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Contact  
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Reference

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Subject: Dutch Water defence Lines (759) the A8-A9 road link

Dear Mr Lazare Eloundou Assomo,

The purpose of this letter is to inform you of the plans for the highway link on the Dutch Water Defence Lines World Heritage Site. You were last informed of these plans in writing on 11 October 2018 (ref: 2018B-024), with the undertaking that UNESCO would receive a further update when the decision-making process on the landscape plan had been completed.

In addition, the World Heritage Committee in Fuzhou (2021) asked the Netherlands to inform the World Heritage Centre and ICOMOS about the final option for the A8-A9 road link by 1 December 2022 (decision: 44com 8B.23).

This letter is also a reply to your letter dated 31 August 2021 (ref: CLT/WHC/EUR/21/13404), in which you ask about the status of the A8-A9 road link in response to third party information.

For decades, the Krommenie-Assendelft urban area has experienced traffic congestion with negative impacts on the health and the quality of the living environment of residents along or near the existing road link between the A8 highway to the east and the A9 highway to the west. An effective solution to this problem in the form of a new road link has long been sought. However, every possible route will have to pass through the World Heritage Site.

After receiving a request for information from UNESCO in 2009, the Netherlands has, at various points in the process, involved UNESCO and ICOMOS in the relevant analysis of this situation and in the development of possible solutions. ICOMOS was also invited to advise on this matter. These studies explored various possible routes for the various modes of motor vehicle and public transport.

In my letter of October 2018, I announced the drawing up of a landscape plan to explore the options for realizing and carefully integrating a road link between the A8 and A9 highways which will pass through the World Heritage Site. To quote that letter: "The central question in this assessment will be whether the integrated highway link and the additional measures for restoring the landscape will achieve the three objectives of improving quality of life, improving the accessibility of the area and at the same time preserving the OUV of the Defence Line of Amsterdam". To clarify: the Defence Line of Amsterdam was expanded at the World Heritage Committee meeting in Fuzhou (2021) and renamed the Dutch Water Defence Lines.

The Province of Noord-Holland completed the announced landscape plan (Dutch title: "Landschapsplan, Stelling van Amsterdam / Verbinding A8-A9") in September 2021.

There are two aspects to this plan: it contains both a proposal for carefully integrating a road link into the World Heritage Site and a package of restoration measures for the current landscape that will not only strengthen the values of the World Heritage Site but also enhance the residential experience. These two aspects are inextricably linked.

The State Secretary for Culture and Media informed the Executive of the Province of Noord-Holland on 19 May 2022 that this proposal provides a coordinated solution to the preservation of the World Heritage Site, the societal challenges of accessibility and the impact of traffic congestion on local residents.. The combination of a painstaking design for the transection of the World Heritage Site with the full implementation of the restoration package results in a positive balance. The Ministry has set the firm condition that the construction of the road link can only be carried out with the full implementation of all the restoration measures in the landscape plan.

The Province of Noord-Holland adopted the landscape plan and the preferred alternative for the A8-A9 link on 31 January 2022. The investment cost of the landscape plan is over €900 million. The province has now entered the development phase for this preferred decision, including the schedule for and funding of the road construction. It is currently unclear when a final decision on the actual construction of the road can be made and when or whether the province will start carrying out the construction and restoration work.

As the planning and decision-making process progresses, I will keep the World Heritage Centre informed of developments.

Please find attached a digital copy of the landscape plan, accompanied by an extensive English-language summary.

Yours sincerely,

Hans Wesseling

Ambassador,  
Permanent Delegate of the Kingdom of the Netherlands to UNESCO



