

#### **47. Gelati Monastery (Georgia) (C 710bis)**

Year of inscription on the World Heritage List 1994

Criteria (iv)

Year(s) of inscription on the List of World Heritage in Danger 2010-2017

Irreversible interventions as part of major reconstruction of the structure of Bagrati Cathedral

Previous Committee Decisions see page <http://whc.unesco.org/en/list/710/documents/>

International Assistance

Requests approved: 0

Total amount approved: USD 0

For details, see page <http://whc.unesco.org/en/list/710/assistance/>

### UNESCO Extra-budgetary Funds

N/A

### Previous monitoring missions

November 2003, June 2008, March 2010, April 2012: Joint World Heritage Centre / ICOMOS Reactive Monitoring missions; October 2014: ICOMOS technical evaluation mission to Gelati Monastery; January 2015: ICOMOS Advisory mission

### Factors affecting the property identified in previous reports

- General need for interior and exterior conservation work on the monuments
- Construction of the visitor centre outside the Gelati Monastery
- Major reconstruction of the structure of Bagrati Cathedral (completed)
- Insufficient coordination between the Georgian Church and the national authorities (issue resolved)
- Lack of co-ordinated management system (issue resolved)
- Water (rain and groundwater)

Illustrative material see page <http://whc.unesco.org/en/list/710/>

### Current conservation issues

On 29 November 2019, the State Party submitted a state of conservation report, the summary of which is available at <http://whc.unesco.org/en/list/710/documents/>. It provides information on measures implemented by the State Party in response to the Decision adopted by the World Heritage Committee at its 41st session (Krakow, 2017), as follows:

- An annual budget has been established for long-term preservation programmes;
- Restoration and stabilisation works were completed;
- Continuous digital monitoring of the structural stability of the Church of the Virgin has commenced;
- A decision has been taken to continue to house monks in the existing accommodation at the property;
- The Georgian Cultural Heritage Data Management Geo-Informational System and GIS Portal is open to public access;
- A participatory process has been established within the Cultural Heritage Council of the National Agency for Cultural Heritage Preservation of Georgia (NACHP);
- A *World Heritage Protection Council of Georgia*, which will include representation from key stakeholders, has been established through a Government Decree;
- The Management Committee provided for in the Management Plan 2017-2021 has not been established;
- The State Party is seeking assistance on developing monitoring indicators.

On 4 September 2020, the State Party informed the World Heritage Centre that the newly-installed tiled roof of the Church of the Virgin was failing, leading to rainwater damage that affected the wall paintings, mosaics and stonework. It also reported moisture related persistent problems in St George's Church. Remedial steps then undertaken included:

- A programme of monitoring and reporting on the wall paintings and mosaics;
- Installing a temporary sheet-metal covering directly onto the roof on the Church of the Virgin.

The State Party requested assistance from the World Heritage Centre and the Advisory Bodies to address this issue urgently. It provided additional information including a proposal to remedially install a temporarily roof over the Church of the Virgin, on which ICOMOS provided a technical review.

The State Party submitted additional documentation, outlining the actions undertaken as a response to the ICOMOS technical review. Following a digital meeting with the World Heritage Centre and Advisory Bodies on 1 April 2021, the State Party highlighted that specific expertise was required to undertake further emergency response and proposed a framework for collaborative methodological assistance.

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

The State Party has initiated many welcomed steps to address the Committee's past Decisions aimed to enforce the management system of the property, including its monitoring. The conservation actions undertaken have unfortunately not all been successful. The failure of the recently installed tiled roofs on the Church of the Virgin and the persistent moisture problems at St George's Church has resulted in damage to the wall paintings and mosaics inside both churches, which has a negative impact on the Outstanding Universal Value (OUV) of the property. The State Party's engagement with the World Heritage Centre and the Advisory Bodies to redress these problems is therefore welcome.

The action undertaken by the State Party to temporarily cover the roof of the Church of the Virgin is likewise welcome, but a solution which will allow reroofing while safeguarding the church is needed. The State Party has made proposals to improve the covering of the church. These have been reviewed by ICOMOS, which recommended that the St George's Church also urgently be covered in such a manner that rain and snow is kept away from the building, while allowing conservation work to continue.

