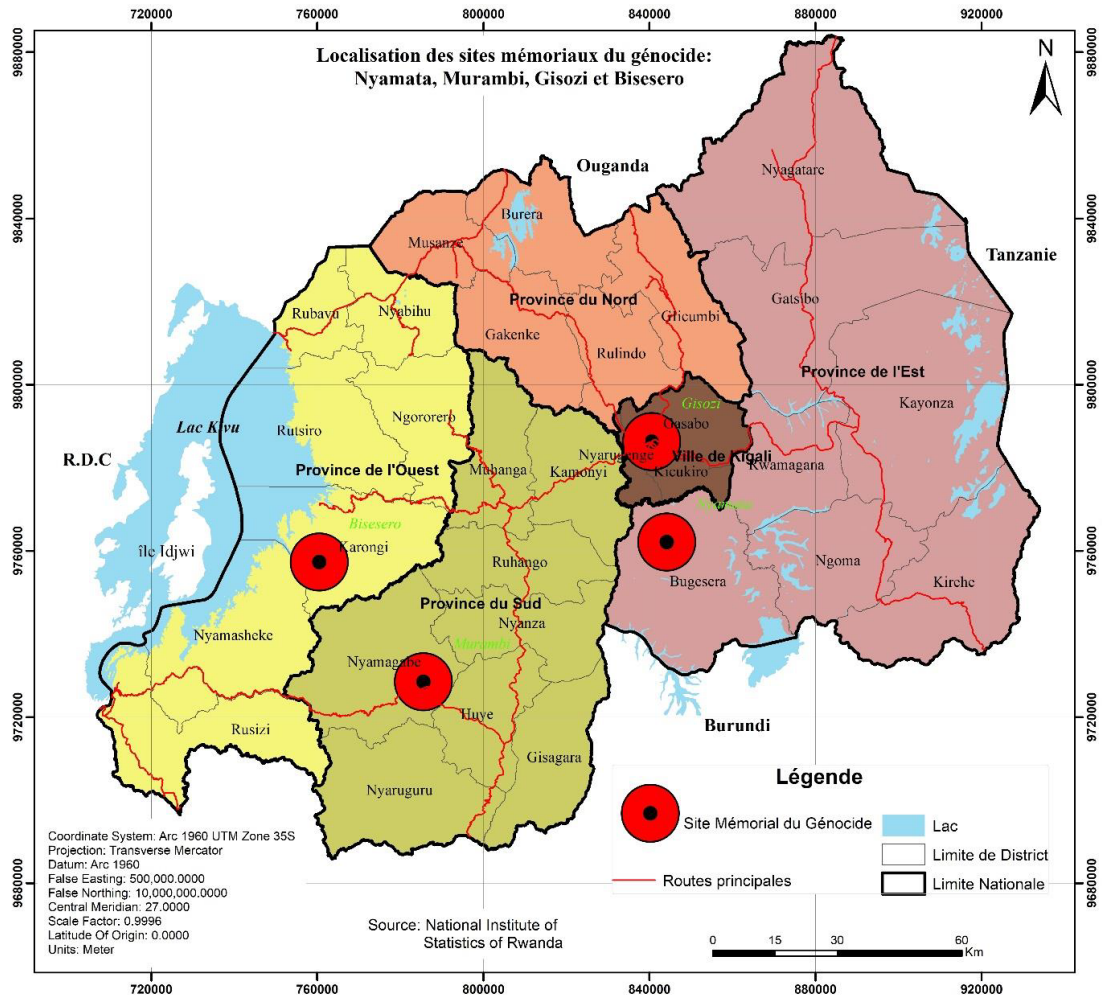
Any revised nomination should be visited by a mission to the site.

Additional recommendations

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

- a) Documenting and preparing a baseline for the conservation, management and monitoring of the component parts of the nominated serial property,
- b) Adopting the designation of the component parts as national cultural heritage,
- c) Updating the management plan including disaster risk management protocols and a visitor and interpretation strategy that is participatory and inclusive of all relevant actors,

- d) Incorporating Heritage Impact Assessments into the planning framework of the buffer zones and wider setting of the nominated property,
- e) Developing a monitoring system that includes key indicators that are related to the key attributes and main threats;



Map showing the location of the nominated component parts