

**REPORT ON THE JOINT WORLD HERITAGE CENTRE/ICOMOS  
REACTIVE MONITORING MISSION TO  
SAMARRA ARCHAEOLOGICAL CITY, IRAQ**

**FROM 10 TO 16 JUNE 2023**



Samarra Archaeological City: View from inside the courtyard of the Great Mosque (top) and Al-Ma'shuq Palace (bottom) © UNESCO/May Shaer

## **ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

The members of the joint World Heritage Centre/ICOMOS Reactive Monitoring mission to Samarra Archaeological City would like to extend sincere appreciation to the Iraqi authorities for kindly facilitating the mission, whose objectives could not have been achieved without their support and full involvement.

The mission is especially grateful to H.E. Dr. Ahmed Fakak Al Badrani Minister of Culture, Tourism, and Antiquities, and to H.E. Dr. Laith Majeed Hussein, Chairman of the State Board of Antiquities and Heritage (SBAH) for his kind support and facilitation to ensure a successful mission, as well as for the fruitful exchanges and discussions. Sincere gratitude is also extended to H.E. Mr. Wadee Al-Batti, Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary, Permanent Delegate of Iraq to UNESCO for his continued support in the organization of the mission.

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The mission had extensive discussions and deliberations with H.E. Dr. Riyad Hamid Tais, Deputy Governor of Samarra for Services and Reconstruction, Mr. Salem Abdullah Ali, Inspector of Antiquities and Heritage of Salaheddin, Mr. Ayad Maher Abdel Latif, site manager of Samarra Archaeological City, and the various teams representing the local authorities and the site contractor. The mission is grateful to all of them for the fruitful discussions and guidance during the site visits.

Special thanks are also extended to the UNESCO Office in Iraq, and its Director Mr. Paolo Fontani, Mr. Junaid Sorosh-Wali, Chief of Culture, and the whole team in Baghdad and Erbil, for coordinating, facilitating, and accompanying the mission, and without whose support it would not have been possible to successfully achieve. The mission team was accompanied throughout by Mr. Junaid Sorosh-Wali, who provided continuous support and insight.

### **Mission Representatives**

May Shaer, UNESCO World Heritage Centre  
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## **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY AND LIST OF RECOMMENDATIONS**

The joint World Heritage Centre/ICOMOS Reactive Monitoring mission to Samarra Archaeological City was undertaken in conjunction with the Reactive Monitoring mission to Hatra, from 10 to 16 June 2023. The mission to Samarra Archaeological City was carried out in accordance with Decision **44 COM 7A.8** of the World Heritage Committee (Fuzhou/Online, 2021), with the main purpose being to assess the overall state of conservation of the property and the damage incurred and to discuss with the authorities the goals and actions required to protect the property. The mission took into consideration its terms of reference and previous decisions of the World Heritage Committee. Site visits were conducted over two days, and meetings were held with the authorities.

Accordingly, the mission conducted an **assessment of the overall state of conservation of the property, having particular regard to identified attributes of the property which support its Outstanding Universal Value**. Site visits were organized for several attributes,

namely the Great Mosque and Al-Malwiya minaret, and Qasr A-Khalifa (Caliphal Palace), Al-Ma'shuq Palace, Balkuwara (Al-Manqur) Palace and Tell Al-Suwwan. The main issues that have been observed as impacting the property have been identified in relation to boundaries of the property and its buffer zone, overall protection and management, and overall conservation approach. Several attributes that convey Outstanding universal Value (OUV) are vulnerable to weathering effects and deterioration, and others have been previously reconstructed with incompatible materials and techniques.

The mission recognized the multiple challenges that the State Party has faced in managing the property, in terms of context, size and complexity, and the necessity of addressing the needs of a growing city located within the buffer zone, and the various attributes with associated requirements. The property has a major significance to the local population and to the country as a whole. Several parts of the property are currently well protected and accessible, yet this may not be the case for all. Nevertheless, there is a recent improvement of the context, and the State Party has been able to better monitor and prevent further encroachment.

The mission also **reviewed any condition or impact assessments that have been already carried out, as well as intervention measures undertaken to mitigate the impact of prevailing threats and improve the conservation of the property.** A complete data collection and detailed condition assessments are needed, after which conservation works may be planned, focusing on a minimal intervention approach, in addition to protection measures addressing encroachment, looting and environmental factors.

The **development of a Desired state of conservation for the removal of the property from the List of World Heritage in Danger (DSOCR) and the identification of corrective measures to achieve the DSOCR** have not been initiated. Although there may still be some concerns with regard to accessibility of certain parts of the property, the mission considers that it would be important that the process is initiated, with the support of the World Heritage Centre and ICOMOS. This process would allow for establishing the priority areas for intervention, whether at the level of establishing adequate management and conservation or any necessary specific interventions.

With regard to the **steps needed to develop comprehensive conservation and management plans**, the mission considers that the process for initiating those plans is a priority. Considering that the property comprises a number of monuments and archaeological sites with varying condition, a comprehensive conservation planning framework, with a clear conservation approach, is essential to guide future conservation interventions. Following the mapping of attributes, and an overall assessment of condition, priority emergency interventions should be developed, comprising protection and preventive actions, as well as urgent conservation actions. The conservation approach should outline a methodology for documenting and assessing condition, including previous interventions, as well as for conservation planning. This approach would also address the protection and conservation of standing remains of monuments that were not heavily reconstructed in the past, as well as excavated, or partly excavated, sites. Based on priority sites that have been identified, specific site conservation plans may need to be developed.

The mission **discussed overall strategic aims for the property in relation to balancing conservation with the need for the property to be better integrated with, and provide benefits to, local communities.** In particular, challenges related to the development of the city of Samarra, located in the buffer zone, were extensively discussed during the mission. The mission acknowledged the urgent necessity to upgrade infrastructure and respond to the needs of the city and its population in terms of providing the necessary services and accommodating population growth. The fact that the city is located within the buffer zone should not prohibit the development of infrastructure and services. However, it would be

important to ensure adequate planning and conduct the necessary Heritage Impact Assessment studies in line with the Guidance and Toolkit for Impact Assessments in a World Heritage Context, in order to ensure that future planning does not have any negative impact on the Outstanding universal Value (OUV) of the property. The process for the development of urban guidelines to inform the development of a Master Plan for the city, may entail consideration of the approach outlined in the 2011 UNESCO Recommendation on the Historic Urban Landscape (HUL), and the creation of synergies between the World Heritage property and the city, ensuring the engagement of all stakeholders, including communities. Such a process would contribute to ensuring the protection of OUV the property, while also safeguarding the character of the traditional/old city of Samarra, and also contributing to the sustainable social, and economic development of the city.

The mission also **assessed recent developments, reports, and projects concerning the property and its buffer zone such as interventions at the Great Mosque, Al-Malwiya (Spiral) Minaret, and Qasr al-Khalifa (Caliphal Palace), the condition of Al-Mashuq (Asheq) palace and proposed intervention work, ongoing and planned projects in the buffer zone, and others as deemed necessary.** The rationale and processes were discussed with the State Party. Some strategic projects are being undertaken, particularly focusing on the Great Mosque and Qasr al-Khalifa (Caliphal Palace), yet, overall, sufficient monitoring is not being carried out. Monuments that had been heavily reconstructed in the past require detailed documentation indicating all previous interventions and current condition, after which only minimal interventions, and those focusing on preventive conservation measures, prevent may be needed to mitigate any additional potential damage.

## **Recommendations**

Recommendation 1: It would be important to ensure that the buffer zone retains its function as an additional layer of protection for the property, as stipulated in paragraphs 103-107 of the Operational Guidelines for the Implementation of the World Heritage Convention, while at the same time, it would safeguard the character of the traditional/old city of Samarra and contribute to its sustainable social, and economic development. It is therefore recommended that the attributes of OUV of the property are clearly defined and an overall mapping of these attributes is carried out, in addition to mapping all monuments and archaeological sites in the buffer zone, as well as the social, cultural and other links with property – in line with the 2011 UNESCO Recommendation on the Historic Urban Landscape (HUL) – in order to define how the buffer zone supports the OUV of the property. This process would also entail conducting a 'views' study, particularly with regard to specific views to the Great Mosque and Al-Malwiya minaret.

Recommendation 2: The definition of the buffer zone could provide a basis for urban design guidelines for the city of Samarra and its expansion area to be established, which would inform the preparation of a Master Plan of the city. The guidelines, with a set of recommendations for future planning, should then guide the development of the city, taking into consideration the approach outlined in the HUL Recommendation, and the creation of synergies between the World Heritage property and the city, ensuring the engagement of communities.

Recommendation 3: Conducting a Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA), to be followed by Heritage Impact Assessments (HIA), in line with the Guidance and Toolkit for Impact Assessments in a World Heritage Context, would inform the decision-making process early on in terms of establishing a master plan for the city and its expansion.

Recommendation 4: It is recommended to initiate work on the preparation of an overall comprehensive Management Plan for the property and its buffer zone as soon as possible, with a monitoring system and a risk mitigation plan, following an overall assessment of condition, risks and threats. The Management Plan would set the overall vision for the

management of the property, and comprise the necessary policies for protection, conservation and visitor management, with the needed human and financial resources.

Recommendation 5: It is recommended to proceed with the establishment of an onsite management unit, equipped with the necessary skilled personnel and equipment to oversee and monitor all aspects related to the property, including, documentation, protection and encroachment issues, research and excavation, conservation and restoration work, and interpretation and visitor management.

Recommendation 6: Preparation of a detailed map with an assessment of existing encroachment on the property, and any potential threats of encroachment, would help in the monitoring process and ensure a timely response.

Recommendation 7: It would be important to improve the coordination between the various stakeholders involved with the management of the property and its buffer zone, to ensure participation in all aspects of the decision-making process.

Recommendation 8: Considering that the property comprises a number of monuments and archaeological sites with varying current condition, it is recommended to develop an overall comprehensive conservation planning framework with a clear conservation approach, as a priority to guide future conservation interventions. The conservation approach would outline a methodology for documenting and assessing condition – including previous interventions – as well as for conservation planning. This approach would address the reconstructed monuments, standing remains of monuments that were not heavily reconstructed in the past, and excavated, or partly excavated, sites. Within this framework, mapping of attributes and an overall assessment of condition would be carried out, after which priorities could be established and emergency interventions identified, comprising protection and preventive actions, as well as urgent conservation actions.

Recommendation 9: Upon establishing the overall conservation planning framework, site specific conservation plans may need to be developed, based on priority sites that have been identified. As a first step of conservation planning, detailed documentation and condition assessment of the site in question is to be carried out. It is recommended that, as far as possible, such site specific conservation plans focus on preventive conservation measures, and not include any further reconstruction of architectural elements, unless necessary for protection.

