

[Arab Regional Centre for World Heritage]
Report for the 46th session of the World Heritage Committee
Reporting period: July 2023 to June 2024

1. General Information

Name of the Centre	Arab Regional Centre for World Heritage
Name and contact information of the Director	Rashad Faraj r.faraj@arcwh.org
Designated Focal Point(s)	Sh.Ebrahim Al Khalifa Deputy Director e.alkhalifa@arcwh.org
Website	www.arcwh.org

2. Institutional and Operational Structure of the Centre

The Arab Regional Centre for World Heritage (ARC-WH), based in the Kingdom of Bahrain, is an autonomous and independent legal entity at the service of the Arab States. The ARC-WH is guided and supervised by a Governing Board which is renewed every two years. The Board meets in ordinary sessions at regular intervals, at least once per calendar year. The Governing Board is chaired by the President of the Bahrain Authority for Culture and Antiquities H.E. Sh. Khalifa Bin Ahmed Alkhalifa, members of the board include the following: a representative of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in the Kingdom of Bahrain, a representative of the Arab Member States to the World Heritage Committee, a representative of the Director General of UNESCO, a representative of each of the Advisory Bodies to the Committee ICOMOS, IUCN and ICCROM and the African World Heritage Fund. The current secretariat of ARC-WH comprises 12 permanent staff members including the Director, Deputy Director, and the Programming Unit. The staff also includes a Communication and Information Officer, an Admin and Logistics Officer and a Finance and Human Resources Officer. The activities of the Centre and its operations are mainly funded by the Government of the Kingdom of Bahrain, while some of the activities are occasionally co-funded by external partners according to ARC-WH agreements on joint projects.

3. Updates on the Management of the Centre

The 13th Governing Board meeting was held on the 12th of February, 2024. During which, the report on the activities of the centre in 2023 was presented. The board also adopted the proposed action plan for 2024, which focused on the priorities derived from the Periodic Reporting Action Plan for the Arab region (2021-2027) with 3 main strategic objectives highlighted A) Contribute to a representative and balanced World Heritage List in the Arab States, reflecting the cultural and natural diversity of the region B) Enhance the protection, conservation and management of World Heritage, particularly for sites inscribed on the List of World Heritage in Danger, including through emergency preparedness, disaster risk response, and planning for recovery. C) Improve the integration of sustainable development policies in the management of World Heritage sites.

The Governing Board of ARC-WH also adopted the proposed advisory body (2024-2025) which aims at providing technical guidance and periodic recommendations on the programmes of ARC-WH.

4. Main Programmes and Activities

Regional Programmes

- **Regional Workshop for Arab States on Impact Assessment in a World Heritage Context**

ARC-WH and the ICCROM-IUCN World Heritage Leadership (WHL) programme organized this Regional Workshop from 27 to 29 November 2023, in Manama, Bahrain. This capacity-building activity supported 23 site managers, coordinators, heritage professionals, and other stakeholders from 15 Member States, in identifying, evaluating, and mitigating potential negative impacts of development projects on World Heritage properties.

- **Regional meeting for World Heritage Focal Points in the Arab States**

The UNESCO World Heritage Centre, in collaboration with the ARC-WH, hosted the regional meeting (5 - 6 December 2023). The meeting aimed to bring together Focal Points to assess the progress of the regional Action Plan (2021-2027) and lay the groundwork for the mid-cycle assessment report.

- **Regional Workshop on Natural and Mixed World Heritage Sites in the Arab States: Listing Implications and Synergies with IUCN's Green List**

ARC-WH in collaboration with the IUCN Regional Office for West Asia of the International Union for Conservation of Nature (ROWA) organised this workshop from 22-24 January 2024. It was held in cooperation with the Aqaba Special Economic Zone Authority (ASEZA), with the participation of heritage professionals from various Arab countries. The workshop aimed to enhance the understanding of Natural and Mixed heritage inscription requirements and improve their management by promoting synergies with the IUCN Green List initiative.

- **Regional Workshop on Interpretation and Presentation of World Heritage Sites in the Arab Region**

In partnership with the International Centre for the Interpretation and Presentation of World Heritage Sites (WHIPIC), ARC-WH organized this workshop from 22-24 April, 2024, to enhance professionals' knowledge and skills for developing effective interpretation and presentation of World Heritage sites in the Arab region.

- **Incorporating Sustainable Development into the Implementation of the World Heritage Convention in the Arab States Region**

ARC-WH and ICOMOS are organising this capacity building programme with the support of the Heritage Commission and ICOMOS Saudi Arabia. It aims to mainstream and promote the approach used in the 2015 Sustainable Development Policy Document into the daily implementation of the World Heritage Convention, through improving knowledge of the Policy

Document, the HUL approach, and the 2030 SDG's Agenda. Scheduled between June and September 2024, the program will commence online and culminate in an in-person workshop at a World Heritage site in Saudi Arabia.

National Programmes

- **Capacity Building Programme on the Preparation of a Site Management Plan for the Transnational Property of Darb Zubaydah**

In collaboration and support of the Heritage Commission under the Ministry of Culture in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia and in cooperation with the State Board of Antiquities and Heritage in the Republic of Iraq. The programme aimed to build the capacities of participants in management plans, including their concept, implementation, and monitoring aspects, while supporting the establishment of efficient transnational management mechanisms for the Darb Zubaydah site. The programme was implemented through a series of online and in-person workshops held between August – December 2023.

- **Online workshop “Bethany Beyond the Jordan- Heritage Impact Assessment and Architectural Guidelines”**

ARC-WH collaborated with the Baptism Site Commission (BSC) in Jordan to conduct this online workshop on 17 August 2023. The workshop aimed to engage six architects and representatives from new churches in enhancing their understanding of the World Heritage site, ‘Baptism Site “Bethany Beyond the Jordan” (Al-Maghtas)’, and its natural surroundings. It also provided clarity on architectural guidelines during the revision of the Heritage Impact Assessment (HIA) for existing and new churches within the buffer zone.

