

**Report on the State of Conservation of
the Royal Tombs of the Joseon Dynasty
(No. 1319)**

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Cultural Heritage Administration
Republic of Korea

1. Executive Summary of the Report

The State Party would like to provide the World Heritage Centre with information on the state of conservation of the Royal Tombs of the Joseon Dynasty. Inscribed on the World Heritage List in 2009, the Royal Tombs of the Joseon Dynasty is a serial property comprising 40 royal tombs found in 18 clusters. The State Party, in conformity with the decision made at the 45th UNESCO World Heritage Committee, intends to submit the updated report as of December 2023, incorporating information from the submissions in both 2022 and 2023.

The State Party wishes to confirm through this report that by the end of 2010 the government of the Republic of Korea had implemented all the recommendations put forward by the World Heritage Committee (Decision 33COM 8B.15) at the time of inscription. Guidelines for allowable development are in place at each of the 18 clusters in the form of a set of standards prescribing the extent of development permitted in the areas surrounding a royal tomb cluster. Sustainable tourism management is outlined in the Plan for the Conservation, Management, and Utilization of the Royal Tombs of the Joseon Dynasty. These development standards and the management plan are updated on an ongoing basis.

Regarding the issue of the construction at Jangneung (W6), the State Party would like to reiterate that this is the result of a rare combination of events with few precedents within the systematic framework of protection ensured by the Cultural Heritage Protection Act. As of December 2023, a lawsuit is in progress between the Cultural Heritage Administration and the construction companies responsible for erecting apartment buildings in the vicinity of the Jangneung Cluster. CHA lost in both the first and second rulings and filed an appeal. The final ruling of the Supreme Court will determine if the developers contravened the Cultural Heritage Protection Act.

Regarding other conservation issues involving Seoreung (W1, specifically, Changneung Royal Tomb) and Taereung (M3) Clusters, Heritage Impact Assessments (HIAs) are currently in progress. The result of which will determine the future plan and direction of the project.

In response to the decision made by the World Heritage Committee, the State Party has updated the spatial information for land use within the property areas and buffer zones encompassing all 40 royal tombs of the Joseon Dynasty. Further, it plans to expand a drone monitoring project which was pilot tested at Yungneung (W7) in Hwaseong to ultimately analyze the development progress of each component cluster within the royal tombs and facilitate ongoing monitoring efforts.

In October 2023, the Special Act on Conservation, Management, and Utilization of World Heritage underwent an amendment to prepare a national legal ground to apply the Heritage Impact Assessment. Concurrently, a Standing Advisory Committee will be established to gather different perspectives from pertinent local governments and members of the public. In addition, the State Party plans to request the World Heritage Centre to invite a joint Advisory Mission to assess the state of conservation of the 18 clusters of the royal tombs.

With regards to the restoration project in Taereung (M3), Seoul, efforts are made to address the issue of retention of some facilities in the Taereung National Sports Training Centre through the impact

assessment as per ICOMOS recommendations which was responded by WHC and consultations among concerned organizations. The State Party will create a plan for demolition, master plan, and outline a plan for future usage of the existing facilities and is expected to submit to the World Heritage Centre. As for the relocation of the Korea National University of Arts in Uireung (M5), Seoul, the State Party has fulfilled the first phase of the restoration project in removal areas as the State Party committed at the time of inscription. The remaining buildings that are currently being used as a school will be demolished by stages after relocation plan to secure a new site is established.

As noted in the previous two State of Conservation (SOC) reports for 2022 and 2023, the State Party remains committed to improving awareness, conservation and dissemination of significance of the royal tombs of the Joseon Dynasty. It will further continue to work closely with the World Heritage Centre and ICOMOS.