

Recommendations of the Fifth Expert Working Group on the Preservation of the Bamiyan Site

Aachen, 14–16 December 2006*

Emergency consolidation of the Giant Buddha niches and cliffs

The Participants of the Working Group

1. Acknowledge the accomplishment of emergency operations over the last four years in consolidating the two Giant Buddha niches and cliffs;
 2. Recommend implementation of a permanent manual system for regular monitoring of the stability of the niches by local professionals;
 3. Agree on the priority for the consolidation of the back walls of both niches, and note the preliminary proposal to be implemented upon scaffolding, then grouting and anchoring as necessary, but with a minimum of impact on the heritage values;
 4. Note the persistence of large cracks, and that a damage assessment of the back walls of the niches should be conducted for future planning on the use of appropriate techniques for necessary intervention;
 5. Note the importance of the use of material compatible with the original material of the statues on the back walls of the niches;
 6. Endorse a proper testing by a joint team composed, at least, of an engineer/geologist and a conservator/restorer, in order to choose the appropriate material before implementation of further major interventions such as grouting of the back walls;
- (...)
10. Recommend continued cleaning of the existing drainage network on top of the cliffs and the establishment of a map of the drainage network.

Conservation of the Giant Buddha statues

The participants of the Working Group

1. Acknowledge the substantial progress made by ICOMOS experts in the salvaging and storage of the fragments of the two Giant Buddha statues, where all works in the Eastern Giant Buddha niche have completed, and recommend continuation in 2007 for the Western Giant Buddha niche;
2. Encourage the finalization of the scaffold tower in the Eastern Giant Buddha niche which started in 2006 to make the back walls accessible to restorers, engineers

and geologists, and foresee a similar scaffold in the Western Giant Buddha niche after successful completion of the salvaging works;

3. Note the necessity to increase the carrying capacity of the wire mesh at the back wall of the Eastern Giant Buddha niche by additional steel wire ropes, in order to ensure safety of all individuals executing the works;
4. Acknowledge the efforts of the Afghan authorities for the enhanced site-security, and stress the necessity of establishing a sustainable site-security plan.
5. Acknowledge the salvaging of plaster pieces with wooden pegs and strings from the surface of the Buddha statues (more than 3000 pieces), and appreciate the proposal of the Afghanistan authorities to safely store them in 2007 at the Bamiyan Training Centre for further analysis;
6. Note the extraordinary findings including birch fragments of manuscripts in July 2006 in the ground next to the right foot of the Eastern Giant Buddha, and recommend conservation of these highly fragile pieces of different materials in cooperation with relevant specialists. Establishment of a specialised laboratory at the Bamiyan Training Centre is encouraged for necessary studies;
7. Underline the priority in 2007 to develop a strategy for the consolidation of the back walls of both niches in cooperation of restorers and engineers;
8. Note the importance of reconstructing the partition walls between the small niches at the base of the Eastern Giant Buddha niche, destroyed by the explosion in 2001, as a necessary first step in 2007 in order to support the cliff structure above;
9. Acknowledge the latest results of the geological mapping in identifying the original position of the rock material, and encourage the finalization of documentation of all preserved/salvaged fragments in both niches upon geological and paleomagnetic analysis and 3D recording. The creation of a 3D model, already progressed for the Eastern Giant Buddha statue, contributes to the virtual positioning of the fragments;
10. Consider continued investigations for the technical possibility of an anastylosis (refer to Article 15 of the Venice Charter) as a method of reassembling the fragments of the Buddha statues.
11. Suggest the Ministry of Information and Culture to establish an Advisory Board on its future decisions on the possibilities of an anastylosis of the Giant Buddha statues.

* Abridged version without archaeological investigations, implementation of the cultural master plan, and training.