These problems exacerbate the fragile state of conservation of this property. It is disconcerting that this situation has arisen so soon after the removal of the property from the List of World Heritage in Danger in 2017 (Decision **41 COM 7A.20**). Some of the Committee's requests from its 2017 Decision related to the significant boundary modification of the property (**41 COM 8B.31**) remain to be addressed, which, if implemented, offer mechanisms to address the new problems as well. This includes the request to implement a system of documentation of conservation. It is therefore recommended that the Committee requests the State Party to urgently develop a costed conservation programme, including monitoring, research and implementation for the property, including all wall-paintings, mosaics and stonework of the two churches, and submit this to the World Heritage Centre for review by the Advisory Bodies. The Committee may wish to call on the International Community to provide technical and financial assistance to the State Party to safeguard this property in line with the approved conservation plan.

More information on which monitoring indicators are used to monitor the attributes of OUV is required. The tri-dimensional structural monitoring system already in use at the Church of the Virgin should be extended to St George's Church and other important structures of the property.

The establishment of the World Heritage Protection Council of Georgia is welcome. However, it remains unclear if and how this Council will act as the coordinating committee for this property as requested by the Committee (**41 COM 8B.31**). An update on the activities of this Council in addressing the conservation challenges at this property would be welcome. The State Party has not provided clarity on how the Management Plan 2017-2021 has been given official status in planning processes. It is also of concern that the Management Committee provided for in the Management Plan has not been established yet. This plan will need to be reviewed and updated.

### Draft Decision: 44 COM 7B.47

*The World Heritage Committee,*

1. Having examined Document WHC/21/44.COM/7B,
2. Recalling Decisions **41 COM 7A.20** and **41 COM 8B.31**, adopted at its 41st session (Krakow, 2017),
3. Notes the unfortunate failure of the new roof of the Church of the Virgin and the continuing degradation through moisture ingress in St George's Church which is leading to decay of stonework, mosaics and wall paintings;
4. Welcomes the State Party's action to install a temporary roof over the Church of the Virgin, and its monitoring and reporting of the damage to the stonework, wall-paintings and mosaics in the churches of the property, and requests the State Party to urgently:
  - a) *Provide a more workable solution to covering over both the Church of the Virgin and St George's Church in a manner that allows for conservation activities to take*

*place uninterruptedly without risk of moisture ingress, and submit this to the World Heritage Centre for review by the Advisory Bodies before implementation,*

- b) Develop a costed conservation programme for the property, including monitoring, research and implementation of conservation work to wall-paintings, mosaics and stonework of the two churches, and submit this to the World Heritage Centre for review by the Advisory Bodies;*
5. Also requests the State Party to:
    - a) Continue its efforts to develop monitoring indicators for monitoring the state of conservation of the attributes that convey the Outstanding Universal Value of the property,*
    - b) Extend the tri-dimensional structural monitoring to St George's Church and other important structures at the property as well,*
    - c) Provide a report on the activities of the World Heritage Protection Council of Georgia in relation to the Committee's request for a coordinating committee for this property in its next report on the state of conservation of this property;*
  6. Further requests the State Party to review and update the Management Plan for the property and submit this to the World Heritage Centre for review by the Advisory Bodies, and establish a Management Committee for its implementation, additionally, reiterates its request to the State Party to consider putting in place a mechanism that will allow the Management Plan, or part of it, to have status in planning processes;
  7. Calls for an increased mobilization of the international community to provide more financial and technical support to the State Party, including through a request to the World Heritage Fund "Conservation & Management" International Assistance, to implement the short- and medium-term measures to improve the state of conservation of the property;
  8. Finally requests the State Party to submit to the World Heritage Centre, by **1 February 2022**, 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 45th session in 2022.

#### **48. Historical Monuments of Mtskheta (Georgia) (C 708)**

See Document WHC/21/44.COM/7B.Add