Recommendation 10: For major monuments that have been previously reconstructed and are currently undergoing further interventions, it would be important to carry out a complete data collection and mapping of all previous interventions, together with a detailed condition assessment. This would help in understanding the history of the structures and previous interventions. Accordingly, conservation measures may be established and planned, outlining minimum interventions that are necessary to ensure the long-term conservation of these monuments, and primarily aimed at retaining authenticity. Preventive conservation measures may comprise water drainage and mitigation of water infiltration (such as along the tops of walls). For any planned conservation works, it would be essential to use materials and techniques that are compatible with original ones (such as in masonry repointing). It is recommended to seek alternative options to cladding, and to preserve all remains of original building materials, such as parts of walls, tiles and stucco work, in situ.

Recommendation 11: It is recommended that no further reconstruction work is planned, and that interventions focus on preventive conservation measures. It is also recommended that any planning for the reinstatement of architectural elements is preceded by detailed studies, analyses and a rationale.

Recommendation 12: In relation to the green area that has been established, it is recommended to ensure a well-studied irrigation system, avoiding any potential impact on the archaeological remains and monuments.

Recommendation 13: For excavated, or partially sites, it is recommended to conduct a full analysis of the current state of conservation of the site in question, in order to ascertain its vulnerabilities. Such an analysis could form the basis of a conservation plan that identifies where consolidation or restoration work is needed and where, if any, further excavation might be justified, and overall, the best conservation strategy to optimize the protection and conservation of the site. It is recommended that, as far as possible, conservation actions comprise minimal intervention measures that would ensure the long-term protection and conservation of standing remains, and mitigation of the impact of environmental degradation (such as in repointing, capping tops of walls, water drainage, and others).

Recommendation 14: Site interpretation and presentation of the monuments that are currently open to the public would ensure adequate communication for visitors, in terms of transmitting the history and significance of the property and the individual monuments, including in relation to its context and timeline of excavation and past reconstruction works.

Recommendation 15: It is recommended that a team is established, equipped with the skills needed to carry out conservation works in line with best practices. Hence, it would be important to implement a capacity building programme focused on cultural heritage conservation and restoration.

Recommendation 16: It is recommended that all documentation, assessments and the overall Conservation Planning Framework, as well as Conservation Plans, with the related Heritage Impact Assessment studies, prepared in line with the Guidance and toolkit for Impact Assessments in a World Heritage Context, are submitted to the World Heritage Centre for review by ICOMOS prior to implementation.

Recommendation 17: It is recommended that a framework for a Desired state of conservation for removal of the property from the List of World Heritage in Danger, with a set of corrective measures and timeline for implementation is initiated, in collaboration with the World Heritage Centre and ICOMOS as soon as possible.

## **I. THE PROPERTY**

### **Inscription History**

Samarra Archaeological City was inscribed in 2007 on the List of World Heritage in Danger at the 31st session of the World Heritage Committee (Decision **31 COM 8B.23**) simultaneously with its inscription on the on the World Heritage List under criteria (ii), (iii) and (iv). It comprises ten component sites (areas and single monuments), covering a total area of 15,058 hectares, with a buffer zone of 31,414 hectares. At the time of its inscription on the List of World Heritage in Danger, it was noted that protective procedures have been in abeyance since 2003 and the principal risk to the property arises from the inability of the responsible authorities to exercise control over the management and conservation of the site. The Committee requested the State Party, in consultation with the World Heritage Centre and ICOMOS, to develop a draft statement of the desired state of conservation for the property, and recommended that all possibilities offered by the World Heritage Convention be used to engage immediately in preventive measures.

## **Summary of the Retrospective Statement of Outstanding Universal Value**

### Brief Synthesis

The ancient capital of Samarra dating from 836-892 provides outstanding evidence of the Abbasid Caliphate which was the major Islamic empire of the period, extending from Tunisia to Central Asia. It is the only surviving Islamic capital that retains its original plan, architecture and arts, such as mosaics and carvings. Samarra has the best preserved plan of an ancient large city, being abandoned relatively early and so avoiding the constant rebuilding of longer lasting cities.

Samarra was the second capital of the Abbasid Caliphate after Baghdad. Following the loss of the monuments of Baghdad, Samarra represents the only physical trace of the Caliphate at its height.

The city preserves two of the largest mosques (Al-Malwiya and Abu Dulaf) and the most unusual minarets, as well as the largest palaces in the Islamic world (the Caliphal Palace Qasr al-Khalifa, al-Ja'fari, al Ma'shuq, and others). Carved stucco known as the Samarra style was developed there and spread to other parts of the Islamic world at that time. A new type of ceramic known as Lustre Ware was also developed in Samarra, imitating utensils made of precious metals such as gold and silver.

### Criteria

Criterion (ii): Samarra represents a distinguished architectural stage in the Abbasid period by virtue of its mosques, its development, the planning of its streets and basins, its architectural decoration, and its ceramic industries.

Criterion (iii): Samarra is the finest preserved example of the architecture and city planning of the Abbasid Caliphate, extending from Tunisia to Central Asia, and one of the world's great powers of that period. The physical remains of this empire are usually poorly preserved since they are frequently built of unfired brick and reusable bricks.

Criterion (iv): The buildings of Samarra represent a new artistic concept in Islamic architecture in the Malwiya and Abu Dulaf mosques, in the form of a unique example in the planning, capacity and construction of Islamic mosques by comparison with those which preceded and succeeded it. In their large dimensions and unique minarets, these mosques demonstrate the pride and political and religious strength that correspond with the strength and pride of the empire at that time.

Since the war in Iraq commenced in 2003, this property has been occupied by multi-national forces that use it as a theatre for military operations.

The conditions of integrity and authenticity appear to have been met, to the extent evaluation is possible without a technical mission of assessment. After abandonment by the Caliphate, occupation continued in a few areas near the nucleus of the modern city but most of the remaining area was left untouched until the early 20th century. The archaeological site is partially preserved, with losses caused mainly by ploughing and cultivation, minor in comparison with other major sites. Restoration work has been in accordance with international standards.

The boundaries of the ten component sites and their surrounding buffer zone appear to be both realistic and adequate. Prior to current hostilities, the State Party protected the site from intrusions, whether farming or urban, under the Archaeological Law. Protective procedures have been in abeyance since 2003 and the principal risk to the property arises from the inability of the responsible authorities to exercise control over the management and conservation of the site.

The Complete Statement of Outstanding Universal Value (OUV) can be found in Annex 5.

The attributes that convey OUV have not been mapped out or listed yet. Nevertheless, the Statement of OUV highlights the following monuments:

- Great Mosque and Al-Malwiya
- Abu Dulaf Mosque
- Caliphal Palace (Qasr al-Khalifa)
- Al-Ja'fari Palace
- Al-Ma'shuq Palace
- Al-Musharrahahat Palace
- Al-Istablat
- Qubbat al-Sulaybiyya

How these sites contribute to OUV needs to be defined together with all other attributes, including the planning of the property, artistic decoration, methods of construction, local industries and religious associations.

### **Key Decisions of the World Heritage Committee**

Initial review of the property by the World Heritage Committee took place at the 31st session in 2007 (Decision **31COM 8B.23**). Upon the simultaneous inscription of the property on the World Heritage List and the List of World Heritage in Danger, the Committee requested the State Party, in consultation with the World Heritage Centre and ICOMOS, to develop a draft a desired state of conservation for the property based on its Outstanding Universal Value, and recommended that all possibilities offered by the World Heritage Convention be used to engage immediately in preventive measures and, when the situation made this possible, in conservation work for Iraq's cultural heritage generally and for all properties inscribed on Iraq's Tentative List in particular.

At its 32nd session in 2008, the World Heritage Committee noted with great concern the continuing difficult situation in Iraq and deplored the loss of human lives (Decision **32 COM 7A.17**). The Committee also noted with concern the continued destruction of the archaeological remains through vehicular movement and called upon the State Party to ensure that this is addressed. It also encouraged the State Party, should the situation allow it, to implement the corrective measures identified at the time, including: a) Establishment of a local management coordination unit on the site; b) Preparation and implementation of a conservation and management plan; and c) Maintenance and emergency conservation activities. The Committee also reiterated its request to the State Party to develop, in consultation with the World Heritage Centre and the Advisory Bodies, a proposal for the Desired state of conservation for the removal of the property from the List of World Heritage in Danger. These requests were reiterated at the 33rd and 34th sessions (Decisions **33 COM 7A.17**, **34 COM 7A.19**, and **35 COM 7A.21**).

Following the request of the Committee at its 33rd and 34th sessions that the State Party, should the situation allow, invite a joint World Heritage Centre/ICOMOS Reactive Monitoring mission to the property, a mission took place in June 2011. The Committee encouraged the State Party to implement the recommendations of this mission (Decision **36 COM 7A.22**), and urged it to prioritize actions related to developing baseline documentation to carry out a detailed conservation condition survey, undertaking identified preventive conservation actions, identifying regulatory measures to ensure the protection of the property and establishing protocols for the approval of public works in the vicinity of the site, including the development of heritage and environmental impact assessments, initiating the planning process for the development of the Management Plan for the property, including a comprehensive conservation plan, and establish a site management unit with adequate staff to implement priority conservation measures as well as maintenance and monitoring actions. The



Committee also noted the limited capacities, and reiterated its invitation to the State Party to submit an International Assistance request to support the implementation of capacity building endeavors, and, called upon the international community to financially and technically support the implementation of these measures. These requests were reiterated at the 37th and 38th sessions.

In 2014, the World Heritage Committee welcomed the efforts made by the State Party in the implementation of a restoration programme for the property (Decision **38COM 7A.3**), and in 2015, the Committee commended the State Party for its efforts to ensure the protection of the property in spite of the difficult prevailing situation (Decision **39 COM 7A.26**).

At the 40th session, the World Heritage Committee encouraged the State Party to pursue its efforts to ensure the protection of the property, despite the impossibility to access it, and expressed its great concern about the absence of information on the state of conservation of the property (Decision **40COM 7A.12**).

In 2017, at its 41st session, the Committee commended the State Party for documenting the damage done to the affected monuments, and requested the State Party to submit a copy of this documentation for review by the World Heritage Centre and the Advisory Bodies (Decision **41 COM 7A.35**). It also encouraged the State Party to continue to pursue efforts to ensure the protection of the property, despite the difficult prevailing situation, and expressed its great concern about the continuing lack of information on the state of conservation of the property.

At its 42nd session, the Committee expressed grave concern about the state of conservation of the property following intentional destructive acts (Decision **42COM 7A.20**), and at its 43rd session, it expressed concern following the armed conflict and intentional destructive acts (Decision **43 COM 7A.20**). It reiterated its request that a full and comprehensive assessment be carried out in close collaboration with UNESCO, as soon as security conditions permit and before any remedial actions are undertaken, with the aim of identifying any necessary emergency stabilization work and establishing a road map for longer-term conservation and management actions.

