

Review on ARCASIA Boundary Expansion

To be presented at the 45th ARCASIA Council Meeting for approval

Incheon, South Korea – September 2025

1. Preamble:

At the 44th ARCASIA Council Meeting in Colombo Sri Lanka on 15th January 2025, the Council mandated a study to review the possibility of expanding ARCASIA's boundary beyond the current scope defined in its Constitution (Schedule A), in order to consider the admission of new member institute applications from countries outside the ARCASIA boundary but within the Asia Continent. Following the completion of this review, the Office Bearers (OBs) have deliberated and approved the findings and position outlined in this paper. The recommendations are to be presented to the Council at the 45th Council meeting in Incheon, South Korea in September 2025.

This paper provides:

- A historical overview of ARCASIA's formation and Founding Intention
- Clarification of the founding intent and legal framework
- A comparative analysis of two scenarios considered
- A review of the financial, governance, and structural implications should expansion proceed.

2. HISTORICAL OVERVIEW OF ARCASIA'S FORMATION AND FOUNDING INTENTION

The idea for ARCASIA was conceived during the 1967 Commonwealth Association of Architects (CAA) Conference in New Delhi, which highlighted the need for a regional. This was a response to an urgent need to organize a regional center concerned with environmental design, information, research and education in Asia and to establish a regional center for post-graduate-level training of architectural teachers and research workers, and to foster unity among the six Asian Member Institutes (**India, Sri Lanka, Pakistan, Malaysia, Singapore and Hong Kong**) of the CAA. The proposal was for a Centre for Environmental and Technical Advancement (CETA) and for the establishment of an **ARCASIA Formation Council**, a regional platform to promote environmental and architectural advancement among Asian nations sharing similar socio-political and climatic contexts.. This led to subsequent meetings, feasibility studies and formation of ARCASIA:

- **1968 (Colombo):** The name "**Architects Regional Centre Asia (ARCASIA)**" was proposed and the location of ARCASIA was finalised to be in Singapore.
- **1970–1971:** The First and Second Foundation Council Meetings were held; ARCASIA was formed as a platform for **CAA's Asian region**.
- **1975:** Drafts of the Constitution and Bylaws were presented.
- **1979:** The ARCHITECTS REGIONAL COUNCIL ASIA was formally established and the acronym "**ARCASIA**" was retained by the Council composed of the presidents (or their representatives) of the various countries of Member Institutes. The Constitution of ARCASIA and the ARCASIA Board of Architectural Education (ABAE) were formally adopted and signed.
- **1980:** The first official ARCASIA Council Meeting and the endorsement of the Constitution by 10 founding institutes.
- **1991:** Formal adoption of the By-Laws.

While recognising the need for worldwide associations, the objective is for the Institutes within the region to deal with matters that are of more immediate importance to the region, foster unity, collaboration, and knowledge exchange within a manageable, culturally cohesive region. Many of the current Members Institutes of ARCASIA already belong to Region IV of the UnionInternationale des Architectes (UIA) being an international organisation and integral with UNESCO.

Over time, ARCASIA expanded from the original 6 founding members to 24 member institutes, while continuing to adhere to the original geographic and cultural boundaries agreed upon by its founding members as defined under the ARCASIA Constitution.

3. CONSTITUTIONAL FRAMEWORK AND INTERPRETATION

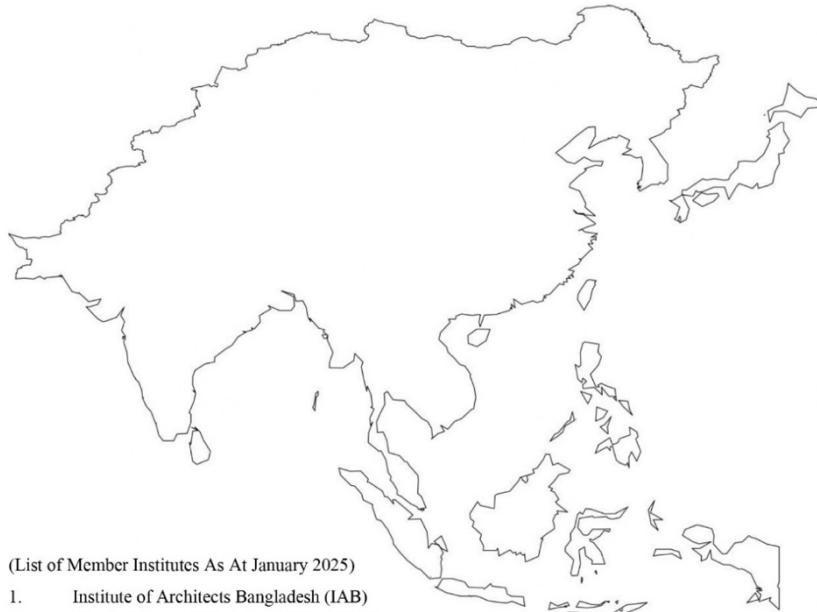
3.1 Clause 4.0 of ARCASIA Constitution on Membership:

