

WHC/24/46.COM/8E Paris, 7 June 2024 Original: English

# CONVENTION CONCERNING THE PROTECTION OF THE WORLD CULTURAL AND NATURAL HERITAGE

## INTERGOVERNMENTAL COMMITTEE FOR THE PROTECTION OF THE WORLD CULTURAL AND NATURAL HERITAGE

Forty-sixth session New Delhi, India 21-31 July 2024

Item 8 of the Provisional Agenda: Establishment of the World Heritage List and of the List of World Heritage in Danger

## 8E. Adoption of retrospective Statements of Outstanding Universal Value

## Summary

This document presents for adoption one retrospective Statement of Outstanding Universal Value submitted by one State Party for a property which had no Statement of Outstanding Universal Value adopted at the time of its inscription on the World Heritage List.

The full text of the retrospective Statement of Outstanding Universal Value in the original language, as submitted to the Secretariat, is presented in the Annex of this document.

Draft Decision: 46 COM 8E, see point II.

## I. BACKGROUND

- 1. The Statement of Outstanding Universal Value was introduced in the Operational Guidelines for the Implementation of the World Heritage Convention in 2005 as an essential requirement for the inscription of a property on the World Heritage List. All properties inscribed since 2007 present such a Statement.
- 2. In 2007, the World Heritage Committee, in its Decision **31 COM 11D.1**, requested that Statements of Outstanding Universal Value be drafted and adopted retrospectively for all World Heritage properties inscribed between 1978 and 2006.
- 3. As a consequence, States Parties draft retrospective Statements of Outstanding Universal Value for World Heritage properties located within their territories. These are then reviewed by the Secretariat and the relevant Advisory Body(ies) in strict relation with the relevant information provided in the official documents and examined at the moment of inscription.
- 4. This document presents one draft retrospective Statement of Outstanding Universal Value for which the review process has been finalized since the extended 45th session of the World Heritage Committee (Riyadh, 2023), for adoption by the World Heritage Committee.
- 5. The text of the draft retrospective Statement of Outstanding Universal Value is included in the Annex of this document and is presented in the language in which it was submitted to the Secretariat. Once adopted, it will be translated into the other working language of the Committee and uploaded on the World Heritage Centre's website.
- 6. Since 2009, the World Heritage Committee adopted 771 retrospective Statements. 37 Statements are still to be finalized and presented to the Committee: 2 in Africa, 4 in Arab States, 9 in Asia and the Pacific, 20 in Europe and North America and 2 in Latin America and Caribbean.
- 7. In compliance with Paragraph 155 of the Operational Guidelines, the World Heritage Centre automatically updates the Statements further to subsequent decisions taken by the Committee concerning a change of name of the property and change of surface further to minor boundary modifications. The World Heritage Centre also corrects any factual errors as agreed with the relevant Advisory Bodies.

## II. DRAFT DECISION

## Draft Decision: 46 COM 8E

The World Heritage Committee,

- 1. <u>Having examined</u> Document WHC/24/46.COM/8E,
- 2. <u>Commends</u> the State Party for the work accomplished in the elaboration of the retrospective Statement of Outstanding Universal Value;
- 3. <u>Adopts</u> the retrospective Statement of Outstanding Universal Value, as presented in the Annex of Document WHC/24/46.COM/8E, for the following World Heritage property:

ARAB STATES

• Libya, Archaeological Site of Leptis Magna;

- 4. <u>Notes</u> that retrospective Statements of Outstanding Universal Value for World Heritage properties inscribed on the List of World Heritage in Danger will be reviewed in priority by the Advisory Bodies;
- 5. <u>Requests</u> the World Heritage Centre to upload the two language versions of the abovementioned retrospective Statement of Outstanding Universal Value on its website.

## **ARAB STATES**

#### Libya

#### Archaeological Site of Leptis Magna

#### **Brief synthesis**

The ancient city of Leptis Magna was founded as a temporary trading port by the Phoenicians in the 7th century B.C.E. and expanded under the Roman Empire. It was significantly embellished by the Severan emperors in the 3rd century C.E., transforming it into one of the most splendid cities of Roman North Africa. The surviving and excavated remains of the city reflect a unique artistic realisation in the domain of urban planning and in its application of monumental display. The city demonstrates a high level of engineering skill achieved in the creation of its infrastructure with the antique port of the city, situated at the mouth of Wadi Lebda, with its artificial basin, barrage dam and canal designed to regulate the course of the Wadi Lebda, being one of the outstanding works of Roman technology.

