

STATE OF CONSERVATION REPORTS BY THE STATES PARTIES
(in compliance with Paragraph 169 of the Operational Guidelines)

State of Eritrea

Asmara: an African Modernist City World Heritage Property

Executive Summary of the report

The State Party Eritrea welcomed the World Heritage Committee (WHC) the recommendations and Decision on (WHC/23/45.COM/7B.) for Asmara- an African Modernist City World Heritage Property. Since the inscription of the property, Eritrea has made some progress on the implementation of the recommendations and decision by the World Heritage Committee.

As per the request of the World Heritage Committee, the State Party Eritrea offers clarification on the main issue raised on the management and conservation of the property.

The State Party has expressed its interest and commitment for the implementation of the recommendation of the Committee's to enhance the Asmara Heritage Project's institutional responsibilities. The revised organizational structures of AHP will provide a range of functional responsibilities in planning cultural and urban development and better coordination and management of the World Heritage Site. This request by the World Heritage Committee remained not yet addressed; however, the State Party has been working in response to the Committee's recommendations and will report to the World Heritage Centre (WHC) as soon as it becomes available.

The State Party has also identified fourteen historical buildings as first-phase priorities for conservation and restoration. At present, the state of the conservation of these buildings, both of the external and internal elements, is in a deteriorating condition. However, the recent survey outcome reveals that the identified historical buildings have retained their authenticity and integrity to a high degree. Furthermore, the State Party has a plan to undertake minor maintenance works for the buildings to halt further deterioration as an interim measure.

The Central Region Administration, in collaboration with the Commission of Culture and Sports, is seeking financial and technical assistance from UNESCO and other international funding organizations to undertake a detailed conservation study for the identified fourteen historical buildings. As the continuation of this effort, they have requested to the national government to launch an international financial and technical assistance program and are waiting for approval.

The Local Economic Development Plan (LEDP) study was planned to start in 2023. However, the preparation of the contract agreement documents and signing took longer than expected. As a result, it has faced some delay. The State Party is pleased to inform the WHC that the LEDP study has commenced and it has made progress on data collection and developing a methodological framework in 2024. The LEDP study is expected to be fully completed in September 2025 and will submit the final LEDP document to the World Heritage Centre and advisory bodies in November 2025 for review.

At its extended 45th session (Riyadh, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, 2023), the World Heritage Committee examined the State of Conservation Report of Asmara World Heritage property. As per the Committee Decision 45 COM 7B.122, the World Heritage Committee requested the State Party to provide information to the World Heritage Centre on improving the structure of the Asmara Heritage Project, developing the Local Economic Development Plan (LEDP), and the preparation of the detailed conservation proposal for the restoration of 14 historical buildings identified.

*3. **Acknowledges** the progress made in finalising the detailed Urban Conservation Master Plan (UCMP) and the Asmara Planning and Technical Regulations (APTR) and encourages the State Party to continue its endeavours to designate the property as a protected area under the auspices of the Cultural and Natural Heritage Proclamation of 2015;*

*4. **Notes** the State Party's commitment to developing the UCMP using the Historic Urban Landscape (HUL) approach and welcomes the proposal to develop the Integrated Historic Parameter (IHP) to ensure the protection of the property, promotion of socioeconomic development for its resident, and enable sustainable urban development for its broader urban context and its geographic setting*

*5. **Notes** the clarification provided by the State Party on the roles and functions of the stakeholders and requests the State Party to improve the structure of the Asmara Heritage Project (AHP) to enhance its responsibilities to conserve, manage and promote the property but also to maintain its link with institutions dealing with cultural development and urban planning and development;*

Response [5]:

The Central Region Administration (CRA) is the parental institution for Department of Public Works Development (DPWD) and AHP. The DPWD has four key technical divisions including Urban Planning Division, Building and Supervision Division, Road and Maintenance Division and Agricultural Infrastructure Divisions. The DPWD is responsible for maintaining and improving Asmara's infrastructure, as well as safeguarding its urban heritage through the enforcement of planning and building regulations. It has over 200 staff of diverse professions including: architects, planners, engineers, technicians, archivists and administrative supporting staff.