At the 44th session, the Committee expressed again its concern about the condition of the property and the lack comprehensive information on its state of conservation (Decision **44COM 7A.8**). It further reiterated its previous request that interventions be addressed within the framework of the overall assessment of damage and risks and a comprehensive conservation plan prepared in full consultation with the World Heritage Centre and the Advisory Bodies. The committee reminded the State Party to submit to the World Heritage Centre, for evaluation by the Advisory Bodies, detailed information of any future works that may affect the Outstanding Universal Value of the property, in conformity with Paragraph 172 of the *Operational Guidelines*, and requested the State Party to invite a joint World Heritage Centre/ICOMOS Reactive Monitoring mission, once security conditions permit, to assist in assessing damage at the property, preparatory to the development of a comprehensive conservation plan, the identification of corrective measures, and the development of a Desired state of conservation for the removal of the property from the List of World Heritage in Danger (DSOCR).

## **II. SUMMARY OF THE NATIONAL MANAGEMENT SYSTEM FOR THE PRESERVATION AND MANAGEMENT OF THE WORLD HERITAGE PROPERTY**

Since 2002, cultural heritage in Iraq has been protected under Law Number 55 for the Antiquities and Heritage of Iraq.

The State Board of antiquities and Heritage (SBAH), under the Ministry of Culture, Tourism and Antiquities, is responsible for the protection, conservation and management of cultural

heritage in Iraq, including Samarra archaeological City. Article 2 of this law stipulates that the Antiquities Authority (State Board of Antiquities and Heritage (SBAH)) is mandated to:

- *First*, to designate sites that are rich in antiquities and cultural treasures as well as sites of historical significance.
- *Second*, to use the latest scientific and technical methods and means to search for antiquities.
- *Third*, to maintain the countries antiquities, its heritage, and its historical sites and to protect them from damage, harm and deterioration.
- *Fourth*, to build modern museums where antiquities and cultural heritage materials and models may be displayed, thereby enabling citizens and visitors to peruse them and learn about them.
- *Fifth*, to manufacture models of antiquities and cultural heritage materials and to produce for display, sale or exchange depictions of these antiques and cultural heritage materials in photographs, slides and films.
- *Sixth*, to conduct studies and research that highlight the antiquities and cultural heritage of Iraq.
- *Seventh*, to effect the temporary and occasional display of antiquities and cultural heritage materials or copies therefor in foreign museums, to enable foreigners to become acquainted with Iraq's ancient culture and civilization.
- *Eighth*, to educate specialist in antiquities and cultural heritage and to upgrade the efficiency of those specialists by means of training courses, academic scholarships, and fellowships.
- *Ninth*, to organize survey teams for the purpose of conducting comprehensive surveys of antiquities and cultural heritage buildings in Iraq.

The Antiquities and Heritage Law also contains the following articles:

- *Article 6 (Second):* The Antiquities Authority may evacuate persons and property from archeological and cultural heritage sites as well as from their no-use perimeters in case to threat to people and to the archeological and cultural heritage sites.
- *Article 7:* All historic and archaeological sites, including archeological hills and mounds, owned by public juristic persons, shall be registered under the name of the Ministry of Finance. Their use shall be designated and dedicated to serve the purposes of the Public Authority for Antiquities and Heritage.
- *Article 8:* Acting in coordination with relevant state agencies the Antiquities Authority shall conduct a comprehensive archeological survey of archeological and cultural heritage sites and buildings in Iraq. It shall pinpoint those sites and structures on survey maps and documents with fixed coordinates, and it shall incorporate them in its own basic design plans. It shall indicate how these sites are being used as archeological land and buildings and it shall send notice to that effect to the competent municipalities.
- *Article 9 (Third):* Agencies responsible for the preservation and maintenance of archeological sites, [cultural] heritage sites and historical sites shall obtain the written consent of the Antiquities Authority before making or altering any plans for locating general, industrial, agricultural, and housing projects at those sites. They shall also obtain a written consent from the Antiquates Authority before making or altering any plans for the construction, expansion, or beautification of cities and villages or for irrigation, [water] filtration, and or road construction projects at these sites.
- *Article 9 (Fifth):* Building permits shall not be issued for areas comprising archeological sites and for areas that are within one kilometer of such sites without the written consent of the Antiquities Authority...

Furthermore, Article 15 of the legislation prohibits the following:

- *First*, Trespassing on archeological, cultural heritage, historical sites.

- *Second, Farming, residing, building a residence, or constructing any other structures on archeological and cultural heritage sites...*
- *Third, Using archeological sites to deposit construction debris or refuse to erect buildings or burial structures or using them as quarries.*
- *Fourth, Uprooting trees and vegetation and removing structures from archeological sites or undertaking any work that will result in the changing of the features of the archeological site.*
- *Fifth, Establishing industries that pollute the environment or pose a threat to public health in areas that are less than three (3) kilometers away in all directions from archeological sites and cultural heritage buildings.*
- *Sixth, Tearing down an archeological or a cultural heritage building, disposing of its construction materials, or using it in such a way as to risk damaging it, harming it or altering its distinguishing features.*

The law also stipulates penalties for such illegal activities, which may imply an imprisonment for a term not more than 10 years, and the payment of a fine.

Moreover, the State Party has ratified the 1972 World Heritage Convention on 5 March 1974, as well as other UNESCO Culture Conventions as follows:

- 1954 Convention for the Protection of Cultural Property in the Event of Armed Conflict, and its First Protocol (21 December 1967)
- 1999 Second Protocol (6 April 2002)
- 1970 Convention on the Means of Prohibiting and Preventing the Illicit Import, Export and Transfer of Ownership of Cultural Property (12 February 1973)
- 2003 Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage (6 January 2010)
- The 2005 Convention for the Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expressions (22 July 2013)

The State Board of Antiquities and Heritage (SBAH) is the authority responsible for the management of World Heritage sites in the country, and its International Organizations Department is responsible for the implementation of the 1972 Convention. It is represented on the ground by the World Heritage site managers, while the Directorate General of Investigations and Excavations is responsible for all activities at archeological sites.

### III. THE MISSION

Following the invitation by the State Party, the joint World Heritage Centre/ICOMOS Reactive Monitoring mission to Samarra Archaeological City was undertaken in accordance with Decision **44 COM 7A.8** of the World Heritage Committee (Fuzhou/Online, 2021). It was organized in conjunction with the joint World Heritage Centre/ICOMOS Reactive Monitoring mission to Hatra from 10 to 16 June 2023. The main purpose of the mission to Samarra Archaeological City was to assess the overall state of conservation of the property, including any incurred damage.

The mission team was composed of May Shaer, representing the World Heritage Centre, and Yasmine Makaroun, representing ICOMOS International. The mission was accompanied by Mr. Junaid Sorosh-Wali, Chief of Culture at the UNESCO Office in Iraq throughout its duration.

Prior to undertaking a site visit, a meeting was held on 12 June 2023, with the Dr. Laith Majeed Hussein, Head of the State Board of Antiquities and Heritage, and was attended by team members of the International Organizations Department.

The mission visited the property on 13 and 14 June 2023, though it did not have an opportunity to visit all ten components in their entirety, due to time constraints and the security context. In particular, the mission visited the Great Mosque and Al-Malwiya minaret, and Qasr A-Khalifa (Caliphal Palace) in component site (Zone) 2, Al-Ma'shuq Palace in component site (Zone) 7, and Tell al-Suwwan, and Balkuwara (al-Manqur) Palace in component site (Zone) 3.

On 13 June 2023, in conjunction with the site visit, two meetings were organized onsite and at the Headquarters of the Preparatory Committee for the Declaration of Samarra as Capital of Islamic Civilization. The meetings were chaired by H.E. Dr. Riyad Hamid Tais, Deputy Governor of Samarra for Services and Reconstruction, Representative of the Chairman of the Preparatory Committee for the Declaration of Samarra as Capital of Islamic Civilization. The meetings were attended by Mr. Salem Abdullah Ali, Inspector of Antiquities and Heritage of Salaheddin, Mr. Ayad Maher Abdel Latif, Site Manager of Samarra Archaeological City, as well as other representatives of SBAH and the contracting team. On 14 June 2023, a meeting was held onsite with the site manager, and on 15 June 2023, a meeting was organized Eng. Ayad Hassan Hamzeh, Director General of the Directorate of Conservation and Preservation, SBAH, and Dr. Suhad Mohamad Suhail, Director of Excavations Department, Investigations and Excavations Directorate, SBAH. The site visits were led by Mr. Iyad Maher Abdel Latif, Site Manager of Samarra Archaeological City, with the participation of Ms. Zouhour Abbas Lafta and Ms. Ferial Hatem, of International Organizations Department, as well as Mr Laith Saadi Taha (Annex 3 comprises the itinerary and programme, and Annex 4 provides the list of people met).

The terms of reference of the mission comprised the following (Annex 1):

- Assessment of the overall state of conservation of the property, having particular regard to identified attributes of the property which support its Outstanding Universal Value (OUV).
- Review any condition or impact assessments that have been already carried out, as well as intervention measures undertaken to mitigate the impact of prevailing threats and improve the conservation of the property.
- Development of a Desired state of conservation for the removal of the property from the List of World Heritage in Danger (DSOCR) and the identification of corrective measures to achieve the DSOCR.
- Steps needed to develop comprehensive conservation and management plans.
- Discuss overall strategic aims for the property in relation to balancing conservation with the need for the property to be better integrated with, and provide benefits to, local communities.
- Assess recent developments, reports, and projects concerning the property and its buffer zone such as interventions at the Great Mosque, Spiral Minaret, and Caliphate Palace, the condition of the Asheq Palace (Al-Ma'shuq Palace) and proposed intervention work, ongoing and planned projects in the buffer zone, and others as deemed necessary.
- Any other matter that may be relevant.

#### **IV. ASSESSMENT OF THE STATE OF CONSERVATION OF THE PROPERTY**

When the property was inscribed on the List of World Heritage in Danger in 2007, it was noted that protective procedures had been suspended since 2003 and the principal risk to the property arises from the inability of the responsible authorities to exercise control over the management and conservation of the site. Factors affecting the property as identified in previous state of conservation reports have been in relation to the state of conflict that does not allow the responsible authorities to assure the protection and management of the property, the absence of adequate management system and management plan, weathering, and lack of maintenance affecting the fragile structures. The conflict situation and related threats has led to the establishment of security forces at the property and its buffer zone with related

infrastructure installations. Due to the conflict in 2015, incurred damage has been reported at Qubbat al-Sulaybiyyah and Sur Ashnas. In addition, the State Party has previously reported on bulldozing activities and encroachment on the property.