- **Revision of the Tentative List of Cultural and Natural Sites in Palestine**

ARC-WH, in collaboration with the Palestinian Ministry of Tourism and Antiquities, conducted an online workshop from 21 to 23 August 2023. The workshop involved experts, academics, and researchers in the heritage field and focused on reviewing the Tentative List of cultural and natural sites in the State of Palestine.

- **Sustainable Management of World Heritage Sites in Tunisia**

ARC-WH and the National Heritage Institute (INP) in Tunisia collaborated to implement a programme for the integration of sustainable development into the management of World Heritage Sites in Tunisia, using the World Heritage site of Dougga/Thugga as a case study. An online Workshop held on 10-11 October, 2023 brought together experts, specialists, and site managers, along with civil society and local community representatives in Dougga.

- **National Workshop “Mechanisms and Concepts of the 1972 World Heritage Convention and the 1954 Convention for the Protection of Cultural Property in the Event of Armed Conflict” in Qatar**

With the participation of relevant stakeholders in the State of Qatar, the workshop aimed at enhancing the understanding and implementation of the two UNESCO Conventions, contributing to enhancing the protection and management of heritage sites in Qatar. The

workshop was organized by ARC-WH in collaboration with the Qatar Museums Authority and took place from 18 to 20 February 2024 in Doha, Qatar.

- **Conservation of Built Heritage in Kuwait Bahrain workshop**

Aiming at enhancing the capacities of heritage professionals in Kuwait, ARC-WH and the National Council for Culture, Art and Letters (NCCAL), in collaboration with the Bahrain Authority for Culture and Antiquities, organized the Workshop on “Fundamentals of Conservation of Built Heritage” 21-24 April 2024, in Manama, Bahrain.

- **Revision of the Tentative List of Yemen**

The capacity building programme aims to enhance the capacities of heritage professionals on the process of revision of the Tentative List and the nomination process. Organized in cooperation with UNESCO Regional Office for the Gulf States and Yemen between May – September 2024, virtually and in-person.

- **Technical Assistance to the State Party of Iraq for the preparation of a Comprehensive Conservation and Management Plan for Ashur (Qal’at Sherqat)**

As part of its support to the State Party in responding to the World Heritage Committee's decisions, ARC-WH in partnership with the World Monument Fund (WMF) to prepare an integrated management plan that protects the OUV of the site, including preparation of a comprehensive conservation plan for the property.

- **Technical Assistance to the State Party of Syria for the preparation of the first phase of the conservation masterplan in Ancient City of Bosra**

ARC-WH is supporting the State Party of Syria to prepare the conservation master plan for Ancient City of Bosra, to help the State Party respond to the Committee's decisions on the preparation of the site master plan, which is crucial to inform the final optimal restoration approaches.

Thematic Programmes

- **Regional Conference: Housing Rehabilitation in Historic Settlements of The Arab Region**

In partnership with the UNESCO Regional office for the Maghreb, UN Habitat and the Islamic Development Bank, a regional conference on Housing Rehabilitation in Historic Settlements of the Arab Region has been organized in Marrakech, Morocco from 13-15 December 2023. With the participation of 43 experts, the conference aimed to co-define new guidelines to protect and revive housing in historic settlements of the Arab region.

- **Second edition of the short-film competition “My Heritage”**

In collaboration with the Heritage Commission of Saudi Arabia, ARC-WH organized the second edition of the "My Heritage" short-film competition as part of the Arab Youth for Heritage initiative with the participation of 170 applicants from 18 countries across the Arab region.

- **International Training Course on Rock Art Recording Techniques, from Traditional to Digital**

ARC-WH supported the organization of the International Training Course on Rock Art Recording Techniques from traditional to Digital held in Sharjah, United Arab Emirates from 10 to 14 of December 2023.

- **International Conference “Opportunities for Heritage”**

The UNESCO chair for World Heritage and Sustainable Tourism Management in the Arab Region, in collaboration with ARC-WH co-organized an International Conference “Opportunities for Heritage” from 24-27 February, 2024. The four-day conference focused on examining the opportunities that lie at the intersection of heritage conservation and sustainable development, focusing on technology's transformative power and innovative solutions.

- **Expert Meeting on Modern Heritage in the Arab Region**

The Expert Meeting was held in Manama, Bahrain, between 4-6 March 2024. It gathered specialists in the field of architecture and cultural heritage preservation from the Arab region and international organizations. The meeting comes amid a growing global interest in modern heritage, which includes architectural and urban buildings constructed in the 19th and 20th centuries. It aimed to explore the status of this underrepresented heritage in the Arab region and develop recommendations for its preservation.

- **Arab/African Professionals Preliminary Assessment Process Meeting**

In close collaboration with the UNESCO WHC, ICOMOS, IUCN and the African World Heritage Fund, ARC-WH hosted a meeting for Arab/African Professionals on the Preliminary Assessment Process aimed at providing them with the tools to prepare Preliminary Evaluation requests in an adequate and efficient manner. The meeting was held from 15-16 May in Manama, Bahrain.

Information and Publications

- **Translation of the Guidance and Toolkit for “Impact Assessment in a World Heritage Context” in partnership with UNESCO and the Advisory Bodies to Arabic**

ARC-WH translated the ‘Guidance and Toolkit for Impact Assessment in a World Heritage Context’ from English to Arabic to support heritage professionals in the protection of heritage sites in the Arab region. This manual was originally developed by UNESCO and the Advisory Bodies to the World Heritage Committee, ICCROM, ICOMOS and IUCN.