


World Heritage
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**UNITED NATIONS EDUCATIONAL, SCIENTIFIC AND CULTURAL ORGANIZATION
CONVENTION CONCERNING THE PROTECTION OF THE WORLD CULTURAL AND NATURAL HERITAGE
WORLD HERITAGE COMMITTEE**

Thirty-eighth session

Doha, Qatar 15-25 June 2014

Item 7A of the Provisional Agenda: State of conservation of the properties inscribed on the List of World Heritage in Danger

SUMMARY

In accordance with Section IV B, paragraphs 190-191 of the *Operational Guidelines*, the Committee shall review annually the state of conservation of properties inscribed on the List of World Heritage in Danger. This review shall include such monitoring procedures and expert missions as might be determined necessary by the Committee.

This document contains information on the state of conservation of properties inscribed on the List of World Heritage in Danger. The World Heritage Committee is requested to review the reports on the state of conservation of properties contained in this document. The full reports of reactive monitoring missions requested by the World Heritage Committee are available at the following Web address in their original language:

<http://whc.unesco.org/en/sessions/38COM/documents>

All previous state of conservation reports are available through the World Heritage State of conservation Information System at the following Web address: <http://whc.unesco.org/en/soc>

Decision required: The Committee is requested to review the following state of conservation reports. The Committee may wish to adopt the draft Decision presented at the end of each state of conservation report.

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**I. STATE OF CONSERVATION REPORTS
CULTURAL PROPERTIES**

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ARAB STATES

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4. Old City of Jerusalem and its Walls (site proposed by Jordan) (C 148 rev)

5. Birthplace of Jesus: Church of the Nativity and the Pilgrimage Route, Bethlehem (Palestine) (C 1433)

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4. Old City of Jerusalem and its Walls (site proposed by Jordan) (C 148 rev)

See Document WHC-14/38.COM/7A.Add (subject to the Reinforced Monitoring mechanism)

5. Birthplace of Jesus: Church of the Nativity and the Pilgrimage Route, Bethlehem (Palestine) (C 1433)

Year of inscription on the World Heritage List **2012**

Criteria (iv)(vi)

Year(s) of inscription on the List of World Heritage in Danger **2012 to present**

Threats for which the property was inscribed on the List of World Heritage in Danger

- Degradation of the architectural complex of the Church of the Nativity;
- Development pressure;
- Tourism pressure.

Desired state of conservation for the removal of the property from the List of World Heritage in Danger Not yet drafted

Corrective measures identified Not yet identified

Timeframe for the implementation of the corrective measures Not yet established

Previous Committee Decisions See page <http://whc.unesco.org/en/list/1433/documents/>

International Assistance

Requests approved: 0

Total amount approved: 0

For details, see page <http://whc.unesco.org/en/list/1433/assistance/>

UNESCO Extra-budgetary Funds

Total amount granted: USD 723,000 from Italy (Emergency Action Plan 1997-1998; Conservation and Management Plan 2006-2010).

Previous monitoring missions N/A

Factors affecting the property identified in previous reports

- Degradation of the architectural complex of the Church of the Nativity;
- Development pressure;
- Tourism pressure.

Illustrative material See page <http://whc.unesco.org/en/list/1433/>

Current conservation issues

On 7 February 2014, the State Party submitted a state of conservation report, which is available at <http://whc.unesco.org/en/list/1433/documents>. Progress in a number of conservation issues addressed by the Committee at its previous sessions is presented in the report as follows:

- *A summary of detailed investigations of the Church of the Nativity* carried out by a Consortium led by CFR (Administrative project managing - Ferrara - Italy) which included a Laser scanning survey, and detailed analysis of historical and archaeological aspects, masonry structures, roof structures, structural aspects, decorated surfaces, mosaics and paintings. According to the report, these analyses have led to the development of relevant guidelines which can be considered as the overarching conservation strategy to guide future restoration work.
- *Restoration of the roof and windows*, for which tender procedure had been started at the time of the previous Committee session, the State Party has provided a detailed account of the progress made with illustrations. Accordingly, the work by the contractor has commenced in September 2013 and is scheduled to be completed by September 2014. On 29 August 2013, the State Party had submitted to the World Heritage Centre the tender documents, scope of work (SoW) and the contractor's technical proposal for the restoration of the wooden roof of the Church of the Nativity. ICOMOS provided their comments on 18 October 2013 recalling the Committee Decision, 37 COM 7A.27 which recalled "the need for an overarching conservation strategy for the Church of the Nativity to be developed as early as possible to guide the restoration project"; such a strategy would be based on an analysis of the church fabric and particularly its historic interest. So far such a document has not been provided.
- *Other activities*:
 - Several rehabilitation activities related to the Pilgrimage Route,
 - Bylaws for the Protection of the Architectural Heritage in Bethlehem: Bethlehem Historic Centre and Individual Traditional Buildings throughout the Town. These were reported to have been gazetted in February 2014,
 - Manual for the Rehabilitation of the Historic Centre of Bethlehem.
- *Preparation of the conservation and management plan* for the property by the stakeholders is underway and the intention is to complete this by March 2014, although few details are available.