The previous joint World Heritage Centre/ICOMOS Reactive Monitoring mission carried out in 2011 noted the need for the preparation of a management plan as well as a comprehensive conservation plan, with priority emergency interventions. Preventive conservation actions that needed to be undertaken included archaeological cleaning, removal of spoil heaps, drainage, backfilling, temporary stabilization, propping and shoring of endangered structures, capping, and superficial protection of walls. The mission also recommended a mandatory provision to prevent the impact of the future development of the modern city of Samarra while a management plan is formulated.

The mission of June 2023 visited specific monuments located within some of the component sites of the property, notably, the Great Mosque and Al-Malwiya minaret, and Qasr A-Khalifa (Caliphal Palace) in component site (Zone) 2, Al-Ma'shuq Palace in component site (Zone) 7, and Tell al-Suwwan, and Balkuwara (al-Manqur) Palace in component site (Zone) 3. Due to the allocated timeframe and the security context, the mission couldn't assess other attributes of the property, such as Abu Dulaf Mosque and Al-Mushaharrat Palace. Several attributes that convey OUV are vulnerable to weathering effects and deterioration, and others have been previously reconstructed with incompatible materials and techniques. The overall main issues that have been observed as impacting the property have been identified in relation to boundaries of the property and its buffer zone, overall protection and management, and overall conservation approach.

### **Issue 1: Boundaries of the World Heritage Property and Buffer Zone**

The property comprises ten component sites covering a total area of 15,058 hectares, and a surrounding buffer zone of 31,414 hectares. The component sites vary in size, from 0.6 hectares (Qubbat al-Sulaybiyya) to 8953 hectares (Samarra South Zone). The buffer zone includes the city of Samarra (the traditional/old city), which was built over part of the archaeological area in the district of Al-Jubairiya, as described in the nomination file.

During the mission, the State Party expressed its concern with regard to challenges faced in the management of the property considering its scale, and particularly in terms of the buffer zone that encompasses the city of Samarra. Challenges comprise population growth, including through the displacement of communities as a result of conflict, who have settled in the city, as well as encroachment. There is a need to improve the city's infrastructure, which is confined by security barriers, and provide the necessary amenities to the population. Activities related to the development of agriculture and industries pose challenges in terms of additional pressure on archeological areas. At the same time, planning is underway for the city's expansion towards the east, within the boundaries of the buffer zone.

The mission noted that the urgent necessity to upgrade infrastructure and respond to the needs of the city and its population in terms of providing the necessary services and accommodating population growth is well acknowledged. The fact that the city is located within the buffer zone should not prohibit the necessary development of infrastructure and services. However, it would be important to ensure adequate planning and conduct the necessary Heritage Impact Assessment studies in line with the Guidance and Toolkit for Impact Assessments in a World Heritage Context, in order to ensure that future planning does not have any negative impact on the OUV of the property. Maps of archaeological sites located within the buffer zone, with related potential threats would contribute to inform future decision-making processes.

## Recommendations

It would be important to ensure that the buffer zone retains its function as an additional layer of protection for the property, as stipulated in paragraphs 103-107 of the Operational Guidelines for the Implementation of the World Heritage Convention, while at the same time, it would safeguard the character of the traditional/old city of Samarra and contribute to its sustainable social, and economic development. It is therefore recommended that the attributes of OUV of the property are clearly defined and an overall mapping of these attributes is carried out, in addition to mapping all monuments and archaeological sites in the buffer zone, as well as the social, cultural and other links with property, in line with the 2011 UNESCO Recommendation on the Historic Urban Landscape (HUL), in order to define how the buffer zone supports the OUV of the property. This process would also entail conducting a 'views' study, particularly with regard to specific views to the Great Mosque and Al-Malwiya minaret.

Such a definition of the buffer zone could also provide a basis for urban guidelines for the city of Samarra and its expansion area to be established, which would inform the preparation of a Master Plan of the city. The guidelines, with a set of recommendations for future planning, should then guide the development of the city, taking into consideration the approach outlined in the HUL Recommendation, and the creation of synergies between the World Heritage property and the city, ensuring the engagement of communities.

Conducting a Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA), to be followed by Heritage Impact Assessments (HIA), in line with the Guidance and Toolkit for Impact Assessments in a World Heritage Context, would inform the decision-making process early on in terms of establishing a master plan for the city and its expansion.

## **Issue 2: Overall Protection and Management**

The situation of the property, with its ten component sites and a relatively large buffer zone in between the different components and surrounding the property, presents several challenges. The mission was not able to access all components of the property, but managed to visit some locations in component site (Zone) 2 (Great Mosque and Al-Malwiya minaret, and Qasr A-Khalifa (Caliphal Palace) in component site (Zone) 2), component site (Zone) 3 (Tell al-Suwwan, and Balkuwara (Al-Manqur) Palace), and component site (Zone) 7 (Al-Ma'shuq Palace).

It is evident that the property is of a large scale, and there are long distances between the various component sites, with the presence of security infrastructure, and having some parts still difficult to access. The challenges of adequate management of the property as a whole, ensuring its protection from encroachment is evident. There is one site manager for the property, responsible for the monitoring of the site and follows up on legal matters with regard to any encroachments. Currently, there is no onsite unit that oversees the management of the whole property, equipped with adequate facilities or having the necessary budgetary allocations.

The State Party has reported in its 2022 state of conservation report that the property comprises a large number of archaeological sites and archaeological Tells, and that while encroachment and bulldozing acts had increased over the past 5 years as a result of the unstable conditions and the COVID-19 pandemic, these actions have been stopped. It mentioned that conservation interventions can now be considered, due to the current encouraging security situation.

The 2011 Reactive Monitoring mission had stressed that a site Management Plan would be crucial to achieve a comprehensive approach that guarantees the long-term preservation and sustainability of the site and allows for its economic development. The mission also underscored the need to establish a site management unit with staff to coordinate

archaeological research and excavations, conservation, and interpretation, as well as to prepare and implement the Management Plan.

The mission undertaken in June 2023 notes that these recommendations and priorities still stand. A Management Plan is essential, and should include an overall vision for the management of the property and its buffer zone, with policies for protection, conservation and visitor management, and including the necessary human and financial resources. Accordingly, it would be important to establish a site management unit, equipped with the necessary resources.

### Recommendations

It is recommended to initiate work on the preparation of an overall comprehensive Management Plan for the property and its buffer zone as soon as possible, with a monitoring system and a risk mitigation plan, following an overall assessment of condition, risks and threats. The Management Plan would set the overall vision for the management of the property, and comprise the necessary policies for protection, conservation and visitor management, with the needed human and financial resources.

In parallel, it is also recommended to proceed with the establishment of an onsite management unit, equipped with the necessary skilled personnel and equipment to oversee and monitor all aspects related to the property, including, documentation, protection and encroachment issues, research and excavation, conservation and restoration work, and interpretation and visitor management.

Preparation of a detailed map with an assessment of existing encroachment on the property, and any potential threats of encroachment, would help in the monitoring process and ensure a timely response.

Moreover, it would be important to improve the coordination between the various stakeholders involved with the management of the property and its buffer zone, to ensure participation in all aspects of the decision-making process.

### **Issue 3: Conservation Approach**

The 2011 Reactive Monitoring mission noted that the majority of the property is still unexcavated and the authenticity and integrity of the remains and standing monuments are acceptable, except for three buildings where extensive restoration and reconstruction works have been undertaken during the 1980s. These monuments include the Great Mosque and Al-Malwiya minaret, the circular basin of Qasr A-Khalifa (Caliphal Palace) and Al-Ma'shuq Palace. Nevertheless, the 2011 mission noted that the overall conservation approach in Samarra is likely to be acceptable, yet it recommended the several measures and remedial interventions, particularly for the three previously mentioned monuments. It also recommended the development of a holistic conservation approach.

Following the designation of Samarra as Iraq's Capital of Islamic Civilization, by the Iraqi Government, two sites have been selected as priority for restoration and rehabilitation at the property: the Great Mosque and the Caliphal Palace. The State Party reported that works would comprise fencing, building a tourist lounge, and completing the conservation restoration of the Great Mosque, which was halted in 2013 due to the conflict situation at the time. The projects are implemented by the local authority, and a supervision committee has been established, with representatives from the SBAH.

Below is a more detailed assessment of the specific sites visited by the June 2023 mission.

### Great Mosque and Al-Malwiya Minaret

The Great Mosque with its spiral minaret (Al-Malwiya) is one of the most iconic monuments in Samarra and Iraq, and is a major attraction. Built of fired brick and gypsum mortar, the Great Mosque is considered the largest mosque of its time, measuring 264 m x 159 m.

The 2011 mission noted that the columns of the porticos in the area of the open courtyard had been reconstructed using reinforced concrete, and that the external wall and Al-Malwiya minaret had been partially restored and reconstructed using the same materials and techniques. Traces of the works undertaken in the 1980s were still evident, with reinforced concrete foundations and columns installed inside the courtyard. Restoration works were carried out at the Great Mosque in 2010, and along the upper part of Al-Malwiya minaret that was damaged during the conflict in 2006, where the same materials and techniques were used.

Based on a site assessment, the 2011 mission recommended the implementation of immediate actions, including the removal of the concrete columns inside the courtyard following the preparation and submission of a technical study, removal of the modern concrete surface covering the parking area and the peripheral modern walkway, improvement of the drainage system inside and outside mosque, improvement of underground water evaporation at wall bases, backfilling of open trenches and excavations, capping and temporary protection of the upper parts of walls, and treatment of wall surfaces and bases. In 2013, the State Party initiated works at the site, which were interrupted, and resumed again in 2022.

Between June and November 2022, the State Party exchanged information with the World Heritage Centre with regard to ongoing or planned interventions at the Great Mosque, which were subject to a technical review by ICOMOS. The technical reviews noted that further detailed data on previous interventions should be provided if available, or otherwise a detailed analysis should be carried out, which would guide future mitigation and conservation interventions. With regard to setting up a green area next to Al-Malwiya minaret, ICOMOS advised that irrigation might directly affect the site and that full details should be submitted for review with the related Heritage Impact Assessment.

The mission visited the site and noted ongoing work, particularly in terms of paving the area between the Great Mosque and Al-Malwiya Minaret, as well as inside the mosque. The soil fill has been removed, especially along the exterior walls and the interior of the mosque. The concrete columns in the mosque's courtyard, which were previously observed by the 2011 mission, have been somewhat removed, and what can still be observed are low rectangular closed-off bases, along the tiled courtyard floor surface, which is aligned with the level of the existing original surface.

