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Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia
Ministry of Culture & Tourism
Authority for Research & Conservation of
Cultural Heritage



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Ref.No 01/31-5/024

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Date 29 JAN 2019

Dr. Mechthild Rössler
Director World Heritage Center
7, Place de Fonteory
75352 Paris 07SP
France

Subject: - State Conservation Report of the Rock-hewn churches of Lalibela

Dear Dr. Mechthild,

I would like to recall the letter (Ref: CLT/HERM/HC/AFR/18/324) dated on 14 November 2018 from the World Heritage Centre that requests the State Party to implement the recommendations of the joint advisory mission. In the same letter the State Party is required to submit an updated State of Conservation Report of the property and a Terms of References of the on projects happening in Lalibela by 1st February 2019.

Therefore I would like to submit an updated State of Conservation Report of the Rock-hewn Churches of Lalibela for examination by the World Heritage Committee at its 43rd Session to be held 2019. Taking this opportunity, I would like to thank the World Heritage Center for its sustained collaboration in our efforts to preserve our shared global resources for posterity.



With best regards,

Yonas Desta
Director General

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Please Quote Our Ref. No. When Replying



FORMAT FOR THE SUBMISSION OF STATE OF CONSERVATION
REPORTS BY THE STATES PARTIES

(In compliance with Paragraph 169 of the
Operational Guidelines)



GOVERNMENT OF ETHIOPIA

Name of World Heritage property (State(s) Party (ies)) (Identification number)

ROCK-HEWN CHURCHES, LALIBELA (Ethiopia)

Property ID C 18

Date of Inscription: 1978

Criteria (i) (ii) (iii)

1. Executive Summary of the report

This report is generated in response to the request from the World Heritage Centre (Ref: CLT/HERM/HC/AFR/18/324) dated on 14 November 2018, where the State Party was required to submit a State of Conservation Report for the Rock-hewn Churches of Lalibela.

The report is established after the joint UNESCO/ICOMOS/ICCROM high level advisory mission in Lalibela, Ethiopia, (20 to 25 May 2018) carried out in response to the invitation of the State Party on 01 December 2018 (Ref. No. 1/9-3/439). The objective of the mission was to monitor progress on the conservation of the property and particularly to advise the State Party on the dismantling of the temporary shelters. The State of Conservation Report contains recent restoration and conservation works, which have been carried out during the last few years and monitoring actions of the temporary shelters.

ARCCH, representing the State Party, has prepared the State of Conservation Report of the Lalibela in accordance with the requirements of the Convention concerning the protection of the world cultural and natural heritage and Operational Guidelines for the Implementation of the World Heritage Convention (1972) for examination by the World Heritage Committee in its 43rd Session in 2019.

2. Response of the State Party to the requests of the World Heritage Centre

The State Party has requested the World Heritage Center for a technical advice on 26 October 2018 (Ref.No. 01/14-1/008), on the dismantling of the temporary shelters established on the five churches of property. In response, the World Heritage Centre expressed its concern about developments happening in Lalibela in a letter (Ref: CLT/HERM/HC/AFR/18/324) dated on 14 November 2018. Consequently, the Centre has requested the State Party to take measures to reduce consequence changes happening on the world heritage property and implement the recommendations of the joint advisory mission. Likewise, the State Party was also required to submit a Terms of References along with an updated State of Conservation report to the World Heritage Centre by 1st February 2019.

2.1 Management system of the property

The Rock-hewn churches world heritage property contains outstanding religious monuments with hydrological systems and traditional houses, which retain the unique historic and cultural character of medieval Ethiopia. The property was one of the first twelve sites inscribed on the world heritage list in 1978. The retrospective Statement of Outstanding Universal Value of the property (SoOUV) was adopted by the World Heritage Committee in 2012 (WHC-12/36COM).

The management plan of the property was developed in consultation with all stakeholders and a validation workshop was organized for its completion in December 2013. Subsequently, the management plan was submitted to the World Heritage Centre and was acknowledged in 2014. In accordance with the approved management plan, the requirements of international and national laws on the management and protection of the property are being implemented. Based on the antiquity law of the republic of Ethiopia proclamation 209/2000, Article 42, the Regulation No 344/2015 *was put in place* by the Council of Ministers of Ethiopia on 28th August 2015. The Regulation has defined the Monolithic Churches of Lalibela as Reserved Area.

