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# **Pleistocene Occupation Sites of South Africa**

## **(South Africa)**

### **No 1723**

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#### **1 Basic information**

##### **Official name as proposed by the State Party**

The Emergence of Modern Humans: The Pleistocene Occupation Sites of South Africa

##### **Location**

Diepkloof Rock Shelter  
Cederberg  
West Coast District  
Western Cape Province

Pinnacle Point Site Complex  
Mossel Bay  
Garden Route District  
Western Cape Province

Sibhudu Cave  
KwaDukuza  
iLembe District  
KwaZulu-Natal Province

South Africa

##### **Brief description**

Diepkloof Rock Shelter, Pinnacle Point Site Complex, and Sibhudu Cave are three widely dispersed archaeological sites located in the Western Cape and KwaZulu-Natal provinces of South Africa. Two of them, Diepkloof Rock Shelter and Sibhudu Cave, are located about ten kilometres from the current shoreline, while the Pinnacle Point Site Complex is located directly on the coast. These sites provide the most varied and best-preserved record known of the development of modern human behaviour, reaching back as far as 162,000 years. Symbolic thought and advanced technologies are exemplified by evidence of ochre processing, engraved patterns on ochre and bone, estuarine shellfish beads for body decoration, decorated ostrich eggshells, lithic technologies for advanced projectile weapons, heat treatment of stone for toolmaking, and microliths. This serial nominated property contributes to the understanding of the origin of behaviourally modern humans, their cognitive abilities and cultures, and the climatic transitions that they survived.

##### **Category of property**

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

#### **Included in the Tentative List**

15 April 2015

#### **Background**

This is a new nomination.

In January 2022, the State Party submitted an International Assistance request for the preparation of an integrated conservation management plan for two Pleistocene occupation sites that are intended to be included as a future extension of the present nominated property. The request was deferred by ICOMOS in order to await the outcome of the nomination process and the investigations currently being carried out at the sites.

#### **Consultations and technical evaluation mission**

Desk reviews have been provided by ICOMOS International Scientific Committees, members and independent experts.

An ICOMOS technical evaluation mission visited the nominated property from 13 to 18 August 2023.

#### **Additional information received by ICOMOS**

A letter was sent to the State Party on 4 October 2023 requesting further information about the nomination strategy, documentation, development, factors affecting the nominated property, boundaries, legislative protection, interpretation and presentation, and visitors and tourism.

Additional information was received from the State Party on 10 November 2023.

An interim report was provided to the State Party on 20 December 2023, summarising the issues identified by the ICOMOS World Heritage Panel.

Further information was requested in the interim report on the management system and plans, site ownership, monitoring, buffer zones and the wider setting, funding, and research and conservation programme.

Additional information was received from the State Party on 28 February 2024.

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

#### **Date of ICOMOS approval of this report**

13 March 2024

## 2 Description of the nominated property

Note: The nomination dossier and additional information contain detailed descriptions of this property, its history and its state of conservation. Due to limitations on the length of evaluation reports, this report provides only a short summary of the most relevant aspects.

### Description and history

The nominated serial property is comprised of three widely dispersed archaeological component parts located in rock shelters and caves. Two of the three component parts are located in Western Cape Province and one in KwaZulu-Natal Province. The Pinnacle Point Site Complex in Western Cape is located in the Western Coastal Plain on the coastline, whereas the Diepkloof Rock Shelter, also in Western Cape, and the Sibhudu Cave in KwaZulu-Natal are situated about ten kilometres from the coastline in the sedimentary fold mountains of the Cape Fold Belt. The confluence of two major oceanic systems along the Southern Coastal Plain resulted in the formation of a rich marine ecosystem and a climate conducive to the development of the floristically hyper-diverse Cape Floral Region.

Thematically, the nominated property focuses on material archaeological remains that illustrate the emergence of modern human behaviour, including symbolic thought and advanced technologies. They are exemplified at the sites by evidence of ochre processing, engraved patterns on ochre and bone, estuarine shellfish beads for body decoration, decorated ostrich eggshells, lithic technologies for advanced projectile weapons, heat treatment of stone for toolmaking, and microliths. It also has the earliest known and best-preserved evidence of the consistent exploitation of coastal resources during the Middle and Late Pleistocene.

While evidence pointing at innovation of human behaviour appears in the archaeological record at various times after about 300,000 years ago, it is well documented in much of Europe, Africa, and Southeast Asia only after 50,000 years ago, when it is widely considered as typifying 'modern' human culture. Earlier evidence is rare. The dating techniques used on the artefacts and deposits in the caves and rock shelters of the nominated property include thermoluminescence dating, optically stimulated luminescence, isotope dating, and electron spin resonance spectroscopy. The stratigraphy of the Middle Stone Age layers at the three component parts together shows that the dated levels reflect a reliable and sequential record of human behaviour through many tens of thousands of years, reaching back as far as 162,000 BP.

#### Component part 01: Diepkloof Rock Shelter

The Diepkloof Rock Shelter component part is located on a freestanding outcrop of the Table Mountain Series quartzites, which formed a butte, and contains two adjacent rock shelters, Diepkloof 1 and 2. This component part has the most complete and continuous Middle Stone Age sequences in southern Africa, from pre-Still Bay to post-Howiesons Poort periods (from before 130,000 BP to about

50,000 BP). Diepkloof 2 is recognised for its rock art. Diepkloof 1 produced clear and unambiguous evidence of engraved geometric patterns on more than 400 ostrich eggshell fragments (dated to as early as 109,000  $\pm$  10,000 years ago) and on bone. The eggshells show the first development of a graphic tradition and the complex use of symbols to mediate social interactions. The appearance of more refined stone tool industries is evidence of abstract thinking, technological innovation (including heat treatments of lithic materials), and the ability to plan and strategize.

Even though Diepkloof has never been on the coast, faunal evidence, such as dolphin vertebrae and seal bones, suggests that the Middle Stone Age groups occupying the rock shelters based their hunting strategies around resources that were available at the coast.

#### Component part 02: Pinnacle Point Site Complex

The Pinnacle Point Site Complex component part consists of a near-continuous distribution of archaeological sites along about three kilometres of the rocky shoreline. These comprise numerous wave-cut caves and rock shelters. Currently, only sites PP13B and PP5-6 are known to have long sequences of human occupation, beginning around 165,000 years ago. Together, these provide the longest composite sequence of all coastal sites in South Africa. The best-preserved evidence for heat treatment of stone tools (using gloss analysis of the silcrete pieces), modified ochre (production of pigment powders and engraved ochre), and small stone blades, some of which were probably hafted, are evidence of early complex culture and advanced cognitive abilities.

The presence of shells that were gathered dead indicate the collection of keepsakes for their aesthetic qualities. For food, the Middle Stone Age occupants focused on rocky inter-tidal shellfish species with occasional scavenging of whales and seals. Sea-level changes caused the development of grassland and allowed the hunting of large plains animals. Other sites such as PP9 and PP13A do not present human occupation, but provide well-dated and high-resolution palaeoclimatological records.