The Asmara Heritage Project office is an institution within DPWD. The AHP operates as autonomous office with its own staff and has mandate to undertake various studies including conservation and management researches. Financially, it has its own operating budget and periodically submits reports and prepares various proposals on the World Heritage Site and Buffer Zone.

AHP is also responsible for the implementation of projects financed by donor organizations such as UNESCO and EU. At present, AHP has 20 staff with diverse professional including architects, urban planners, engineers, Auto CAD and GIS operators, archivists and management team. Currently, the AHP is the principal body responsible for managing the World Heritage Site and for the preparation of the Urban Conservation Master Plan and the revision of the Integrated Management Plan. AHP is also undertaking the role of coordination for the World Heritage

Property and Buffer zone in collaboration with Department of Public Works Development, Department of Culture and Sports and other key stakeholders.

As we mentioned in our previous SOC report, there are four divisions under the Department of Public Works Development including Urban Planning Division, Building and Supervision Division, and Road and Maintenance Division, and Agriculture Infrastructure Division. These four divisions are working in close collaboration in planning, designing and implementation of urban development projects at the historic center, city and regional level. AHP is actively engaging and participating in the planning and implementation of urban development activities with the World Heritage Boundary and buffer zone. The Detailed Urban Conservation Plan, and the Technical Implementation Norms and Regulations study was prepared in collaboration with four divisions of DPWD, all urban development strategies and building regulations are incorporated in the study.

AHP is also working in close collaboration with the Department of Culture and Sports of the Central region Administration in cultural development activities. Currently, they are working jointly on promoting Asmara's World Heritage Property and to increase awareness among the public, the importance of the citizen participation on the conservation effort.

The State Party has expressed its interest and commitment for the implementation of the recommendation of the World Heritage Committee to enhance the Asmara Heritage Project Institutional responsibilities. There are ongoing discussions between the Central Region Administration and Commission of Culture and Sports how AHP be better organized to fulfill as the central management body of Asmara World Heritage Property. The revised organizational structures of AHP will provide a range of functional responsibilities, in planning cultural and urban development, better coordination and management of the World Heritage Site. This request by the World Heritage Committee has not yet fully addressed, however, the State Party Eritrea has been working in this regard and will report to the World Heritage Centre (WHC).

6. Also requests the State Party to continue working with the World Heritage Centre to develop the Local Economic Development Plan (LEDP) with a view to supporting the implementation of the UCMP and providing a mechanism to ensure a viable financial resource for sustainable conservation of the property;

Response [6]:

To meet the recommendations of the World Heritage Committee, the State Party Eritrea has initiated a Local Economic Development Plan (LEDP) for Asmara: A Modernist African City World Heritage Property. The State Party has received international assistance from the World Heritage Centre to undertake the Local Economic Development Plan study. The following activities has been carried out: preparing Terms of Reference (ToR) for national and international heritage economic consultants, the ToR was sent to the World Heritage Centre (WHC) for review and approval. Both the WHC and the State Party had endorsed the consultants CVs and TOR. There was some delay to finalize the contract agreement due to some administrative bureaucracy and this issue is addressed in 2024. Furthermore the agreements were signed between the World Heritage Centre and the Asmara Heritage Project, and the national and international consultants in August 2024. The State Party would like to express its appreciation for the WHC-Africa Unit staff for their unwavering support in facilitating the kickoff of the study. In 2024, many online meetings were organized and discussed with the WHC-Africa Unit, the State Party (AHP), and national and international experts on the purpose and scope of the LED plan. After considering the World

Heritage Committee decision on 43rd session and having reviewed the official document, it is identified that some key issues should be taken into account on the LED Plan for elaboration.

- 1) The LEDP must be in line with Historic Urban Landscape (HUL) recommendation
- 2) LEDP should address two main needs concerning Asmara: a) Conserving/preserving it's highly impressive and cherished heritage of OUVs, and b) Meeting its growing socio-economic development requirements as the main metropolis i.e. social, economic and political fulcrum of development of Eritrea as a whole.
- 3) The LEDP shall identify and assess main options for mobilization of resources (financial and others), suggest innovative solution for potential unforeseen problems that may put the WHS at risk during the implementation of the rehabilitation and recovery programme for historical buildings, infrastructures and public spaces. Among different strategies for resource mobilization, in 2023, both the WHC and the Advisory Bodies have remarked that it is critical that the LEDP supports the establishment of a financial mechanism to support the conservation of the World Heritage property. In some documents, this mechanism is cited as the establishment of Conservation Fund.
- 4) The LED plan should be aligned with the Urban Conservation Management Plan (UCMP) and other conservation strategies of the World Heritage Property. As the State Party has identified 14 historical buildings as a priority for conservation and restoration, it is relevant to understand how the conservation and restoration of these buildings will be taken into consideration into the LEDP planning.