Analysis and Conclusions of the World Heritage Centre, ICOMOS and ICCROM

The Church of the Nativity:

Progress has been made towards the restoration of the roof of the Church of the Nativity and the detailed investigations carried out on the overall conditions of the Church. Although considerable survey and research into the Church of the Nativity has been undertaken, this has not been used as a basis for a Conservation strategy, as requested. Such a strategy needs to set out the historic evidence and significance of the overall building and its component parts, as a guide to how conservation interventions are identified and addressed. However, details of the strategy have not been provided in the report.

Currently there is no way of telling whether the proposed structural timber repairs are taking full account of the undoubted historic character of the roof, which may possibly contain elements surviving from Justinian's construction period. Given the rarity and consequent importance of such a structure, there should be clarity about the way in which its historic character is taken into account by the repair programme. In addition, there is no reference to any research into the historical character and significance of the leadwork with which the roof is covered, or analysis of its condition and it seems that timber repairs are being carried out to the roof trusses without any reference to the condition of the roof coverings.

There is a need for a clear understanding of the way in which all the component aspects of the fabric of the building, which appear to have been investigated in detail on an individual basis by the various members of the Consortium, are understood in a holistic way. The absence of such an overall assessment makes it difficult to comment on the scope of the work presently being carried out, and its appropriateness within the framework proposed for the overall project.

The contractors who were appointed on 25 July 2013 to carry out Phase I (Roof and Windows restoration) are already half way through their programme. Details were provided for the roof project in terms of the specific techniques and areas of investigative study carried out by the various research units within the Consortium. However, the report sets out no clear conclusions drawn from the findings of these separate investigative units and no clear set of recommendations for the resultant coordinated action to be taken.

It is therefore recommended that the World Heritage Committee reiterate its request to the State Party to develop a conservation plan which draws together the conclusions of the detailed investigative reports into a comprehensive conservation strategy for the whole property and reinforces its Outstanding Universal Value (OUV).

Conservation and management plan of the property:

Noting the reference made to the development of the property's conservation and management plan, it is recommended that the World Heritage Committee urge the State Party to expedite its completion together with the overarching conservation strategy, and submit them for review by the Advisory Bodies prior to their adoption.

The State Party has not yet identified the corrective measures and Desired state of conservation for the removal of the property from the List of World Heritage in Danger that would serve as a basis for planning of all future action at the property. The World Heritage Centre and the Advisory Bodies are ready to assist in this regard. The World Heritage Committee may want to request the State Party to attend to this.

Draft Decision: 38 COM 7A.5

The World Heritage Committee,

1. Having examined Document WHC-14/[38.COM/7A](#).
 2. Recalling Decision **37 COM 7A.27**, adopted at its 37th session (Phnom Penh, 2013),
 3. Regrets that the State Party had not developed the overarching conservation strategy for the Church of the Nativity prior to the commencement of the restoration works and requests the State Party to provide such strategy based on the analysis of the church fabric and its historic, archaeological and architectural characteristics, prior to any future conservation works;
 4. Notes the progress made towards the restoration of the roof of the Church of the Nativity but expresses its concern that this work is not being guided by a defined conservation approach;
 5. Also requests the State Party, in consultation with the World Heritage Centre and the Advisory Bodies to develop corrective measures, a timeframe for their implementation and a Desired state of conservation for the removal of the property from the List of World Heritage in Danger;
 6. Further requests the State Party to expedite the development of the management plan and provide an electronic and three printed copies of this plan for review by the World Heritage Centre and the Advisory Bodies;
 7. Requests furthermore the State Party to submit to the World Heritage Centre, by **1 February 2015**, 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 39th session in 2015;
 8. **Decides to retain the Birthplace of Jesus, Church of the Nativity and the Pilgrimage Route, Bethlehem (Palestine) on the List of World Heritage in Danger.**
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<http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0023/002333/233323e.pdf>