#### Component part 03: Sibhudu Cave

The Sibhudu Cave component part is located in a steep, forested cliff that overlooks the uThongathi River, in an area that is now a sugar cane plantation. Of the three component parts, Sibhudu is the only one that produced human remains dating as far back as 77,000 years ago. Not all teeth, bones or fragments are from securely dated contexts. Nevertheless, the teeth add to the pool of Middle Stone Age human fossil records from another fifteen sites in South Africa and assist in understanding anatomical features and the individual variability within the human fossil record of *Homo sapiens*.

Sibhudu was occupied during the Middle Stone Age from about 120,000 to 38,000 years ago and presents a complex but clear stratigraphy of more than fifty exceptionally well-preserved Middle Stone Age layers (including organic

cultural remains indicating, for example, the development of plant bedding) with extremely high find densities of stone tools and faunal remains. This provides a uniquely high-resolution insight into the lifeways of early modern humans. The cave presents evidence of personal ornamentation in the form of intentionally perforated shells, which are said to be the oldest in Africa. However, the shells do not seem to display any wear from use. The earliest projectile points in the world inferred to be used as arrow points are dated as early as 77,000 years ago (an older tool was identified in Blombos Cave). Arrows seem to have been equipped with barbs, and there is evidence of the use of several recipes for compound adhesives. Sibhudu also offers a particularly rich and varied collection of bone tools. Ongoing excavations by the German University of Tübingen keep producing more material.

The area of the three component parts totals 57.4 ha, with buffer zones totalling 965.5 ha.

Archaeological investigation of the nominated property began in 1973 with the first excavation at Diepkloof Rock Shelter by a team from the University of Cape Town, with the aim of examining the Late Stone Age period occupation. Between 1998 and 2013, a South African-French partnership enabled the expansion of these excavations, this time focused on Middle Stone Age artefacts and associated materials. The results of several research projects on the palaeoenvironment, faunal remains, and Middle Stone Age stone tools from Diepkloof Rock Shelter were published in a special edition of the *Journal of Archaeological Science* (vol. 40) in 2013. No further excavations are planned at the site in the immediate future. Nevertheless, the site and its materials maintain a high research value.

A 1997 proposal to develop a golf course and casino at Pinnacle Point triggered an archaeological impact assessment, during which the first Pinnacle Point archaeological sites were registered. In 1999, four caves were selected for test excavations. Follow-up investigations were conducted until 2003 by Peter Nilssen and Curtis Marean. Excavations continued at PP13B from 2005 to 2007, with some excavations also shifting to PP9B and PP9C. Excavations since 2007 have focused exclusively on the very long section at PP5-6 and on the Middle Stone Age open air sites at the adjoining Vleesbaai. The findings have been published in respected scientific journals over the past twenty years. Even though there is currently no active excavation permit for the site, excavations are planned from 2023 until 2031. The archaeological assemblage from Pinnacle Point Site Complex is permanently curated at the Iziko South African Museum in Cape Town.

Sibhudu Cave is mentioned in the site records of the KwaZulu-Natal Museum dating from 1929. It was first excavated in 1983 by Aron Mazel. He excavated one square metre in the shelter and then abandoned the site because the entire Stone Age feature appeared to be Middle Stone Age. Lyn Wadley of the University of the Witwatersrand began excavations at the site in 1998, after

which two excavation seasons per year were conducted until 2011. In that year, Nicholas Conard of the University of Tübingen, Germany, took over the directorship of the site excavation on a yearly basis. Funding is available to continue the excavation into the foreseeable future.

### State of conservation

The nominated property presents the best-preserved record known of the behaviour of the earliest modern humans. The cave and rock shelter sites preserve long stratigraphic sequences of paleoenvironmental and habitation remains with, in the case of Sibhudu Cave, exceptional organic preservation.

The rock shelters at Diepkloof have entrances that face away from the prevailing wind direction, thus providing some natural protection. About ten percent of the volume and twenty-five percent of the area of Diepkloof 1 has been excavated to date. The excavated areas were backfilled with sandbags and are considered stable. A tool shed installed at the entrance to the main shelter to store the tools of archaeologist was scheduled to be removed during conservation work in 2022. No further information is available. The rock art has suffered from graffiti vandalism in the 19th and early 20th centuries, but no recent cases are reported. At present the rock shelters are not open to the public. The surrounding environment is well maintained. The component part has a new Integrated Conservation Management Plan that substitutes for the old plan that ended in 2022. The new draft is currently in stakeholder revision, in order to be approved by the Council of Heritage Western Cape by the end of May 2024.

At Pinnacle Point Site Complex, the excavated sites at PP9, PP13A, PP13B, PP13C, and PP5-6 are stabilised with sandbags and sterile sand, according to the additional information provided by the State Party in November 2023. The surface of PP05 shows a well-formed erosion gully approximately 0.5 metres in depth, which runs from the back right-hand side of the shelter across the deposit. Some of the sites of the Complex are close to sea level. The State Party considers that the condition of the sites remains consistent. At PP5-6 a water flow issue has been temporarily mitigated. The Integrated Conservation Management Plan of the component part was described to ICOMOS during the technical evaluation mission as "somewhat operational". The new draft is in the same state of revision as the Diepkloof plan.

Sibhudu Cave is currently under excavation. Excavation units about 2.7 metres in depth have been stabilised with tensioning poles that secure wooden boards against the eastern and northern profiles of the excavation. As with the other component parts, the excavated areas are filled with sandbags at the end of each season. When no archaeological work is being done, a local custodian watches the site from his homestead across the river. At present the cave site is not open to the public. The surrounding environment is generally well maintained, but some sand quarrying upstream the uThongathi River was recorded during the ICOMOS technical evaluation mission. The additional information provided by the State Party in

November 2023 indicates that no mining has been observed since April 2022, when flooding changed the river flow. The traditional leadership of the region has agreed to strengthen monitoring of this section of the river. The Integrated Conservation Management Plan of this component part was elaborated in 2021 and will be valid until 2026. However, ICOMOS notes that at the time of its technical evaluation mission the conservation plan was “not operational yet”.

Based on the information provided by the State Party and the observations of the ICOMOS technical evaluation mission, ICOMOS considers that the state of conservation of the nominated property is good. However, Integrated Conservation Management Plans will have to be fully implemented as soon as possible.

#### **Factors affecting the nominated property**

Based on the information provided by the State Party and the observations of the ICOMOS technical evaluation mission, ICOMOS considers that the main factors affecting (or having the potential to affect) the nominated property are increased numbers of visitors, climate change, water seepage and erosion, rock falls and slides, burrowing animals, development pressures, vandalism, archaeological excavations, and financial uncertainty.

Most of these factors are potential threats that apply to all of the component parts.

Currently, the number of visitors is very small and closely regulated. The additional information supplied by the State Party in November 2023 indicates that visiting groups should be limited to twelve to fifteen visitors per guide. Furthermore, most of the locations are protected, to a certain degree, by difficult access. If interest in the nominated property increases in the future, the sites will have to be better prepared for visitation, and visitor numbers as well as visitor behaviour will have to be closely monitored and regulated. The research conducted at the sites is described as being well documented, professional, and adhering to archaeological standards. It is important to maintain these standards in the future, and to resolve the challenges of conservation, backfilling, and presentation of opened excavations.