The national consultant in collaboration with the international expert, has developed questionnaires for household and business surveys in order to materialize the study. In addition, the assignment will be prepared with the principles of value-driven, participatory, holistic, and inclusive approaches to involve the public, private, and civil societies, households, local administrators, and legislative body (Baito) in the study processes. Overall, the study has six phases and outlined as follows:

- Phase 1: Field data collection and Literature review.
- Phase 2 : Approach and Situation analysis
- Phase 3: The Development Scenario will come out after consultation workshops with local stakeholders or documenting how current plans for Asmara align with the overall scope of the heritage-led LEDP.
- Phases 4 to 6 mainly represent the overall LEDP strategies and will be framed in agreement with the state party and the stakeholders. It will outline the articulation of the actions, management mechanisms, and resource mobilization.

At present, the study has made progress and reached phase 1 and 2 stages; the remaining phases of the study are estimated to be completed within ten months (September 2025). After the completion of the LEDP, the State Party will send the document to the WHC and the Advisory bodies for review.

7. Further requests the State Party to provide an update report on the state of conservation of the 14 historical buildings identified in 2018 as an initial priority conservation and restoration phase to the World Heritage Centre;

Response [7]:

The State Party has identified fourteen historical buildings as first phase priority for conservation and restoration. At present, the state of the conservation of these buildings, both of the external and internal elements are in a deteriorating condition. In 2023, the AHP in collaboration with the DPWD has conducted rapid survey and assessment of the fourteen priority buildings. The survey outcome reveals that the fourteen identified historical buildings have retained their authenticity and integrity to a high degree. Regarding the existing condition of the buildings specifically, the external part- façade elements and details are deteriorating, and the plaster work is generally in poor condition as well as the interior parts of the building are in deteriorating state. The main contributing factor for the bad state conservation is lack of maintenance that has not been carried out over two decades. Although the building is structurally sound from general observation, further study is required in all structural elements to understand the current condition of its stability.

The rapid survey assessment were taken and the type and extent of damage was examined and quantity estimation was done for minor maintenance works for the buildings to halt the deterioration. The AHP has prepared cost estimation and requested for a budget to the national and the local government to undertake minor maintenance work. However the requested budget is under review and it is not yet approved. As a result, the planned maintenance programme has not yet realized.

8. Reiterates its invitation to the State Party to seek international financial and technical support towards the preparation of detailed conservation proposals, including criteria, methods, and materials to be used for the conservation and restoration of the 14 historical buildings identified in 2018 and to submit such proposals to the World Heritage Centre for review by the Advisory Bodies;

Response [8]:

Since the inscription of Asmara on the World Heritage List, the State Party Eritrea has been working relentlessly on laying basis for safeguarding the Outstanding Universal Value of the Property. As part of this commitments, the management, conservation, regulatory tools have been put in place since 2017 as statement the following key documents are produced:

- Integrated Management Plan(2016),
- Cultural and Natural Heritage Proclamation (2015),
- Disaster Risk Management Framework(2016)
- Detailed Urban Conservation Plan(2023),
- Technical Implementation Norms and Regulation(2023)
- Local Economic Development Plan(2024) ongoing study
- Revised Integrated Management Plan(2026-2031) ongoing study

Before any conservation and restoration intervention, a full condition assessment study must be carried out analysing in detail the condition of every physical attribute of the buildings (materials authenticity, services, utilities, structural integrity, etc). The proposed methodological study require the following phases:

Phase one: Preliminary Assessment

- a) Deskwork - Collection and assessment of all existing design documents including the history of intervention on the building.
- b) Preliminary condition survey including - conservation professionals will assess the present condition of the architectural elements, structural stability and integrity of the whole complex, authenticity of materials, and drainage and sewage systems, water supply and electrical systems.
- c) Production of clearly synthesized preliminary report - for communicating with stakeholders.
- d) Workshops - identification of intervention alternatives, presentation to and consultation with the Department of Public Works Development and Asmara Heritage Project (both under the Municipality of Asmara) and other stakeholders and resident(local community) .
- e) Public engagement activities to ascertain inclusion of public opinion about the building's conservation plan and its future use.
- f) Production of clearly synthesized final preliminary report - with recommendations for further advanced studies on the findings.