Moreover, the exterior concrete walkways have also been removed and are being replaced by tiled surfaces. The mission was informed about the intention to proceed with interventions at the previously restored mihrab, as well as the reinstallation of a central fountain/basin, though no detailed information was provided. While some repointing of walls and columns, especially along the bases, appears to have been undertaken, though with limited integration and the distinction between the various previous periods of work is not easily discernible in the absence of detailed documentation and studies that illustrate all previous interventions carried and showing their extent and materials used. The State Party has informed that all works undertaken at the site aim to remedy the situation, following inappropriate previous work.

The project for setting up green areas next to the minaret have been implemented, including the associated water system, though the ICOMOS technical review had alerted on potential impact on the minaret. A prototype for the site fence has been built, but its design has not been shared yet with the World Heritage Centre.



The mission considers that it would be important to carry out a complete data collection and mapping of all previous interventions, together with a detailed condition assessment. Accordingly, conservation measures may be established and planned, outlining minimum interventions that are necessary to ensure the long-term conservation of this monument. Preventive conservation measures may comprise water drainage and mitigation of water infiltration (such as along the tops of walls). For any planned conservation works, it would be essential to use materials and techniques that are compatible with original ones (such as in masonry repointing), and to preserve all remains of original material, such as parts of walls or tiling, in situ. It is recommended that any planning for the reinstatement of architectural elements is preceded by detailed studies, analyses and rationale, to be submitted to the World Heritage Centre for review. In relation to the green area that has been established, it is recommended to ensure a well-studied irrigation system, avoiding any potential impact on the archaeological remains and monuments.



**Figures 1 and 2: Views of the ongoing exterior tiling work at the Great Mosque © UNESCO/May Shaer**



**Figure 3: View the courtyard of the Great Mosque © UNESCO/May Shaer**

Qasr Al-Khalifa (Caliphal Palace): Bab Al-'Amma, Qasr Al-Hayr and the Circular Basin

Considered as one of the largest Arab Islamic Palaces (125 ha), the Caliphal Palace comprises living quarters, halls, administration rooms, the diwans, and barracks, in addition to facilities for rest and recreation. It includes Bab Al-'Amma, which was used as the formal ceremonial entrance of the palace, in addition to the palace of Al-Hayr, and the circular basin.

The 2011 mission noted that the circular basin of the Caliphal Palace had been fully reconstructed with the use of poor quality materials and techniques in the 1980s, while Bab Al-'Amma had been restored and partially reconstructed. The mission noted that the authenticity and integrity of this reconstructed monument had been significantly altered, and accordingly, it recommended the development of a comparative study using archives and existing documentation, in order to distinguish between the completely reconstructed parts and original structures. The mission also recommended to complete the documentation and condition assessment of the excavated sector, and to carry out limited interventions at Bab Al-'Amma by protecting the top of the vaulted passage to prevent water infiltration. It also recommended improving site drainage, installing protective capping and sacrificial plaster to protect the upper part of walls, carrying out conservation work for wall decoration, and developing a monitoring programme as well as architectural and archaeological studies.

In its state of conservation report, the State Party mentioned that a number of factors contributed in the deterioration and damage of features of this monument, such as relative humidity, rain water, climate change, and extreme temperature. As a result, cracks have appeared at the weakest points, and the four Iwans have been severely damaged.

In 2022, the State Party exchanged information with the World Heritage Centre with regard to ongoing or planned interventions at the site, which was subject to technical review by ICOMOS. The technical review noted that mitigation of any impacts of previous works should be initiated and a road map for future works should be devised. The State Party informed that encroachments at Qasr Al-Hayr have been removed, interior and exterior plastering has been removed and treatment of walls was to proceed. In addition, debris has been removed from the archaeological area with the adjustment of levels, to be used as a 'green' area. The State Party reported that previous restoration of the circular basin was inadequately undertaken, with inappropriate brick and that its levelling was incorrect.

The June 2023 mission noted that works were being carried out at Qasr Al-Hayr, Bab Al-'Amma and the circular basin. Notably, substantive works are being undertaken in terms of reconstructing unstable or missing parts, and mainly cladding walls of the circular basin with new brick masonry, by directly attaching masonry to the existing previously reconstructed walls. This approach to cladding changes the current proportions and shape of the monument, thus heavily impacting the already altered state of authenticity of the attribute through previous reconstruction work. The original stucco panels have not been homogeneously preserved.

This monument has already been heavily reconstructed in several parts. A complete data collection and mapping of all previous interventions, together with a detailed condition assessment, would help in understanding the history of the structures and previous interventions. Remedial conservation measures could then be proposed, and accordingly and discussed, in collaboration with the World Heritage Centre and ICOMOS. It is recommended that such measures primarily aim at retaining authenticity and ensuring long-term conservation. Preventive conservation measures may entail proper water drainage and the mitigation of water infiltration (such as along the top of walls). For remedial conservation works, it would be essential to use materials and techniques that are compatible with original ones. It is recommended to seek alternative options to cladding, and to preserve all remains of original building materials, including stucco work, in situ.



Figures 4 and 5: Views of the circular basin (left) and brick cladding work (right) © ICOMOS/Y. Makaroun

### Tell al-Suwwan

Tell al-Suwwan is an archaeological site overlooking the Tigris River, located within the boundaries of the property, dating to the Chalcolithic period. The site was excavated during the second half of the last century. The 2011 mission noted that excavated mudbrick walls have been abandoned without protection. With the combined effect of natural deterioration and humidity from the ground, walls have been subjected to continuous erosion. The mission recommended cleaning of the site and removal of vegetation, installation of a drainage system, and capping and laying out sacrificial mud layers to protect tops of walls. In its 2022 state of conservation report, the State Party has noted that this partially excavated site is in need of extensive excavation work.

Through communication with the World Heritage Centre, the State Party has advised of the need to conduct excavation, to install fencing around it, build a road to facilitate access to it, and build services and facilities for the site. Before any archeological excavations are envisaged, it is recommended that a full analysis is needed of the current state of conservation of the site, in order to ascertain its vulnerability from unprotected excavations and possible previous looting activity. Such an analysis could form the basis of a conservation plan that identifies where consolidation or restoration work is needed and where, if any, further excavation might be justified, and overall, the best conservation strategy to optimize the protection and conservation of the site.

The June 2023 mission visited the site and noted the ongoing erosion of walls and excavated trenches, and the presence of mostly dried-up vegetation. The mission was informed that the site is not currently at risk of looting or encroachment.



Figure 6: Tell Al-Suwwan © UNESCO/May Shaer



### Balkuwara (Al-Manqur) Palace

Balkuwara Palace, built in about 854 AD, is situated to the south of the city of Samarra, along the bank of the Tigris river. Archaeological excavations and investigations were carried out in the past, which allowed drawing up a complete plan of the building.

Currently, extant remains of this palace comprise remnants of brick walls with open niches, and surrounding soil fill. The site is located in an open, otherwise empty, area. It appears that no conservation work was previously undertaken at this site, and there are no preventive conservation measures, although it represent one of the main attributes of the property. These remains are subject to continuous deterioration and erosion from environmental factors, particularly rainfall and humidity.

This site is need of adequate conservation and management. A detailed documentation and condition assessment of the current condition of the site would be necessary to establish the basis for developing a conservation plan, with minimum intervention measures to ensure its conservation.



**Figures 7: Balkuwara Palace excavated remains © ICOMOS/Y.Makaroun**

### Al-Ma'shuq Palace

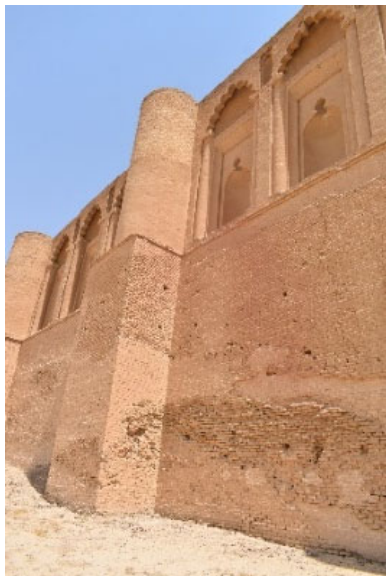
Built in 876, al-Ma'shuq Palace has previously undergone substantive restoration and reconstruction work. The 2011 mission noted that the façades of the palace and the upper floor have been restored and partially reconstructed, and noted a poor quality of the restoration work. It recommended a detailed condition assessment, full architectural documentation of the site, historical studies to identify reconstructed parts, and a preventive conservation plan. Currently, there are no works that are being undertaken at the site, though the State Party has expressed its intention to carry out interventions and urgent preventive conservation work, due to certain vulnerabilities, particularly along the lower parts of walls leading to partial collapse, damage at the upper roofs, and damage to the lower vaults and the secondary entrances. Deterioration and damage have been mainly attributed to water infiltration and humidity, failure of the lime mortar used, the use of concrete material, lack of maintenance, previous use of incompatible material, graffiti, stray animals, in addition to the absence of fencing, onsite facilities, and a site management unit.

During the site visit, the June 2023 mission noted that indeed, this monument is vulnerable in several parts, particularly along its west wall, where the impact of erosion is more prominent than along the other walls. The brick masonry shows that reconstruction or restoration work was executed at different times, with the use of inadequate materials and techniques leading to deterioration or damage to the monument, including cracks and structural failure, due to factors such as the presence of salts and water infiltration into joints.

This monument has been previously reconstructed. As a first step, it would be essential to carry out a complete data collection and mapping of all previous interventions, together with a detailed condition assessment. Accordingly, a conservation plan may be prepared, outlining only minimum intervention measures that would be necessary to ensure its conservation. This may entail water drainage and measures for mitigation of water infiltration, in addition to conservation works, using compatible materials and techniques, and avoiding further reconstruction or cladding works.



Figures 8 and 9: Al-Ma'shuq Palace view (left) and upper floor (right) © ICOMOS/Y. Makaroun



Figures 10 and 11: Al-Ma'shuq Palace, evidence of humidity (left) and slat efflorescence (right) © ICOMOS/Y. Makaroun

The mission did not manage to visit Qubbat al-Sulaybiyya, beyond an overall quick view, or Abu Dulaf Mosque. The State Party had reported in its 2022 state of conservation report that Abu Dulaf Mosque is in need of comprehensive restoration and conservation, as it has suffered from environmental factors and water pooling. The 2011 mission had recommended improving protection at the site, completing its documentation, developing a monitoring programme, improving site drainage and limited interventions, including limited structural reinforcement.