While two of the component parts are relatively far from the sea, rising sea levels caused by climate change could present a problem at Pinnacle Point Site Complex. This and water-related erosion linked to natural or anthropic causes must be monitored and controlled. Surface water seepage at PP13B and PP5-6 linked to the operation of a golf course needs to be stopped permanently.

Rock falls and slides are not discussed in detail in the nomination documentation and only limited studies exist, but falls and slides can pose a serious threat. The additional information presented by the State Party in November 2023 differentiates between spalling (principally salt-induced spallation) and granular disaggregation. Both processes are ongoing at the sites. The State Party highlights,

however, that there is no indication of significant rock falls being imminent.

Burrowing animals can affect the archaeological contexts in a very direct and destructive manner. While the absence of a discussion of this issue seems to indicate a low level of threat, it is necessary to consider the probabilities of future impacts.

Development pressures seem to be very real at Sibhudu Cave, where a 620-hectare mixed development project less than 500 metres from the cave is planned. This project is proposed to include a shopping centre, 4,000 low-cost houses, and schools. The additional information provided by the State Party in November 2023 indicates that a buffer zone is maintained between Sibhudu Cave and the planned development, and that Environmental and Heritage Impact Assessments were conducted and approved. Further information supplied by the State Party in February 2024 details that a 300-metre-wide area proposed as buffer zone between the prospective development and the nominated property has already been zoned as a conservation area, as requested in the Environmental Authorization for the mixed housing development. Construction has not yet started.

At Pinnacle Point Site Complex, a visual impact assessment has been conducted to ensure that the impact of current and proposed developments does not affect the nominated property negatively. The assessment concludes that the significance of the majority of impacts on archaeological assets can be reduced to a low level by the implementation of mitigation measures. However, a noticeable impact on the overall ‘sense of place’ of the component part is expected, and that impact is rated as medium. The additional information supplied by the State Party in November 2023 indicates that the proposed construction of a boutique hotel at the site has been cancelled.

At Diepkloof Rock Shelter, the construction of on-site visitor infrastructure has been suggested, but no detailed information about the exact location is available. In this context, ICOMOS considers that a Heritage Impact Assessment must be undertaken for any development proposal that may have an impact on the proposed Outstanding Universal Value, authenticity, and integrity of the nominated property before any decisions are made that would be difficult to reverse.

A final factor that may affect the nominated property is financial uncertainty, due to the lack of a regular budget for activities beyond the core tasks. All of these points will need to be adequately addressed by the State Party.

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ICOMOS considers that the state of conservation is good and that factors affecting the nominated property are adequately controlled at the moment. It will be necessary to study, monitor, and resolve several issues that may affect the nominated property in the future.

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### 3 Proposed justification for inscription

#### Proposed justification

The nominated property is considered by the State Party to be of Outstanding Universal Value as a cultural property for the following reasons:

- Diepkloof Rock Shelter, Pinnacle Point Site Complex, and Sibhudu Cave provide excellent scientific evidence for the first appearance of modern human behaviour in the Middle Stone Age, reaching back as far as 162,000 years.
- The three nominated archaeological sites present the best preserved and probably most complete record known of this important step in human development.

Based on the nomination dossier and the additional information, the key attributes of the nominated property are the long and continuous sequences of stratigraphic layers with datable occupation remains; the identification (*in situ* in the archaeological context) of well-preserved evidence for symbolic behaviour, abstract thinking, behavioural, social, economic and technological innovation, and the ability to cooperatively plan and strategize; the settings of the archaeological sites in relation to the oscillating coastline; and the evidence of climate change during the Middle and Late Pleistocene.

The name of the nominated property refers to the “emergence of modern humans”. This implies the emergence of anatomically modern humans, whereas hardly any skeletal remains of relevance to this question have been located in the three component parts. It is planned, however, to submit three additional sites currently included in the Tentative List entry – Blombos Cave, Border Cave, and Klasies River – as a future extension of this nomination. At this stage it is not entirely clear what these sites would add to the value, but, from the Tentative List description and from the additional information supplied by the State Party in November 2023, the main addition appears to be skeletal remains that would validate the original, more general name, as well as some different or even older examples of artefactual evidence of modern behaviour. Excavations are ongoing at Border Cave and Klasies River, so the current plan is to await publication of the findings before submitting the planned extension.

ICOMOS therefore considers that a change of the name of the nominated property to “The Emergence of Modern Human Behaviour: The Pleistocene Occupation Sites of South Africa”, would be needed. If and when other sites with more convincing evidence of the emergence of anatomically modern humans are added to the nominated property in the future, the more general title “The Emergence of Modern Humans: The Pleistocene Occupation Sites of South Africa” could be used.

#### Comparative analysis

The comparative analysis has been developed around archaeological sites that contain key tenets of modern behaviour exhibited by anatomically modern humans. It has examined properties within the region and throughout

the world inscribed on the World Heritage List, included in the Tentative Lists of States Parties as well as other properties. The geo-cultural region is presumed to be Africa and the Middle East.

The State Party highlights that the World Heritage List includes several properties that exemplify the emergence of anatomically modern humans, but lacks sites that demonstrate full evidence of the development of modern behaviour by *Homo sapiens* during the Middle to Late Pleistocene. The State Party also underlines that one of the key objectives of the Human Evolution: Adaptations, Dispersals and Social Developments (HEADS) World Heritage Thematic Programme 2010 Action Plan is to recognise sites that are outstanding demonstrations of traces of the earliest interactions between humankind and the land, early cultural behaviour, cognitive steps, and creative expressions.

At the national level, the three component parts were compared to Blombos Cave, Klipdrift Shelter, Nelson Bay Cave, Boomplaas Cave, Elands Bay Cave, Klipgat Cave, Montagu Cave, Peers Cave, Yzerfontein, and Hoedjiespunt in Western Cape Province. In Free State Province they were compared to Rose Cottage Cave and Florisbad. In Northern Cape Province they were compared to Wonderwerk Cave; in Limpopo Province to the Cave of Hearths, Mwulu Cave, and Olieboompoort Cave; in KwaZulu-Natal Province to Border Cave and Umhlatuzana Cave; in Eastern Cape Province to Klasies River Rock Shelter; and in Mpumalanga Province to Bushman Rock Shelter.

While all of the compared sites have some relevant evidence, the State Party concludes that their archaeological record is less well excavated, not as well preserved, more recent, smaller in terms of artefact samples or less clear in their evidence of modern human behaviour.

Blombos Cave, Border Cave, and Klasies River are sites that were originally included in the Tentative List of the State Party, together with the three nominated component parts. The reason for not including them in this nomination is that in two of them, Border Cave and Klasies River, archaeological research has recently recommenced. They likely will be nominated as an extension once the results of the findings there have been published. The additional information offered by the State Party in November 2023 indicates that Border Cave is not yet formally protected. Furthermore, management documents are in the process of being drafted and consultations with the stakeholders are ongoing. The State Party anticipates a nomination of the extension in 2025-2026. No information is given concerning Blombos Cave.