Phase Two - Full Assessment

- g) Full condition survey assessment - which may include destructive and non-destructive tests, and lab tests depending on the recommendations from the preliminary report.
- h) Study of materials and recommendation for their replacement in the contemporary market or their preservation procedures, without undermining their authenticity.
- i) Preparation of full conservation plan the best selected alternatives from the preliminary assessment – including Heritage Impact Assessment(HIA), detailed technical drawings, budget estimation, construction materials and contract documents.
- j) Preparation of full conservation plan the best selected alternatives from the preliminary report.

The State Party has not yet implimeted a full condition assessment (detailed conservation proposal) study for the identified fourteen historical buildings due to a shortage of skilled and experienced conservation experts and financial constraints. The LED plan is under development and will be aligned with the Urban Conservation Management Plan (UCMP) and other conservation strategies of the World Heritage Property. The completion of the LED plan will provide the authorities the financial and institutional tools and allow them to mobilize financial resources. Moreover, the Plan will define various scenarios for the preservation of the historic city and propose tools to devise locally tailored strategies in cooperation with local, regional, and international stakeholders and actors.

The Central Region Administration, in collaboration with the Commission of Culture and Sports, is seeking financial and technical assistance from UNESCO and other international funding organizations to undertake a detailed conservation study. As the continuation of this effort, they have requested to the national government to launch international/donor financial assistance and are waiting for approval. During the implementation of the study, the State Party will respect the decision adopted by the 45th session of the World Heritage Committee for the Asmara: an African Modernist City World Heritage Property.

9. Encourages the State Party to continue with the mobilization, engagement and capacity building of stakeholders and rights holders, also with regards to managing the historic urban landscape and to the physical conservation of the built attributes of the property;

Response [9]:

The State Party Eritrea has also initiated a study to prepare the revised Integrated Management Plan (2026-2031) in 2024 and it is expected to be finalized in 2025. The overall aim of the management plan is to develop an approach to the management of Asmara: an African Modernist City World Heritage Property that will retain and strengthen the balance between conserving the Historic Urban Landscape, improving the local character and amenities of the World Heritage Property, and serving the vision in favor of sustainable urban conservation of the capital city of Eritrea. The State Party will consider the World Heritage Committee recommendation to mobilize and engage stakeholders and right holders during the preparation of the management plan and implementation process.

3. Other current conservation issues identified by the State Party (ies) which may have an impact on the Property's Outstanding Universal Value

The State Party would like to assure you that there is no threat which can impact on the Outstanding Universal Value of the World Heritage Property's.

4. In conformity with Paragraph 172 of the Operational Guidelines describe any potential major restorations alteration and/or new construction(s) intended within the property and the buffer zone s and/or corridors or other areas where such developments may affect the Outstanding Universal Value of the property including authenticity and integrity.

At present, no significant development projects or investment proposals, major restoration or rehabilitation projects in the World Heritage Property and the buffer zone which may affect potentially the Outstanding Universal Value (OUV) of the Property including the authenticity and integrity. The State Party will report to the World Heritage Centre when there are intentions of potential development projects such as major restoration, alteration, and/or new construction in the World Heritage Property to comply with the paragraph 172 of the Operational Guidelines.

5. Public access to the state of conservation report

We would be pleased this report to be uploaded on UNESCO- World Heritage Centre State conservation report information system websites.

6. Finally requests the State Party to submit to the World Heritage Centre, by 1 December 2024, an updated report on the state of conservation of the property and the implementation of the above, for examination by the World Heritage Committee at its 47th session in 2025.

Signature of the Authorities

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Medhanie Teklemariam
Site Manager,
Asmara World Heritage Property