### Recommendations

Considering that the property comprises a number of monuments and archaeological sites with varying current condition, it is recommended to develop an overall comprehensive conservation planning framework with a clear conservation approach, as a priority to guide future conservation interventions. The conservation approach would outline a methodology for documenting and assessing condition, including previous interventions, as well as for conservation planning. This approach would address the reconstructed monuments, standing remains of monuments that were not heavily reconstructed in the past, and excavated, or partly excavated, sites. Within this framework, mapping of attributes and an overall assessment of condition could be carried out, after which priorities could be established and emergency interventions identified, comprising protection and preventive actions, as well as urgent conservation actions.

Upon establishing the overall conservation planning framework, site specific conservation plans may need to be developed, based on priority sites that have been identified. As a first step of conservation planning, detailed documentation and condition assessment of the site in question is to be carried out. It is recommended that, as far as possible, such site specific conservation plans focus on preventive conservation measures, and not include any further reconstruction of architectural elements, unless necessary for protection.

For major monuments that have been previously reconstructed and are currently undergoing further interventions, it would be important to carry out a complete data collection and mapping of all previous interventions, together with a detailed condition assessment. This would help in understanding the history of the structures and previous interventions. Accordingly, conservation measures may be established and planned, outlining minimum interventions that are necessary to ensure the long-term conservation of these monuments, and primarily aimed at retaining authenticity. Preventive conservation measures may comprise water drainage and mitigation of water infiltration (such as along the tops of walls). For any planned conservation works, it would be essential to use materials and techniques that are compatible with original ones (such as in masonry repointing). It is recommended to seek alternative options to cladding, and to preserve all remains of original building materials, such as parts of walls, tiles and stucco work, in situ.

It is also recommended that no further reconstruction work is planned, and that interventions focus on preventive conservation measures. It is also recommended that any planning for the reinstatement of architectural elements is preceded by detailed studies, analyses and a rationale.

In relation to the green area that has been established, it is recommended to ensure a well-studied irrigation system, avoiding any potential impact on the archaeological remains and monuments.

For excavated, or partially sites, it is recommended that a full analysis is needed of the current state of conservation of the site in question, in order to ascertain its vulnerabilities. Such an analysis could form the basis of a conservation plan that identifies where consolidation or restoration work is needed and where, if any, further excavation might be justified and overall, the best conservation strategy to optimize the protection and conservation of the site. It is recommended that, as far as possible, conservation actions comprise minimal intervention measures that would ensure the long-term protection and conservation of standing remains, and mitigation of the impact of environmental degradation (such as in repointing, capping tops of walls, water drainage, and others).

Site interpretation and presentation of the monuments that are currently open to the public would ensure adequate communication for visitors, in terms of transmitting the history and

significance of the property and monuments, including in relation to context and timeline of excavation and previous reconstruction works.

In addition, it is recommended that a team is established, equipped with the skills needed to carry out conservation works in line with best practices. Hence, it would be important to implement a capacity building programme focused on cultural heritage conservation and restoration.

Finally, it is recommended that all documentation, assessments and the overall Conservation Planning Framework, as well as Conservation Plans, with the related Heritage Impact Assessment studies, prepared in line with the Guidance and toolkit for Impact Assessments in a World Heritage Context, are submitted to the World Heritage Centre for review by ICOMOS prior to implementation.

#### **Issue 4: Establishment of the Desired state of conservation for removal of the property from the List of World Heritage in Danger and corrective measures**

When the property was inscribed in 2007 on the List of World Heritage in Danger, a “Desired state of conservation for the removal of the property from the List of World Heritage in Danger” (DSOCR), and a programme for corrective measures, was not developed, in line with paragraph 183 of the Operational Guidelines. Upon the inscription of the property on the List of World Heritage in Danger, the Committee requested the State Party, in consultation with the World Heritage Centre and ICOMOS, to develop a Desired state of conservation for the removal of the property from the List of World Heritage in Danger (DSOCR).

The State Party has not yet initiated the process of preparing a DSOCR with a set of corrective measures for the property. Although there may still be some concerns with regard to accessibility of certain parts of the property, the mission considers that it would be important that the process is initiated, with the support of the World Heritage Centre and ICOMOS. This process would allow for establishing the priority areas for intervention, whether at the level of establishing adequate management and conservation or any necessary specific interventions.

#### Recommendations

It is recommended that a framework for a Desired state of conservation for removal of the property from the List of World Heritage in Danger, with a set of corrective measures and timeline for implementation is initiated, in collaboration with the World Heritage Centre and ICOMOS as soon as possible.

## **V. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

The mission recognizes the multiple challenges that the State Party has faced in managing the property, in terms of context, size and complexity with the various component sites and their associated requirements, as well as with regard to the scale of the buffer zone and the necessity of addressing the needs of a growing city and the provision of services to its population. The fact that the city is located within the buffer zone should not prohibit any necessary development of infrastructure and services. However, it would be important to ensure that the buffer zone retains its function as an additional layer of protection for the property, as stipulated in paragraphs 103-107 of the Operational Guidelines, while at the same time acknowledge its potential role in contributing to the sustainable social and economic development of the city.

The property has a major significance to the population and the whole country. Several parts of the property are currently well protected and accessible, yet this may not be the case for all. Nevertheless, there is a recent improvement of the context, and the State Party has been able to better monitor the property and prevent further encroachment. Several attributes that

convey OUV are vulnerable to weathering effects and deterioration, and others have been previously reconstructed using incompatible materials and techniques. While some of the specific conservation recommendations of the 2011 mission have been addressed, strategic recommendations, such as the preparation of comprehensive Conservation and Management Plans have not been initiated. An overall conservation planning framework is needed, comprising a conservation approach, and a road map for future interventions at the whole property, following overall assessments of condition, threats and risks. Based on identified priorities, conservation plans for major sites could be prepared. Overall, the mission considers that conservation planning should address mitigation measures as a priority, and that further reconstruction planning should not proceed, unless there is an urgent need and is within the scope of conservation plans.

### **Response to the Mission Terms of Reference**

The mission addressed the items outlined in its Terms of Reference as follows:

- **Assessment of the overall state of conservation of the property, having particular regard to identified attributes of the property which support its Outstanding Universal Value**

The mission had an overview of the state of conservation of the property by visiting some of the main attributes. The sites that were part of the visit, included reconstructed monuments (Great Mosque and Al-Malwiya minaret, and Qasr A-Khalifa (Caliphal Palace) in component site (Zone) 2, and Al-Ma'shuq Palace in component site (Zone) 7), a previously excavated monument that had not undergone any interventions (Balkuwara (Al-Manqur) Palace in component site (Zone) 3), and a previously excavated archaeological site (Tell Al-Suwwan in component site (Zone) 3). Due to the allocated timeframe and security context, the mission could not assess other attributes of the property, such as Abu Dulaf Mosque and Al-Mushaharrat Palace. The individual sites vary in context and state of conservation. The main issues that have been observed as impacting the property, have been identified in relation to boundaries of the property and its buffer zone, overall protection and management and overall conservation approach.

- **Review any condition or impact assessments that have been already carried out, as well as intervention measures undertaken to mitigate the impact of prevailing threats and improve the conservation of the property.**

The mission reviewed the situation with regard to specific monuments for which an outline of assessments and planned actions have been provided. For previously reconstructed monuments, it would be important to carry out a complete data collection and detailed condition assessment, after which conservation works may be planned, focusing on a minimal intervention approach. As regards archaeological sites, the consolidation of standing remains may be necessary to avoid further damage and loss of remains, in addition to protection measures from encroachment, looting and environmental factors.

- **Development of a Desired state of conservation for the removal of the property from the List of World Heritage in Danger (DSOCR) and the identification of corrective measures to achieve the DSOCR**

The preparation of a DSOCR with a set of corrective measures for the property has not been initiated yet. Several parts of the property are currently protected and accessible, yet, this may not be the case for all and there may still be some concerns with regard to the accessibility of certain parts. Nevertheless, the mission considers that it would be important that this process is initiated, with the support of the World Heritage Centre and ICOMOS.

- **Steps needed to develop comprehensive conservation and management plans**



The mission noted that while some strategic conservation projects are being undertaken, the preparation of comprehensive Conservation and Management Plans has not been initiated yet. Such plans are considered a priority and should proceed as soon as possible. Establishing an overall conservation planning framework is needed, which comprises a conservation approach with the methodology for documenting and assessing condition, including previous interventions, as well as for future conservation planning. Following this exercise, specific site conservation plans may be developed, based on priority sites that have been identified. In addition, urban guidelines to support the development of a Master Plan for the city of Samarra would support adequate management of the property.

**Discuss overall strategic aims for the property in relation to balancing conservation with the need for the property to be better integrated with, and provide benefits to, local communities**

The State Party has been facing a number of challenges in the management of the property considering its scale, and particularly with regard to the buffer zone that encompasses the city of Samarra. Challenges include issues related to population growth and encroachment. There is a need to improve the city's infrastructure and provide the necessary amenities to the population. These challenges were discussed with the local authorities. The development of adequate guidance for the development of the city and its future expansion, would support the development of the Master Plan for the city, and would contribute to ensuring the protection of OUV the property, while also safeguarding the character of the traditional/old city of Samarra, and also contributing to the sustainable social and economic development of the city. It would be important to define and map the attributes of OUV, map of all monuments and archaeological sites in the buffer zone, as well as social, cultural and other links with property, in line with the 2011 UNESCO Recommendation on the Historic Urban Landscape (HUL) Recommendation, in order to define how the buffer zone supports the OUV of the property. This process would also entail conducting a 'views' study, and consideration of the approach outlined in the 2011 UNESCO Recommendation on the Historic Urban Landscape (HUL), with the creation of synergies between the World Heritage property and the city, ensuring the engagement of all stakeholders, including communities. Such a definition of the buffer zone could also provide a basis for after which urban guidelines for the city of Samarra and its expansion area to be established, which would inform the preparation of a Master Plan of the city.

- **Assess recent developments, reports, and projects concerning the property and its buffer zone such as interventions at the Great Mosque, Al-Malwiya (Spiral) Minaret, and Qasr al-Khalifa (Caliphal Palace), the condition of Al-Mashuq (Asheq) palace and proposed intervention work, ongoing and planned projects in the buffer zone, and others as deemed necessary**

The mission also reviewed onsite the intervention measures carried out, and discussed the rationale and processes with the State Party. Some strategic projects are being undertaken, particularly focusing on the Great Mosque and Qasr al-Khalifa (Caliphal Palace), yet sufficient monitoring is not being carried out. Monuments that had been heavily reconstructed in the past require a detailed documentation indicating all previous interventions and current condition, after which minimal interventions may be needed to mitigate any additional potential damage.