Relevant evidence of modern human behaviour on a comparable timescale has only been found on the African continent and in the Middle East, and for that reason no archaeological sites from other regions of the world were included in the comparative analysis. The comparable sites with artefact sequences from the Middle Stone Age that were included are Haua Fteah (Libya), Mumba Cave

(Tanzania), Mumbwa (Zambia), Grotte des Pigeons and Jebel Irhoud (Morocco), Qafzeh Cave (Israel), and Melka Kunture and Balchit (Ethiopia, Tentative List).

While sites such as Jebel Irhoud, and Melka Kunture and Balchit, present very important information about the emergence of anatomically modern humans, the evidence of modern human behaviour at the nominated property dates farther back in time and presents a more extensive set of characteristics.

The properties already inscribed on the World Heritage List that contain evidence of human evolution include the Fossil Hominid Sites of South Africa (South Africa, 1999, 2005, criteria (iii) and (vi)); Sangiran Early Man Site (Indonesia, 1996, criteria (iii) and (vi)); Peking Man Site at Zhoukoudian (China, 1987, criteria (iii) and (vi)); Archaeological Site of Atapuerca (Spain, 2000, criteria (iii) and (v)); Willandra Lakes Region (Australia, 1981, criteria (iii) and (viii)); Sites of Human Evolution at Mount Carmel: The Nahal Me'arot / Wadi el-Mughara Caves (Israel, 2012, criteria (iii) and (v)); and Lower Valley of the Omo (Ethiopia, 1980, criteria (iii) and (iv)). They focus on the anatomical development of *Homo sapiens* and do not have clear evidence of behavioural development. Olorgesailie Prehistoric Site (Kenya, Tentative List) offers interesting information from around 320,000 years ago, but no remains of *Homo sapiens* have yet been found there.

In contrast to the nominated property, the archaeological sites presented in the framework of the comparative analysis do not present evidence that is able to fill the gap between sites linked to the anatomical evolution of the genus *Homo* and sites that display fully developed modern human behaviour at a later stage in the archaeological record.

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ICOMOS considers that the comparative analysis justifies consideration of this property for the World Heritage List.

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#### **Criteria under which inscription is proposed**

The property is nominated on the basis of cultural criteria (iii), (iv) and (v).

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

This criterion is justified by the State Party on the grounds that the archaeological layers at the nominated component parts provide exceptional evidence of behavioural and palaeoenvironmental developments in the Middle Stone Age. They contain early evidence of symbolic thought and advanced technologies.

ICOMOS considers that very little technical information has been provided concerning the analysis of the materials that are the evidence of modern human behaviour. Insufficient technical data has been submitted on the adhesives, the heat treatment of lithic materials, and the production traces on bone and ochre, for example. Nevertheless, the bibliography as well as the

additional information provided by the State Party in November 2023 refer to a large number of scientific studies on these subjects. The great variety of materials, the early dates, and the excellent state of conservation make the evidence of this important step in human development exceptional.

ICOMOS considers that criterion (iii) has been demonstrated.

Criterion (iv): *be an outstanding example of a type of building, architectural or technological ensemble or landscape which illustrates (a) significant stage(s) in human history;*

This criterion is justified by the State Party on the grounds that the nominated property preserves exceptionally well-stratified and well-dated sedimentary records of ancient human life dating from about 162,000 to 38,000 years ago. The archaeological strata also bear evidence of the development of complex cognition.

ICOMOS considers that the way this justification is framed makes it difficult to differentiate it from criterion (iii). However, the archaeological remains at the three nominated component parts illustrate a very significant stage in human history. The development of modern human behaviour and complex cognition are illustrated by the evidence of abstract thinking, the ability to plan and strategize, and technological innovation, including, for example, the preparation and use of adhesives and the heat treatment of lithic materials.

ICOMOS considers that criterion (iv) has been demonstrated.

Criterion (v): *be an outstanding example of a traditional human settlement, land-use, or sea-use which is representative of a culture (or cultures), or human interaction with the environment especially when it has become vulnerable under the impact of irreversible change;*

This criterion is justified by the State Party on the grounds that the nominated property offers some of the earliest and best-preserved evidence in the world for the consistent exploitation of coastal resources during the Middle and Late Pleistocene. The consumption of nutrients included in these foods may have contributed to the healthy development of *Homo sapiens* brains and the expansion of advanced cognitive abilities during the Middle Stone Age. As current sea levels rise due to climate change, much of the ancient record of human coastal resource use has been obliterated or is in grave danger. As such, the excellent state of conservation of these sites is pivotal for preserving evidence of palaeoclimates and palaeoenvironments.

ICOMOS considers that the discussion concerning the brain development of *Homo sapiens* due to coastal and/or marine resource consumption is not yet resolved. Nevertheless, the importance and rarity of evidence for the early exploitation of coastal resources, and for

understanding palaeoclimates and palaeoenvironments, is undoubted.

ICOMOS considers that criterion (v) has been demonstrated.

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ICOMOS considers that the nominated property meets cultural criteria (iii), (iv) and (v).

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## **Integrity and authenticity**

### **Integrity**

The integrity of the nominated serial property is based on archaeological remains that illustrate the emergence of modern human behaviour. It includes all the attributes necessary to express its proposed Outstanding Universal Value, and is of adequate size to ensure the complete representation of the features that convey its significance. This applies to the integrity of the whole series as well as the integrity of each of the component parts.

All three nominated component parts contain long stratigraphic sequences of human occupation that together cover a time span of about 124,000 years, from 162,000 to 38,000 years ago. Preservation conditions, even for organic material, are very good at Sibhudu Cave. Favourable depositional processes have allowed the steady accumulation of archaeologically significant deposits with little or no loss due to natural erosion or human or animal activities. The views from the sites are described as being generally undisturbed, and allow the visitors to be taken back in time. As declared by the State Party, archaeological excavations have been conducted according to the highest international standards. All remains have been carefully curated and catalogued in national collections, and their significance and the interpretations based upon them have been reported and published in international journals.

ICOMOS considers that the integrity of the whole nominated series, as well as the integrity of each of the component parts have been demonstrated.

### **Authenticity**

The authenticity of the nominated serial property is based on its cultural values being truthfully and credibly expressed through its attributes, and the way in which these attributes convey the proposed Outstanding Universal Value. The stratigraphic sequences and the dating of the different deposits, as excavated and documented by several international multidisciplinary teams of experts and peer reviewed at the time of publication, prove the authenticity of each component part and of the whole nominated series as relates to the archaeological contexts and remains that are the evidence of modern human behaviour.

ICOMOS considers that the authenticity of the whole nominated series as well as the authenticity of each of the component parts have been demonstrated.

In conclusion, ICOMOS considers that the conditions of integrity and authenticity of the whole nominated series and of the individual component parts have been met.

## **Boundaries**

The boundaries of the Diepkloof Rock Shelter component part (Diepkloof 1 and 2), located on a rocky outcrop, correspond to the boundaries of the formally protected Provincial Heritage Site and are defined by the 100-metre contour line. The State Party states that no significant archaeological resources are located below this line. The rather large buffer zone coincides with the boundaries of Portion 3 of Farm 5 Groote Drift. There are no inhabitants in this component part, but one family residence is located in the buffer zone.