The city of Leptis Magna provides a vivid and full picture of life in a Roman provincial city during the early and middle periods of the Roman Empire, with some buildings deviating considerably in their organization or shape from those seen at other Roman sites. Not only have remains of prestigious monuments such as arches, gates, the Severan forum, temples, baths, theatre, fortifications and amphitheatre survived, but also evidence for the essential of everyday life such as the market, with its votive arch and colonnade of shops, as well as warehouse and ateliers that attest to commercial and industrial activity.

In the 17th and 18th centuries CE, the ruins of Leptis Magna were rediscovered by travellers and came to play a major role in the elaboration of the Neo-classical aesthetic.

**Criterion (i):** Leptis Magna is a unique artistic realisation in the domain of urban planning and in its application of monumental display; The urban fabric of the city represents a synthesis of progressive developments and enlargements which came to a height in the Severan period; incorporating major monumental elements of that period worthy of an imperial capital. The Severan forum, the basilica and the Severan arch rank among the finest monuments known from the Roman world and were strongly influenced by African and Eastern traditions. The sculpture and carvings, including that of the Severan basilica and the Severan arch are innovative in their linear definition of forms, the crispness of their contours and the angular delineation of their volumes. The port of Leptis is one of the outstanding works of Roman technology.

**Criterion (ii):** The large amount of sculptures and statues found in Leptis demonstrate clearly Punic, Roman, Greek and Hellenistic influences. Aegean craftsmanship can be seen in the magnificent marble decorations on the pillars in the Severan Basilica and those on the Arch of Severus. Leptis, which was rediscovered in the 17th and 18th centuries by travellers such as Durand and Lemaire, has played a major role in the movement back to Antiquity and in the elaboration of the Neo-classic aesthetic.

**Criterion (iii):** The number and the variety of the structures of Leptis Magna bear witness to a vanished civilization. The site provides a full picture of life in a large provincial city through the urban, architectural and decorative aspects that have been preserved. The monuments furnish a vivid impression of the lifestyle enjoyed in the city during the early and middle periods of the Roman Empire. The city still maintains the most important elements of its antique port, including vestiges of the former warehouses and the outline of its artificial basin of nearly 102,000 m2 still discernible. The market, an essential element in the every-day life of a large commercial trading centre, with its votive arch, its colonnades and its shops, has been, for the most part, preserved. The prestigious monuments, arches, gates, old forum, Severan forum, temples, baths, theatre, circus and amphitheatre all attest to the commercial, industrial, and civic activity of the city.

#### Integrity

The architectural heritage of Leptis Magna is very extensive and most of its principal elements are largely intact. The urban area (ca. 400 ha) offers an authentic glimpse of a great provincial city. The monuments and archaeological finds of the ancient city represent all the attributes expressed in the Outstanding Universal Value within its designated area.

#### Authenticity

Leptis Magna has maintained a high level of authenticity and the city has deservedly earned a reputation of having the most complete and impressive Roman ruins in the entirety of North Africa. It is largely due to a cover of windblown sand from the interior that Leptis Magna is so well preserved and entirely protected for 800 years.

The authenticity of the individual components and the ancient urban fabric as a whole is very high. The structures brought to light by excavations carried out in the first half of the twentieth century have been the object of consolidation, restoration and maintenance operations and, to a lesser extent, reconstruction in full respect of the original morphology of the elements involved.

#### Protection and management requirements

At the time of inscription, the city including all of its individual monuments and archaeological sites, was legally protected and assured by the authority of the Department of Antiquities (DoA) and the local community of Lebda through the provisions of Law No. 40/1968 governing the administration of antiquities. This was later replaced by Law No. 3/1994 and its Executive regulations/1995 issued by the General People's Congress. Leptis Magna, at the time of inscription was managed by the superintendent of Lebda region/municipality. Since 2019 the DoA has established a local office overseeing the management and protection of the property as well as the museums which hold a significant collection of excavated material, including mosaics and frescoes.

Effective protection is guaranteed through collaboration between the local authority, the development partners and the Department of Antiquities, the Urban Planning Department, local City Council, civil society associations and the Tourist and Antiquities Police. The law cited has, so far, guaranteed the preservation of the entire area of the property which, in relation to its principal areas, has not been compromised or suffered the effects of illegal building activity. Vegetal encroachment is a factor that needs constant monitoring and intervention. A buffer-zone that will limit urban development in the vicinity of the site of Leptis Magna and ensure that the neighbouring area is also conserved has been outlined and is under preparation.