## **Recommendations**

The mission recommends the following:

Recommendation 1: It would be important to ensure that the buffer zone retains its function as an additional layer of protection for the property, as stipulated in paragraphs 103-107 of the Operational Guidelines for the Implementation of the World Heritage Convention, while at the same time, it would safeguard the character of the traditional/old city of Samarra and

contribute to its sustainable social, and economic development. It is therefore recommended that the attributes of OUV of the property are clearly defined and an overall mapping of these attributes is carried out, in addition to mapping all monuments and archaeological sites in the buffer zone, as well as the social, cultural and other links with property – in line with the 2011 UNESCO Recommendation on the Historic Urban Landscape (HUL) – in order to define how the buffer zone supports the OUV of the property. This process would also entail conducting a 'views' study, particularly with regard to specific views to the Great Mosque and Al-Malwiya minaret.

Recommendation 2: The definition of the buffer zone could provide a basis for urban design guidelines for the city of Samarra and its expansion area to be established, which would inform the preparation of a Master Plan of the city. The guidelines, with a set of recommendations for future planning, should then guide the development of the city, taking into consideration the approach outlined in the HUL Recommendation, and the creation of synergies between the World Heritage property and the city, ensuring the engagement of communities.

Recommendation 3: Conducting a Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA), to be followed by Heritage Impact Assessments (HIA), in line with the Guidance and Toolkit for Impact Assessments in a World Heritage Context, would inform the decision-making process early on in terms of establishing a master plan for the city and its expansion.

Recommendation 4: It is recommended to initiate work on the preparation of an overall comprehensive Management Plan for the property and its buffer zone as soon as possible, with a monitoring system and a risk mitigation plan, following an overall assessment of condition, risks and threats. The Management Plan would set the overall vision for the management of the property, and comprise the necessary policies for protection, conservation and visitor management, with the needed human and financial resources.

Recommendation 5: It is recommended to proceed with the establishment of an onsite management unit, equipped with the necessary skilled personnel and equipment to oversee and monitor all aspects related to the property, including, documentation, protection and encroachment issues, research and excavation, conservation and restoration work, and interpretation and visitor management.

Recommendation 6: Preparation of a detailed map with an assessment of existing encroachment on the property, and any potential threats of encroachment, would help in the monitoring process and ensure a timely response.

Recommendation 7: It would be important to improve the coordination between the various stakeholders involved with the management of the property and its buffer zone, to ensure participation in all aspects of the decision-making process.

Recommendation 8: Considering that the property comprises a number of monuments and archaeological sites with varying current condition, it is recommended to develop an overall comprehensive conservation planning framework with a clear conservation approach, as a priority to guide future conservation interventions. The conservation approach would outline a methodology for documenting and assessing condition – including previous interventions – as well as for conservation planning. This approach would address the reconstructed monuments, standing remains of monuments that were not heavily reconstructed in the past, and excavated, or partly excavated, sites. Within this framework, mapping of attributes and an overall assessment of condition would be carried out, after which priorities could be established and emergency interventions identified, comprising protection and preventive actions, as well as urgent conservation actions.

Recommendation 9: Upon establishing the overall conservation planning framework, site specific conservation plans may need to be developed, based on priority sites that have been identified. As a first step of conservation planning, detailed documentation and condition assessment of the site in question is to be carried out. It is recommended that, as far as possible, such site specific conservation plans focus on preventive conservation measures, and not include any further reconstruction of architectural elements, unless necessary for protection.

Recommendation 10: For major monuments that have been previously reconstructed and are currently undergoing further interventions, it would be important to carry out a complete data collection and mapping of all previous interventions, together with a detailed condition assessment. This would help in understanding the history of the structures and previous interventions. Accordingly, conservation measures may be established and planned, outlining minimum interventions that are necessary to ensure the long-term conservation of these monuments, and primarily aimed at retaining authenticity. Preventive conservation measures may comprise water drainage and mitigation of water infiltration (such as along the tops of walls). For any planned conservation works, it would be essential to use materials and techniques that are compatible with original ones (such as in masonry repointing). It is recommended to seek alternative options to cladding, and to preserve all remains of original building materials, such as parts of walls, tiles and stucco work, in situ.

Recommendation 11: It is recommended that no further reconstruction work is planned, and that interventions focus on preventive conservation measures. It is also recommended that any planning for the reinstatement of architectural elements is preceded by detailed studies, analyses and a rationale.

Recommendation 12: In relation to the green area that has been established, it is recommended to ensure a well-studied irrigation system, avoiding any potential impact on the archaeological remains and monuments.

Recommendation 13: For excavated, or partially sites, it is recommended to conduct a full analysis of the current state of conservation of the site in question, in order to ascertain its vulnerabilities. Such an analysis could form the basis of a conservation plan that identifies where consolidation or restoration work is needed and where, if any, further excavation might be justified, and overall, the best conservation strategy to optimize the protection and conservation of the site. It is recommended that, as far as possible, conservation actions comprise minimal intervention measures that would ensure the long-term protection and conservation of standing remains, and mitigation of the impact of environmental degradation (such as in repointing, capping tops of walls, water drainage, and others).

Recommendation 14: Site interpretation and presentation of the monuments that are currently open to the public would ensure adequate communication for visitors, in terms of transmitting the history and significance of the property and the individual monuments, including in relation to its context and timeline of excavation and past reconstruction works.

Recommendation 15: It is recommended that a team is established, equipped with the skills needed to carry out conservation works in line with best practices. Hence, it would be important to implement a capacity building programme focused on cultural heritage conservation and restoration.

Recommendation 16: It is recommended that all documentation, assessments and the overall Conservation Planning Framework, as well as Conservation Plans, with the related Heritage Impact Assessment studies, prepared in line with the Guidance and toolkit for Impact Assessments in a World Heritage Context, are submitted to the World Heritage Centre for review by ICOMOS prior to implementation.

Recommendation 17: It is recommended that a framework for a Desired state of conservation for removal of the property from the List of World Heritage in Danger, with a set of corrective measures and timeline for implementation is initiated, in collaboration with the World Heritage Centre and ICOMOS as soon as possible.

## **VI. ANNEXES**

- Annex 1: Terms of Reference of the Mission (including World Heritage Committee decision(s) requesting the mission to be carried out)
- Annex 2: Composition of Mission Team
- Annex 3: Itinerary and Programme of the Mission as Implemented
- Annex 4: List of People Met
- Annex 5: Statement of Outstanding Universal Value of the Property
- Annex 6: National Management System
- Annex 7: Figures

**Annex 1: Terms of Reference of the Mission (including World Heritage Committee decision(s) requesting the mission to be carried out)**

**TERMS OF REFERENCE**  
**Joint World Heritage Centre/ICOMOS Reactive Monitoring Missions**  
**Hatra and Samarra Archeological City**  
**(Iraq)**

10-16 June 2023

At its extended 44th session (Fuzhou/online, 2021), the World Heritage Committee requested the State Party of Iraq to invite a Joint World Heritage Centre/ICOMOS Reactive Monitoring missions to Hatra and Samarra Archeological City (Decisions **44 COM 7A.7** and **44 COM 7A.8**) (Annex I). The Committee requested that the joint missions assist the State Party in assessing damage at the properties, the identification of corrective measures, and the development of a Desired state of conservation for the removal of the property from the List of World Heritage in Danger (DSOCR), as well as to discuss with the authorities the goals and actions required to protect the property, in order to implement corrective measures and achieve the DSOCR.

For Hatra, work on the elaboration of the Desired state of conservation for the removal of the property from the List of World Heritage in Danger (DSOCR) and related corrective measures has progressed through collaboration between the State Party, the World Heritage Centre, and ICOMOS. Reports have been provided by the State Party on ongoing documentation, assessment and priority interventions, all of which contribute towards the establishment of the DSCOR.

As regards Samarra Archaeological City, the State Party has been submitting information about ongoing and planned projects at the property, for which the respective technical review have been undertaken by ICOMOS, in addition to identifying some priority projects for implementation.

As regards Hatra, the mission will, in particular, address the following:

1. Assessment of the overall state of conservation of the property, having particular regard to identified attributes of the property which support its Outstanding Universal Value (OUV).
2. Assessment of actions and/or resources required to facilitate the protection, repair, rehabilitation and reconstruction of the important monuments.
3. Assessment of implemented actions and projects, as well as review of the identified threats, damage and proposed interventions, which would contribute to the finalization of the DSOCR and corrective measures.
4. Specific advice regarding the proposed DSOCR and potential corrective measures.
5. Progress and steps undertaken towards a comprehensive conservation and management plan for the property.
6. Follow up and progress with regard to boundary clarification.
7. Any other matter that may be relevant.

As regards Samarra Archaeological City, the mission will, in particular, address the following:

1. Assessment of the overall state of conservation of the property, having particular regard to identified attributes of the property which support its Outstanding Universal Value (OUV).

2. Review any condition or impact assessments that have been already carried out, as well as intervention measures undertaken to mitigate the impact of prevailing threats and improve the conservation of the property.
3. Development of a Desired state of conservation for the removal of the property from the List of World Heritage in Danger (DSOCR) and the identification of corrective measures to achieve the DSOCR.
4. Steps needed to develop comprehensive conservation and management plans.
5. Discuss overall strategic aims for the property in relation to balancing conservation with the need for the property to be better integrated with, and provide benefits to, local communities;
6. Assess recent developments, reports, and projects concerning the property and its buffer zone such as interventions at the Great Mosque, Spiral Minaret, and Caliphate Palace, the condition of the Asheq palace and proposed intervention work, ongoing and planned projects in the buffer zone, and others as deemed necessary.
7. Any other matter that may be relevant.

The mission will be carried out by May Shaer, representing the UNESCO World Heritage Centre, and Yasmine Makaroun representing ICOMOS.

The State Party will facilitate the necessary field visits and access to key locations, as well as meetings with stakeholders, including the Ministry of Culture, Tourism and Antiquities, the State Board of Antiquities and Heritage, and other authorities and stakeholders involved in the management of the property, including the local communities.

In order to enable the preparation of the mission, it would be necessary that the following items are provided to the World Heritage Centre and ICOMOS as soon as possible:

1. Background information, documentation and recent report about the two properties, including high resolutions maps.
2. Information on all emergency intervention measures, undertaken or planned at the two properties.
3. The most-recent damage assessment reports for both properties, including available photographic surveys, drawings, graphics and quantitative data.
4. Information on any planned conservation or development projects or other potential interventions at the two properties or buffer zone.
5. A brief outline of the statutory protection available to the properties, and the current management arrangements, including resources and personnel.
6. Current documents (draft or final as available) pertaining to the proposed DSOCR and potential corrective measures to support the removal of the properties from the List of World Heritage in Danger.

Please note that additional information may be requested during or following the mission.

Based on the results of the above-mentioned reviews, assessments and discussions with the State Party representatives, authorities and stakeholders, the mission will prepare a concise report on the findings and recommendations as soon as possible after the completion of the mission, following the standard format (Annex II), for review by the World Heritage Committee. The recommendations will be provided with the mission report, and not during the course of the mission.