The Pinnacle Point Site Complex is situated on the Pinnacle Point Estate near a continuous distribution of archaeological sites along the southern coastline, between the Cape St. Blaize Trail and the provincial boundaries at sea level below the cliffs, with an additional section on the western boundary that includes the site of a hyena den (PP30). The Complex is situated along the southern and western edge of Erf 15391 (a portion of Erf 2001), Boplass, Mossel Bay, and is within the boundaries of a Provincial Heritage Site, which is slightly bigger than the component part. The remaining extent of the Pinnacle Point Estate and the adjacent property, Erf 15390, will act as a buffer zone. Originally, there was no buffer zone foreseen extending from the coastline into the ocean. In response to an enquiry by ICOMOS in its interim report, the State Party in February 2024 agreed to explore the option of declaring an area extending 100 metres into the ocean for the whole extent of the component part as a protected area under Section 28 of the National Heritage Resources Act, No. 25 of 1999. Erf 15390 is owned by the Mossel Bay Municipality and the southern part of it, bordering the Pinnacle Point Estate, has been designated as a Critical Biodiversity Area and declared a nature reserve in the Spatial Development Plan 2018. There are no inhabitants living in this component part; about 720 people live in the buffer zone.

The boundaries of the Sibhudu Cave component part coincide with the National Heritage Site. It is located in a semi-rural environment on a steep and forested cliff that overlooks the uThongathi River, which acts as a natural boundary. The surrounding area is now a sugar cane plantation. The boundaries of the component part and its buffer zone are determined by the extent of the wooded areas, the steep slopes, and the river. On the northeast and southeast sides of the cave, the buffer zone is also defined by the forest. Here, the buffer zone is small, but no further expansion can take place because of the steep slope between the cave and the buffer zone boundary. On the south side of the cave, the buffer zone extends twenty metres from the south bank of the uThongathi River. A family living across the river about 200 metres south of the archaeological site has been monitoring the access to the cave for the past thirty years.

At this stage it is unclear to what degree the planned 620-hectare Wewe Driefontein mixed-zone development

located less than 500 metres from the cave could affect the nominated property and its surrounding area. The State Party supplied additional information in November 2023 on this development and referred to approved Environmental and Heritage Impact Assessments. In the additional information provided in February 2024, the State Party indicated that the KwaZulu-Natal Amafa and Research Institute has discussed the option of extending the buffer zone with the landowner of the property, KDC Consulting, to further shield the nominated property from the Wewe Driefontein mixed-zone development. The 300-metre-wide area proposed as buffer zone between the prospective development and the nominated property has already been zoned as a conservation area, as requested in the Environmental Authorization for the mixed housing development. The State Party considers that the inclusion of this area in the buffer zone would only be strengthening the existing protection. More detailed information about the planned infrastructure was supplied. There are currently no inhabitants living within this component part or its buffer zone.

ICOMOS considers that there is a logical and scientific rationale for the selection of the area to be nominated in terms of encompassing the attributes of the proposed Outstanding Universal Value, and that this underlying rationale has been applied appropriately and consistently.

ICOMOS considers that the nominated property and buffer zone boundaries are adequate in the case of Diepkloof Rock Shelter. For the Pinnacle Point Site Complex, ICOMOS welcomes the fact that the State Party has agreed to explore the option of extending the buffer zone into the ocean. The buffer zone of the Sibhudu Cave component part is considered to be too small to fully shield this component part from the Wewe Driefontein mixed-zone development. However, ICOMOS welcomes the creation of a 300-metre-wide conservation area, as has been done, and encourages the State Party to include this area in an expanded buffer zone.

#### **Evaluation of the proposed justification for inscription**

In summary, ICOMOS considers that comparative analysis justifies consideration of this property for the World Heritage List. The nominated property meets cultural criteria (iii), (iv) and (v). The integrity and authenticity of the whole series and of each component part have been demonstrated, though in the case of Sibhudu Cave, a planned development project raises concerns about the ongoing integrity of this component part and the sufficiency of its proposed buffer zone. ICOMOS recommends that the buffer zone extensions of the Pinnacle Point Site Complex and the Sibhudu Cave component parts be formalised, through a minor boundary modification request.

## **4 Conservation measures and monitoring**

### **Documentation**

The first archaeological excavations began in Diepkloof Rock Shelter in the 1970s. Sibhudu Cave and Pinnacle Point Site Complex followed in the 1980s and late 1990s respectively. The excavations at the three component parts have been extensively documented and published by international multidisciplinary teams of experts who are described as leaders in their fields of expertise. Studies of the resulting archaeological materials have likewise been published.

The South African Heritage Resources Agency (SAHRA) keeps a record of the listed sites and excavation permits granted under the National Heritage Resources Act. This record is uploaded on the South African Heritage Resources Information System online register. The register contains information about the geographical location and name of the declared property. The State Party states that the owners and managers of each site have a record of all previous excavation work done on the site. A complete copy of the inventory and excavation permits is also kept at Heritage Western Cape and the KwaZulu-Natal Amafa and Research Institute, which are Provincial Heritage Resources Authorities.

All recovered archaeological assemblages from Diepkloof Rock Shelter and Pinnacle Point Site Complex are curated at the Iziko South African Museum in Cape Town. During ongoing archaeological excavations, the material from Pinnacle Point Site Complex is stored temporarily at the end of each excavation season in the Bartolomeu Dias Museum in Mossel Bay, which includes a laboratory for conducting many of the analyses of Pinnacle Point material. The excavated material from Sibhudu Cave is kept for permanent storage at the KwaZulu-Natal Museum in Pietermaritzburg. During excavations, newly recovered materials are temporarily stored at a private dig house in Ballito, where the researchers and students process and analyse the finds.

While the documentation of the nominated component parts seems adequate, additional information provided by the State Party in November 2023 indicates that very little material from the nominated property is exhibited at the museums in which they are stored.

In the additional information submitted in February 2024, the State Party includes the future research plans of the three leading archaeologists investigating the three component parts. All three foresee further excavations and analyses of the excavated materials in order to strengthen or extend the information already available. While all three investigators share a focus on the development of human behaviour and interaction with the environment, an overarching research plan does not seem to exist.

### **Conservation measures**

Integrated Conservation Management Plans have been compiled for each of the nominated sites in terms of section 47 of the National Heritage Resources Act, No. 25 of 1999,



and of the World Heritage Convention Act, No. 49 of 1999. However, ICOMOS observes that at least some of the planning documents are not yet operational.

For the Diepkloof Rock Shelter component part, conservation work was scheduled for 2022, but the specific actions have not been detailed. The State Party mentions that Heritage Western Cape can prescribe conservation measures to be taken during and after excavation.

At the Pinnacle Point Site Complex component part, Heritage Western Cape can likewise prescribe conservation measures to be taken during and after excavation. The principal archaeologist is closely involved in the management of the site and is very experienced in conservation techniques to protect the proposed Outstanding Universal Value of the component part. Furthermore, Point of Human Origins, the company involved in operating tourism activities at the Complex, is directed by a professional archaeologist and regularly conducts on-site monitoring and maintenance using some of the revenues obtained from tourism.

