

H.E. Mr Jüri Seilenthal
Ambassador Extraordinary and
Plenipotentiary
Permanent Delegate of the Republic of
Estonia to UNESCO (designate)
Ambassade de la République d'Estonie
17 rue de la Baume
75008 Paris

20 October 2025

**Culture Sector
World Heritage Centre**

Ref: CLT/WHC/ENA/25/15299

Dear Ambassador,

I would like to thank your competent authorities for meeting with the World Heritage Centre and ICOMOS International on 10 July 2025, during the 47th session of the World Heritage Committee at UNESCO Headquarters, to discuss the state of conservation of the World Heritage property **'Historic Centre (Old Town) of Tallinn'** and the proposed extension of the Estonia Opera Theatre.

I note that the established Working Group has already held its first meeting to explore solutions regarding the different views on the proposed extension, including possible alternatives within the property's buffer zone. I would therefore like to reiterate the availability of the Centre and ICOMOS for further discussions – in person, online, or, if required, through an Advisory Mission.

I would also like to recall my colleagues' invitation to share the Terms of Reference of the architectural competition, should it be pursued, including the detailed functional brief, with the Centre for ICOMOS review prior to official publication. This will help to ensure that the property's Outstanding Universal Value (OUV) is fully considered. Lastly, I note that the Tallinn Heritage Conservation Area Protection Policy Bill, intended to provide the legal framework for managing the property and its buffer zone, is likely to be adopted only after decisions have been made regarding the Theatre extension.

I would like to take this opportunity to acknowledge with appreciation the letter from the Tallinn Urban Planning Department dated 9 June 2025, providing further details of the draft Management Plan 2035 and information on the extension of the historic Tallinn Secondary School of Science, located within the property's boundaries on the outer edge of the historic city fortifications.

Regarding the latter, I note that the project has been planned and implemented in full compliance with national heritage legislation, balancing conservation priorities with the need to modernise educational facilities. I welcome that a schematic volumetric analysis was conducted in 2007 to prevent negative impacts on the OUV of the property, and that the selected design has minimal impact on preserved historical structures – notably the moat's retaining wall, which will be conserved and displayed within the new building.

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While this project differs from more impactful proposals such as the nearby Opera Theatre extension, I would like to emphasise the importance of taking even minimal impacts into account when assessing the cumulative effects of the proposed Theatre extension and any future developments within the property and its buffer zone.

I thank you for your continuous collaboration and support in the implementation of the World Heritage Convention and remain,

Yours sincerely,



Lazare Eloundou Assomo
Director

cc: Estonian National Commission for UNESCO
National Focal Points for the implementation of the Convention
ICOMOS International