## **Previous World Heritage Committee Decision**

Decision: **44 COM 7A.8**

Samarra Archeological City (Iraq)

The World Heritage Committee,

1. Having examined Document WHC/21/44.COM/7A,
2. Recalling Decisions **43 COM 7A.20** and **44 COM 7A.21**, adopted at its 43rd session (Baku, 2019),
3. Taking into account Decision **44 COM 7A.9**, on the World Heritage properties of Iraq,
4. Expresses again its concern about the condition of the property and the lack comprehensive information on its state of conservation, and reiterates its request to the State Party to submit documentation of the damage done to the property as a whole and its affected monuments, for review by the World Heritage Centre and the Advisory Bodies;
5. Also reiterates its request to the State Party that a full and comprehensive assessment be carried out as soon as security conditions permit and before any remedial actions are undertaken, with the aim of identifying any necessary emergency stabilization work and establishing a road map for longer-term conservation and management actions;
6. Further reiterates its previous request that interventions be addressed within the framework of the overall assessment of damage and risks and a comprehensive conservation plan prepared in full consultation with the World Heritage Centre and the Advisory Bodies;
7. Reminds the State Party to submit to the World Heritage Centre, for evaluation by the Advisory Bodies, detailed information of any future works that may affect the Outstanding Universal Value of the property, in conformity with Paragraph 172 of the *Operational Guidelines*;
8. Requests the State Party to invite a joint World Heritage Centre/ICOMOS Reactive Monitoring mission, once security conditions permit, to assist in assessing damage at the property, preparatory to the development of a comprehensive conservation plan, the identification of corrective measures, and the development of a Desired state of conservation for the removal of the property from the List of World Heritage in Danger (DSOCR);
9. Reiterates its appeal to all States Parties to cooperate in the fight against the illicit trafficking of cultural heritage coming from Iraq as per the United Nations Security Council Resolutions 2199 of February 2015, 2253 of December 2015 and 2347 of March 2017;
10. Calls again on all States Parties to support emergency safeguarding measures, including through the UNESCO Heritage Emergency Fund;
11. Also requests the State Party to submit to the World Heritage Centre, by **1 February 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 45th session;
12. **Decides to retain Samarra Archaeological City (Iraq) on the List of World Heritage in Danger.**



## **Annex 2: Composition of Mission Team**

The mission team was composed of the following members:

- May Shaer, Head of Unit, Arab States, UNESCO World Heritage Centre (Paris)
- Yasmine Makaroun, Expert of ICOMOS International

The mission was accompanied by Junaid Sorosh-Wali, Chief of Culture, UNESCO Office in Iraq.

### **Annex 3: Itinerary and Programme of the Mission**

#### **Programme of the Reactive Monitoring Mission to Hatra and Samarra Archaeological City, Iraq (10-16 June 2021)**

##### **Saturday, 10 June 2023**

Arrival in Erbil

##### **Sunday, 11 June 2023**

8:00 – 18:30 Hatra site visit and onsite meeting onsite

23:00 Departure to Baghdad: 23:00

##### **Monday, 12 June 2023**

10:00 – 13:00 Meeting with the Chairman of SBAH

##### **Tuesday, 13 June 2023**

7:30 – 18:30 Samarra Archaeological City site visit and onsite meetings

##### **Wednesday, 14 June 2023**

7:30 – 18:30 Samarra Archaeological City site visit and onsite meetings

##### **Thursday, 15 June 2023**

11:00 – 13:00 Meeting with Director General of the Directorate of Conservation and Preservation and the Director of the Excavations Department, SBAH

##### **Friday, 16 June 2023**

Departure from Baghdad

## **Annex 4: List of People Met**

### **People Met in the Framework of the Reactive Monitoring Mission to Samarra Archaeological City**

#### **12 June 2023: Headquarters of the State Board of Antiquities and Heritage**

- Dr. Laith Majeed Hussein, Chairman, State Board of Antiquities and Heritage (SBAH)
- Ms. Zouhour Abbas Lafta, Director of Translation Section, International Organizations Department, SBAH
- Ms. Ferial Hatem, Director of Documentation and Follow-up Section, International Organizations Department, SBAH

#### **13 June 2023: Samarra Archaeological City (Location of the Great Mosque), and Headquarters of the Preparatory Committee for the Declaration of Samarra as Capital of Islamic Civilization**

- Dr. Riyadh Hamid Tais, Deputy Governor of Samarra for Services and Reconstruction, Representative of the Chairman of the Preparatory Committee for the Declaration of Samarra as Capital of Islamic Civilization
- Mr. Salem Abdullah Ali, Inspector of Antiquities and Heritage of Salaheddin
- Mr. Ayad Maher Abdel Latif, site manager of Samarra Archaeological City
- Mr. Arkan Abdul Razzaq Mohammed, representative of Samarra University
- Eng. Ziad Ahmed Ali, Head of the Engineering Department
- Ms. Abeer Majeed Shaker, Department of Resident Engineer
- M. Marwa Jassim Mohammed, Department of Resident Engineer
- Ms. Hanan Qasim Hamid, Department of Resident Engineer
- Mr. Ayoub Mohammed Hamid, Department of Resident Engineer
- Ms. Rasha Hatem Osman, Department of Resident Engineer
- Mr. Khaled Kamel Hosni, Contractor
- Mr. Ammar Khaled Kamel
- Mr. Laith Saadi Taha, Observer of Antiquities and Heritage, Samarra
- Ms. Shahd Atallah Ahmed, Member of the Supervisory Committee
- Mr. Ahmed Abbas Hussein, Member of the Supervisory Committee

#### **14 June 2023: Samarra Archaeological City (Location of the Great Mosque)**

- Mr. Ayad Maher Abdel Latif, site manager of Samarra Archaeological City
- Ms. Zouhour Abbas Lafta, Director of Translation Section, International Organizations Department, SBAH
- Ms. Ferial Hatem, Director of Documentation and Follow-up Section, International Organizations Department, SBAH

#### **15 June 2023: Samarra Archaeological City (Location of the Great Mosque)**

- Eng. Ayad Hassan Hamzeh, Director General, Directorate of Conservation and Preservation, SBAH
- Dr. Suhad Mohamad Suhail, Director of Excavations Department, Investigations and Excavations Directorate, SBAH
- Ms. Zouhour Abbas Lafta, Director of Translation Section, International Organizations Department, SBAH

## **Annex 5: Statement of Outstanding Universal Value of the Property**

### **Outstanding Universal Value**

The ancient capital of Samarra dating from 836-892 provides outstanding evidence of the Abbasid Caliphate which was the major Islamic empire of the period, extending from Tunisia to Central Asia. It is the only surviving Islamic capital that retains its original plan, architecture and arts, such as mosaics and carvings. Samarra has the best preserved plan of an ancient large city, being abandoned relatively early and so avoiding the constant rebuilding of longer lasting cities.

Samarra was the second capital of the Abbasid Caliphate after Baghdad. Following the loss of the monuments of Baghdad, Samarra represents the only physical trace of the Caliphate at its height.

The city preserves two of the largest mosques (Al-Malwiya and Abu Dulaf) and the most unusual minarets, as well as the largest palaces in the Islamic world (the Caliphal Palace Qasr al-Khalifa, al-Ja'fari, al Ma'shuq, and others). Carved stucco known as the Samarra style was developed there and spread to other parts of the Islamic world at that time. A new type of ceramic known as Lustre Ware was also developed in Samarra, imitating utensils made of precious metals such as gold and silver.

Criterion (ii): Samarra represents a distinguished architectural stage in the Abbasid period by virtue of its mosques, its development, the planning of its streets and basins, its architectural decoration, and its ceramic industries.

Criterion (iii): Samarra is the finest preserved example of the architecture and city planning of the Abbasid Caliphate, extending from Tunisia to Central Asia, and one of the world's great powers of that period. The physical remains of this empire are usually poorly preserved since they are frequently built of unfired brick and reusable bricks.

Criterion (iv): The buildings of Samarra represent a new artistic concept in Islamic architecture in the Malwiya and Abu Dulaf mosques, in the form of a unique example in the planning, capacity and construction of Islamic mosques by comparison with those which preceded and succeeded it. In their large dimensions and unique minarets, these mosques demonstrate the pride and political and religious strength that correspond with the strength and pride of the empire at that time.

Since the war in Iraq commenced in 2003, this property has been occupied by multi-national forces that use it as a theatre for military operations.

The conditions of integrity and authenticity appear to have been met, to the extent evaluation is possible without a technical mission of assessment. After abandonment by the Caliphate, occupation continued in a few areas near the nucleus of the modern city but most of the remaining area was left untouched until the early 20th century. The archaeological site is partially preserved, with losses caused mainly by ploughing and cultivation, minor in comparison with other major sites. Restoration work has been in accordance with international standards.

The boundaries of the core and buffer zone appear to be both realistic and adequate. Prior to current hostilities, the State Party protected the site from intrusions, whether farming or urban, under the Archaeological Law. Protective procedures have been in abeyance since 2003 and the principal risk to the property arises from the inability of the responsible authorities to exercise control over the management and conservation of the site.

## **Annex 6: National Management System**

The State Board of Antiquities and Heritage (SBAH) is the national authority responsible for managing heritage sites and museums of Iraq. Its mandate is stipulated under Law Number 55 of 2002 for the Antiquities and Heritage of Iraq.

The Headquarters of SBAH are located in Baghdad, within a precinct that also includes a Library, and the Iraq Museum. SBAH is presided by a Chairman (Dr. Laith Majeed Hussein) and comprises the following Departments:

- Investigations and Excavations Directorate
- Heritage Directorate
- Museums Directorate
- Manuscripts Directorate
- Researches and Studies Directorate
- Conservation and Preservation Directorate
- Administration

SBAH has branches in the various provinces of Iraq, which have been established under Investigations and Excavations Directorate:

- Al-Anbar – SBAH Inspectorate Ramadi
- Babylon – SBAH Inspectorate Hillah
- Basra – SBAH Inspectorate Basra
- Dhi Qar – SBAH Inspectorate Nasiriyah
- Diyala – SBAH Inspectorate Baqubah
- Halabja – SBAH Inspectorate Helebce
- Karbala – SBAH Inspectorate Karbala
- Kirkuk – SBAH Inspectorate Kirkuk
- Maysan – SBAH Inspectorate Amarah
- Muthanna – SBAH Inspectorate Samawah
- Najaf – SBAH Inspectorate Najaf
- Ninawa – SBAH Inspectorate Mosul
- Al-Qadisiyah – SBAH Inspectorate Al-Diwaniyah Salahaddin – SBAH Inspectorate Tikrit
- Wasit – SBAH Inspectorate Kut

(<https://sbah.gov.iq/>)