In 2007, seepage of irrigation and storm water from the golf course near the Complex was detected. Algae grew from the dripping water, and some areas of the rocks were stained green. Action was taken to reduce the flow by a number of means, including moving one of the golf course greens and installing a lining between the grassed surface of the playing areas and the underlying calcrete sediments. Buckets have been placed under the drips to collect the water as part of a monitoring programme. A record is kept of the quantity of water that accumulates to ascertain its potential damage to archaeological sediments, and samples are analysed for chemical content.

At the Sibhudu Cave component part, the excavated pits and trenches are filled with sandbags at the end of each excavation season. This measure has proven successful for the last ten years, without any erosion or damage to the site and its archaeological sediments.

The additional information submitted by the State Party in November 2023 indicates that sandbags to backfill archaeological excavations are used at all three component parts. The bags are periodically inspected, and replaced if necessary. At least in Diepkloof Rock Shelter, sterile sand from the foot of the hill has been used to fill the bags. More of this sand was used to cover the bags. A walkway will be constructed to allow visitors to access the site and to view exposed sections that show the stratigraphy and items of interest.

### Monitoring

As Provincial Heritage Sites, the two component parts located in Western Cape Province have Grade II status, which affords them protection under the South African heritage law. As such, they are subject to regular monitoring and inspection by Heritage Western Cape, which has the necessary expertise to undertake such work. As a National Heritage Site, Sibhudu Cave in KwaZulu-Natal Province is subject to regular monitoring by the

SAHRA, which also has the necessary expertise to conduct inspections.

For the future management structure, the installation of an overall Management Authority and individual Site Management Committees is foreseen. The Management Authority will be responsible for the development of site and cave monitoring systems using SMART (specific, measurable, achievable, relevant, time-bound) indicators, in line with standard practice for caves, shelters, and middens. An archaeologist participating in each Site Management Committee will be responsible for monitoring and evaluating the component parts at regular intervals. The archaeologist will also develop and implement a baseline survey of the impact of activities around the component parts. The nominated sites have conservation and maintenance plans to mitigate the degradation of structures and to facilitate general risk monitoring. However, not all of these documents are operational at the moment.

The State Party has presented a list of key indicators for measuring the state of conservation of the nominated property. Most of these indicators focus on management goals and not on site conservation. While it is important to monitor the management aspects of the component parts, this is not a substitute for, or the equivalent of, site conservation monitoring. The few conservation-oriented indicators (such as “lack of vandalism on site”) are very general and difficult to quantify. The additional information submitted by the State Party in February 2024 details additional indicators that will help measure changes to the state of conservation of the nominated property. Extending the list of indicators is an important step, though clear criteria for recording and quantifying these indicators will have to be developed.

ICOMOS considers it positive that several different existing or planned entities are directed at implementing monitoring activities. Nevertheless, it is necessary to clearly define the monitoring responsibilities in order to make the monitoring system as efficient and effective as possible. Furthermore, it will be necessary to further develop the indicators to allow the state of conservation of all the attributes that support the proposed Outstanding Universal Value of the nominated property to be monitored.

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ICOMOS considers that the documentation of the nominated property is adequate. The conservation and monitoring activities applied to the component parts have made it possible to maintain a good state of conservation until now, but should be further developed and made more efficient. The conservation plans will have to be implemented as soon as possible. ICOMOS also considers that it would be advisable that the monitoring responsibilities are more clearly defined, and that the monitoring system is further developed to encompass all the attributes that support the proposed Outstanding Universal Value and is adapted for easy integration of its outcomes into the Periodic Reporting questionnaire.

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## 5 Protection and management

### Legal protection

Legislation for the protection of cultural heritage, the environment, and land-use planning combine to provide the protective framework for the three component parts of the nominated property. The World Heritage Convention Act, No. 49 of 1999, incorporates the World Heritage Convention into South African law and provides for the management of properties inscribed on the World Heritage List. The National Heritage Resources Act, No. 25 of 1999, protects the three component parts. Other provisions of this Act provide for the assessment and control of impacts on these sites. The National Environmental Management Act, No. 107 of 1998, also includes a system of impact assessment in the legal tool-kit. The National Environmental Management: Protected Areas Act, No. 57 of 2003, provides a range of environmental protections for properties inscribed on the World Heritage List and prevents mining and prospecting in such areas. The Spatial Planning and Land Use Management Act, No. 16 of 2013, installs a Land Use Management System that determines and manages development rights. It can be used to protect the areas around properties inscribed on the World Heritage List.

Pinnacle Point Site Complex and Diepkloof Rock Shelter are Provincial Heritage Sites and fall under the responsibility of Heritage Western Cape, which is a Provincial Heritage Resources Authority, whereas Sibhudu Cave is a National Heritage Site and falls under the responsibility of the South African Heritage Resources Agency (SAHRA). Section 27(18) of the National Heritage Resources Act stipulates that a permit is required from the relevant heritage authority to “*destroy, damage, deface, excavate, alter, remove from its original position, subdivide or change the planning status of the declared area*”. However, all three of the component parts, and most of their buffer zones, are still in private ownership, which means that collaboration and consensus with the owners is necessary. The State Party explained in the additional information submitted in February 2024 that formal heritage agreements with the respective landowners are in the process of being updated (in the case of Diepkloof Rock Shelter) or agreed upon. The agreements regulate aspects linked to site access, use, and responsibilities of the involved parties.

There are two ways in which the declaration of a buffer zone can be implemented. The first is to declare the area a protected area in terms of Section 28 of the National Heritage Resources Act, which would ensure consultation between the affected landowners, the SAHRA, and the Management Authority. The second option is to declare the buffer zone a heritage area in terms of Section 31 of the National Heritage Resources Act, which would result in its integration into the local municipal zoning scheme.

For Diepkloof Rock Shelter, a section of its buffer zone has been declared a protected area, allowing for the development of tourism infrastructure to service this component part. It appears that a Memorandum of

Understanding has been prepared. The buffer zone for the Pinnacle Point Site Complex component part has been declared under the provisions of the Land Use Planning Act of Western Cape (2014) and encompasses the entire extent of the Pinnacle Point Estate. The buffer zone of the Sibhudu Cave component part includes land zoned for agricultural purposes, but apparently this is not indicated in municipal planning documents such as, for example, the Spatial Development Framework. The Sibhudu Trust is in the process of acquiring a portion of the privately owned land.

ICOMOS considers that the legal protection framework provides adequate protection for heritage sites. However, the fact that the component parts are still in private ownership makes it an urgent priority to formalise relationships with the legal owners through heritage agreements.

### Management system

The establishment of Management Authorities for properties inscribed on the World Heritage List is a statutory requirement of South Africa’s World Heritage Convention Act.

The management of the Western Cape component parts is coordinated and hosted at the provincial level by the Member (minister) of the Executive Council of Cultural Affairs and Sport, whereas the management of the KwaZulu-Natal component part is coordinated and hosted by the KwaZulu-Natal Amafa and Research Institute. The two authorities will jointly serve as the overall Management Authority through the establishment of a Joint Management Committee, which will meet biannually as well as when necessary. It will be chaired by the Deputy Director-General: Biodiversity and Conservation of the Department of Forestry, Fisheries and the Environment, which is the focal point for World Heritage.