The Regulation has also established the state cadastre of the nominated area and its buffer zone, which contains a set of GPS coordinate points marking the boundary of the property. Consequently the State Party is working towards the creation of the cadastre system concerning the cadastre maps of the property and its implementation. The implementation work on the preparation of cadastre system is connected with the preservation of the monumental, architectural, archaeological and pilgrim elements of the property. The government institution in charge of the cadastre registration, the Ethiopian Geo-special and Information Agency, has been engaged to finalize the cadaster maps of the property in 2019.

2.2 Terms of References

To implement the recommendations of the Advisory mission, the Stat Party has invited a local company, Construction Design and Supervision Works Corporation (ECDSWC), to prepare **Terms of references and tender document for the conservation works of the rock-hewn churches of Lalibela** on October 31, 2018. Accordingly, the company has produced a road map of the conservation works for the five Lalibela churches in January 2019 with some recommendations. For further information the road map document is also annexed to this report (See Annex_1).

Some of the recommendations stated in the road map are the following.

1. Establishment of a conservation management plan for the property and individual churches.
2. Local companies take the leading role in the conservation project during the dilapidation survey, implementation and supervision stages of the project.
3. International consultant is invited after the dilapidation survey and conservation recommendation is completed.
4. Separate contract be established for individual church once the former work is evaluated.
5. Regular training scheme and a conservation laboratory to be established.

2.3 Monitoring of the temporary shelters

Concerning the periodic assessment of the temporary shelters, the first monitoring actions had been carried out, involving Addis Ababa University, in January 2014 and then assessment results had been submitted to the world heritage centre.

The second assessment of the temporary shelters was undertaken by a team of experts from the original contracting company of the temporary shelters, INDECO, in February 2018 when a technical site visit was arranged by ARCCH to Lalibela.

The objectives of the visit were:

- To inspect the status of the shelters, in particular to assess their structural conditions and any eventual risks on the Churches.
- To understand and possibility clarify some concerns related to wind load effects on the shelter's column base frames and the risks due to the presence of underground tunnel under shelter's column base frames.

Respective reports are annexed for further information (See also annex_2)

2.4 Recent Restoration Initiatives

Over the last six year, two preservation projects were implemented for the restoration of the Lalibela churches. These projects were made possible by a grant from the U.S. government's Ambassadors Fund for Cultural Preservation. The goal of these projects was to do sustainable conservation work that preserves the churches with minimum intervention and by respecting the quality of the sacred places.

The first pilot preservation project was implemented at the Bete Gabriel-Rafael church. This project was innovative in that it employed non-intrusive preservation techniques for the sustainable preservation of the unique church of Bete Gabriel-Rafael. The pilot preservation project was successfully completed in December 2015 and inaugurated in 2016.

The second preservation project was initiated at the twin churches of Beta Golgotha and Mika'el in December 2016. The conservation work at Beta Golgotha and Mika'el took place in a sustainable technique with minimum intervention. The project was successfully completed in July 2018 and the inauguration to mark completion of the conservation work at Beta Golgotha and Mika'el took place in November 2018.

The two US funded projects at the Lalibela churches involved local craftsmen trainings on the innovative technique of stone conservation methods. These trainings were designed to enhance local capacity and ensure that the local community pays attention on the preservation of the unique churches of Lalibela. Respective reports of the monitoring projects are annexed here with for further information (See also Annex_3).

3. Other current conservation issues

(Identified by the State(s) Party (ies) which may have an impact on the property's Outstanding Universal Value).

Annex 13 of the Operational Guidelines

- There are no other current conservation issues identified.

4. In conformity with Paragraph 172 of the *Operational Guidelines*, describe any potential major restorations, alterations and/or new construction(s) intended within the property, 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.

- There are no potential major restorations or other projects to be reported in conformity with Paragraph 172 of the Operational Guidelines.

5. Public access to the state of conservation report

[Note: this report will be uploaded for public access on the World Heritage Centre's State of conservation Information System (<http://whc.unesco.org/en/soc>). Should your State Party request that the full report should not be uploaded, only the 1-page executive summary provided in point (1.) above will be uploaded for public access].

- Uploading this report on the World Heritage Centre's State of conservation Information, for public access, is accepted by the State Party without reservation.

System for public access: (<http://whc.unesco.org/en/soc>).

6. Signature of the Authority

Name Yonas Desta
Director General

Signature [Signature]

Date _____