The South African World Heritage Convention Committee is another overarching intergovernmental committee. It is appointed by the Minister to advise on issues pertaining to the establishment, conservation, and management of South African properties inscribed on the World Heritage List. Besides a Management Authority and a Joint Management Committee rooted in the provincial and national structures, each component part has a Site Management Committee based in the local context, which relies on local authorities and the involvement of relevant local stakeholders. These Committees are advisory committees supported by the respective provincial departments, which will bear their operational costs. The compliance authorities responsible for monitoring research and conservation of the sites are the SAHRA for Sibhudu Cave, and Heritage Western Cape for Diepkloof Rock Shelter and Pinnacle Point Site Complex.

The State Party supplied additional information in February 2024 in which the composition of the Site Management Committees is described; the date for the first meetings of these bodies is set for May 2024.

The nominated property has an overarching Integrated Management Plan, and each component part has an Integrated Conservation Management Plan that is valid for five years, until 2022 for Diepkloof Rock Shelter and Pinnacle Point Site Complex, and until 2026 for Sibhudu Cave. In the additional information submitted in February 2024, the State Party explained that the two expired plans were updated and are in stakeholder revision. With the proposed changes they will be discussed for approval by the Council of Heritage Western Cape at a meeting on 31 May 2024. The vision expressed in the individual management plans is to have sites that will be financially sustainable, managed effectively, and protected through collaboration between key stakeholders, while enhancing the appreciation of the site by all people through education and interpretation, and potentially contributing to local economic development through community-based heritage tourism.

For Diepkloof Rock Shelter, funding from Heritage Western Cape and the Department of Cultural Affairs and Sport will be available for conserving the site. Most other expenses will apparently have to be covered with income from the planned visitor centre and donations. At Pinnacle Point Site Complex, about five percent of the income received from Point of Human Origins tours goes to the Home Owners' Association non-profit company and is used to cover the costs of monitoring water flow and quality in the caves, fixing the boardwalk, and replacing sandbags. The planned interpretation centre in Mossel Bay is considered by the State Party to be a promising potential source of funding. Heritage Western Cape and the Department of Cultural Affairs and Sport will make funds available for conservation of the site. Further expenses are currently covered by tourism activities and fundraising.

At Sibhudu Cave, funding is available through the University of Tübingen for excavation, research, and maintenance within the excavation project. Tourism activities and the development of an interpretation centre have the potential to contribute funds towards the management of this component part. Donations would have to cover all additional expenses. In the additional information supplied in February 2024, the State Party highlighted the consistent availability of funding during the nomination process, which reflects the commitment to these sites by both provincial governments.

The KwaZulu-Natal provincial government has committed R5 million to support the current nomination project and further extensions to it.

ICOMOS considers that the management structure and planning documents are carefully prepared and seem to have the potential to bring together different levels of government with local stakeholders and communities. However, ICOMOS highlights the need to operationalise the management structure and finalise the two updated Integrated Conservation Management Plans that have completed their five-year lifespan as announced by the State Party. Finally, a large part of the funding seems to

depend on donations and tourism income, in some cases from installations that are not yet operational.

### **Visitor management**

The nominated component parts are fragile and not able to receive large numbers of visitors. Currently, Diepkloof Rock Shelter receives about 240 visitors per year, Pinnacle Point Site Complex about 1,400 per year, and Sibhudu Cave is not open to the public unless a prior appointment is made with the heritage authorities, but infrastructure for accessing the site is being considered. For all three sites, visitor groups are limited to twelve to fifteen people per guide, according to the additional information sent by the State Party in November 2023. Visitor facilities and information at the sites are sparse or non-existent. Only at Pinnacle Point Estate can visitors find amenities as well as local guides for archaeological tours. The State Party presented additional information on this subject in November 2023, noting that off-site interpretation centres are planned, installed or provisionally installed for all three component parts.

The State Party highlights the need to carefully manage the expectations of visitors with respect to what they will see, as well as the anticipations of local communities concerning the economic opportunities arising from tourism. Tourism should therefore be developed slowly and in line with the capacity of community members.

ICOMOS welcomes the careful approach to site development, but underlines the need to provide informative material, such as on-site information and signs, as well as digital information, to all interested visitors. It is also important to conduct a carrying capacity study for each nominated component part.

### **Community involvement**

The elaboration of the Integrated Conservation Management Plans and the nomination dossier were accompanied by extensive stakeholder consultations. Invitations to the public consultation meetings were sent to all ward councillors, local and district municipalities, Indigenous groups, registered conservation bodies, heritage organisations, tourism offices, chambers of commerce, landowners, custodians of the properties, and the community at large. Furthermore, it is proposed that each nominated component part will have its own Site Management Committee, which will be firmly rooted in the local context by including local authorities and relevant local stakeholders such as the local community, scientists, heritage authorities, the Management Authority, and landowners.

The team excavating the Pinnacle Point Site Complex component part has involved the community in the project since excavation began in 2004. It has trained and employed several local persons and currently employs five people year-round who are responsible for the excavation and post-excavation process. The State Party states that the way in which this project has harnessed local skills is an exemplary illustration of the achievements that an

international excavation project can bring to local communities.

Public consultation is regarded as both an ongoing process and an integral part of the management of the sites. This principle is also underlined in the management documents for the nominated property. No specific issues related to human rights are known to exist, and no communities or Indigenous peoples are believed to have been left out of the process.

ICOMOS considers that the nomination process has successfully included local communities and a wide range of stakeholders. The planned management structure foresees Site Management Committees, which are currently in the process of formation, as the State Party indicated in the additional information of February 2024. These committees will ensure representatives of all relevant groups are included in the management process.

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#### **Effectiveness of the protection and management of the nominated property**

In summary, ICOMOS considers that the protection and management of the nominated property is satisfactory. ICOMOS recommends that the management structure be operationalised and the two updated Integrated Conservation Management Plans that have completed their five-year lifespan be finalised, as announced by the State Party. It is of some concern that the component parts are in private ownership. However, these issues are being addressed by the State Party. Visitors need to find relevant information at the sites and be able to visit without putting the values of the nominated property or their own security at risk. Stakeholders and the local communities are well integrated in the nomination and management processes. Finally, ICOMOS considers that finding regular, secure sources of funding should be a priority.

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## **6 Conclusion**

ICOMOS considers that the primary interesting features of the nominated property are the great variety of archaeological evidence of the development of modern human behaviour found in the nominated caves and rock shelters, the early dates associated with these finds, and their state of conservation.

The research and documentation work done for the nomination dossier by the State Party and international teams of investigators is very thorough and robust. ICOMOS also appreciates the work carried out by the State Party to produce informative additional information.

ICOMOS considers that criteria (iii), (iv) and (v) have been demonstrated. The comparative analysis shows that none of the compared sites have the same combination of good state of conservation, age, and quantity and quality of relevant evidence. No major issues were detected concerning the authenticity or integrity of the whole nominated series or of each component part. Factors affecting the nominated property are being controlled

adequately at the moment. The nominated property has satisfactory protection and management system. ICOMOS considers that stakeholders and local communities are well integrated in the nomination and management processes.

The formalisation of the relationships with the legal owners and the improvement of the monitoring system need to be addressed. The management structure should be operationalised and the two updated Integrated Conservation Management Plans that have completed their five-year lifespan should be finalised, as announced by the State Party. Visitor installations and information at the component parts are minimal, despite a good part of the funding for the nominated property being dependent on tourism-generated income. Securing more dependable funding should be a priority.

Nearly completely missing in the nominated property are early *Homo sapiens* skeletal remains. For that reason, ICOMOS proposes a change of the nominated property name in order to focus on the emergence of modern human behaviour rather than on modern humans per se.

## **7 Recommendations**

### **Recommendations with respect to inscription**

ICOMOS recommends that The Emergence of Modern Humans: The Pleistocene Occupation Sites of South Africa, South Africa, be inscribed on the World Heritage List on the basis of **criteria (iii), (iv) and (v)**.

### **Recommended Statement of Outstanding Universal Value**

#### **Brief synthesis**

Diepkloof Rock Shelter, Pinnacle Point Site Complex, and Sibhudu Cave are three widely dispersed archaeological sites located in the Western Cape and KwaZulu-Natal provinces of South Africa. Two of them, Sibhudu Cave and Diepkloof Rock Shelter, are located about ten kilometres from the current shoreline, while the Pinnacle Point Site Complex is located directly on the coast. These sites provide the most varied and best-preserved record known of the development of modern human behaviour, reaching back as far as 162,000 years. Symbolic thought and advanced technologies are exemplified by evidence of ochre processing, engraved patterns on ochre and bone, estuarine shellfish beads for body decoration, decorated ostrich eggshells, lithic technologies for advanced projectile weapons, heat treatment of stone for toolmaking, and microliths. This serial property contributes to the understanding of the origin of behaviourally modern humans, their cognitive abilities and cultures, and the climatic transitions that they survived.

**Criterion (iii):** The archaeological layers at the Diepkloof Rock Shelter, Pinnacle Point Site Complex, and Sibhudu Cave provide exceptional evidence of behavioural and palaeoenvironmental developments in the Middle Stone Age. They contain early evidence of symbolic thought and

advanced technologies. The great variety of materials, the early dates, and the excellent state of conservation make the evidence of this important step in human development exceptional.

**Criterion (iv):** Diepkloof Rock Shelter, Pinnacle Point Site Complex, and Sibhudu Cave preserve exceptionally well-stratified and well-dated sedimentary records of ancient human life dating from about 162,000 to 38,000 years ago. The development of modern human behaviour and complex cognition are illustrated by the evidence of abstract thinking, the ability to plan and strategize, and technological innovation, including, for example, the preparation and use of adhesives and the heat treatment of lithic materials.

**Criterion (v):** Diepkloof Rock Shelter, Pinnacle Point Site Complex, and Sibhudu Cave offer some of the most important evidence known for the consistent exploitation of coastal resources during the Middle and Late Pleistocene. As current sea levels rise due to climate change, much of the ancient record of human coastal resource use has been obliterated or is in grave danger. As such, the excellent state of conservation of these rare sites is pivotal for preserving evidence of palaeoclimates and palaeoenvironments.

#### Integrity

The property includes all the attributes necessary to express its Outstanding Universal Value, and is of adequate size to ensure the complete representation of the features that convey its significance. All three component parts contain long stratigraphic sequences of human occupation that together cover a time span of about 124,000 years, from 162,000 to 38,000 years ago. Preservation conditions, even for organic material at the Sibhudu Cave, are very good. Favourable depositional processes have allowed the steady accumulation of archaeologically significant deposits with little or no loss due to natural erosion or human or animal activities. The views from the sites are generally undisturbed. Archaeological excavations have been conducted according to the highest international standards. All remains have been carefully curated and catalogued in national collections, and their significance and the interpretations based upon them have been reported and published in international journals.

#### Authenticity

The cultural values of the property are truthfully and credibly expressed through its attributes. The stratigraphic sequences and the dating of the different deposits, as excavated and documented by several international multidisciplinary teams of experts and peer reviewed at the time of publication, confirm the authenticity of the archaeological contexts and remains that constitute evidence of modern human behaviour.

#### Protection and management requirements

Legal protection of the property is based principally on the World Heritage Convention Act, No. 49 of 1999, and the National Heritage Resources Act, No. 25 of 1999, which protect the three component parts and provide for a system of Heritage Impact Assessment. The National Environmental Management Act, No. 107 of 1998, also includes a system of impact assessment.

The management of the Western Cape component parts is coordinated and hosted at the provincial level by the Member (minister) of the Executive Council of Cultural Affairs and Sport, and the management of the KwaZulu-Natal component part is coordinated and hosted by the KwaZulu-Natal Amafa and Research Institute. The two authorities will jointly serve as the overall Management Authority through the establishment of a Joint Management Committee. Each component part will have a Site Management Committee based in the local context. The World Heritage Convention Committee of South Africa advises on issues related to properties inscribed on the World Heritage List. Integrated Conservation Management Plans have been developed, as is required under the World Heritage Convention Act of the State Party. Stakeholders and the local communities are well integrated in the management process. The component parts are privately owned, which makes the formalisation of relationships with the legal owners through heritage agreements an important step to be completed as soon as possible.

#### Additional recommendations

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

- a) Making operational the planned management structure, including the installation of an overall Management Authority and individual Site Management Committees,
- b) Making fully operational the individual Integrated Conservation Management Plans for each component part,
- c) Finalising and implementing the three heritage agreements,
- d) Finding regular, secure sources of funding as a priority,
- e) Formalising the buffer zone extensions of the Pinnacle Point Site Complex and the Sibhudu Cave component parts, through a minor boundary modification request,
- f) Permanently resolving water flow and seepage problems affecting the Pinnacle Point Site Complex component part,
- g) Resolving the challenge of conserving, backfilling, and presenting opened excavations in conformity with international standards,

- h) Defining the monitoring responsibilities more clearly, and developing clear criteria for recording and quantifying the key indicators measuring the state of conservation of the property,
- i) Providing informative material to visitors, such as on-site information and signs, as well as digital information,
- j) Conducting a carrying capacity study for each component part,
- k) Exhibiting more materials from the property in the museums in which they are stored,
- l) Creating a more coordinated approach regarding research projects at the three component parts,
- m) Undertaking a Heritage Impact Assessment for any development proposal that may have an impact on the Outstanding Universal Value, authenticity, and integrity of the property before any decisions are made that would be difficult to reverse. This includes the planned development project near the Sibhudu Cave component part, the proposed developments near the Pinnacle Point Site Complex component part, and the planned visitor access walkway and on-site visitor infrastructure being suggested for the Diepkloof Rock Shelter component part,
- n) Informing the World Heritage Centre of the intention to undertake or authorise all major projects which may affect the Outstanding Universal Value of the property, in line with paragraph 172 of *Operational Guidelines for the Implementation of the World Heritage Convention*.

ICOMOS recommends that the name of the serial property be changed to: “The Emergence of Modern Human Behaviour: The Pleistocene Occupation Sites of South Africa”.