The membership of ARCASIA shall consist of

- a) the founding members Institutes, Hong Kong, India, Malaysia, Pakistan, Singapore and Sri Lanka
- b) any other national institute of Architects in Asia as may be admitted by the Council, and
- c) any independent Institute of Architects of a territory within a nation in Asia, accepted as such by the national Institute of Architects of that nation, as may be admitted by the Council.

(As shown in Schedule A below)

SCHEDULE A



(List of Member Institutes As At January 2025)

1. Institute of Architects Bangladesh (IAB)
2. The Architectural Society of China (ASC)
3. *The Hong Kong Institute of Architects (HKIA)
4. Indonesian Institute of Architects (IIA)
5. Japan Institute of Architects (JIA)
6. Korea Institute of Registered Architects (KIRA)
7. Association of Lao Architects and Civil Engineers (ALACE)
8. Association for Architects of Macau (AAM)
9. *Pertubuhan Akitek Malaysia (PAM)
10. The Union of Mongolian Architects (UMA)
11. *The Institute of Architects, Pakistan (IAP)
12. United Architects of the Philippines (UAP)
13. *Singapore Institute of Architects (SIA)
14. *Sri Lanka Institute of Architects (SLIA)
15. The Association of Siamese Architects (ASA)
16. *The Indian Institute of Architects (IIA)
17. Vietnam Association of Architects (VAA)
18. Society of Nepalese Architects (SONA)
19. Bhutan Institute of Architects (BIA)
20. Pertubuhan Ukur, Jurutera dan Arkitek, Brunei (PUJA (B))
21. Association of Myanmar Architects (AMA)
22. Architects Union of Korea (KAU)
23. Architects Association of Khmer (AAK)
24. Architects Association Maldives (AAM(mv))

(* Denotes Founder Member Institutes)

Note: The map as shown in Schedule A of ARCASIA Constitution comprise of all the countries in South-East Asia, East Asia and South Asia but excludes **Afghanistan** and **Iran** in South Asia, comprising of 26 countries & territories, out of which, 24 are ARCASIA Member Institutes (except **Timor-Leste** and **Chinese Taipei**).

SUBREGION 1: South-East Asia (11 countries):

Brunei, Cambodia, Indonesia, Laos, Malaysia, Myanmar, Philippines, Singapore, Thailand, Timor-Leste, Vietnam

SUBREGION 2: East Asia (8 countries & territories):

China, Hong Kong, Macao, North Korea, South Korea, Japan, Mongolia, Chinese Taipei

SUBREGION 3: South Asia (9 countries):

**Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, **Iran, Maldives, Nepal, Pakistan, Sri Lanka

3.2 Clause 2.0 ARCASIA BYE-LAWS on Membership

The Asian Region is the internationally accepted region as defined by the United Nations.

UNITED NATIONS DEFINITION OF ASIA

The UN map divides Asia into six subregions, totalling 52 countries & territories, including some with vastly different political, religious, and socio-economic systems:

SUBREGION 1: South-East Asia (11 countries):

Brunei, Cambodia, Indonesia, Laos, Malaysia, Myanmar, Philippines, Singapore, Thailand, Timor-Leste, Vietnam

SUBREGION 2: East Asia (8 countries & territories):

China, Hong Kong, Macao, North Korea, South Korea, Japan, Mongolia, Chinese Taipei

SUBREGION 3: South Asia (9 countries):

**Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, **Iran, Maldives, Nepal, Pakistan, Sri Lanka

SUBREGION 4: Central Asia (5 countries):

Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan

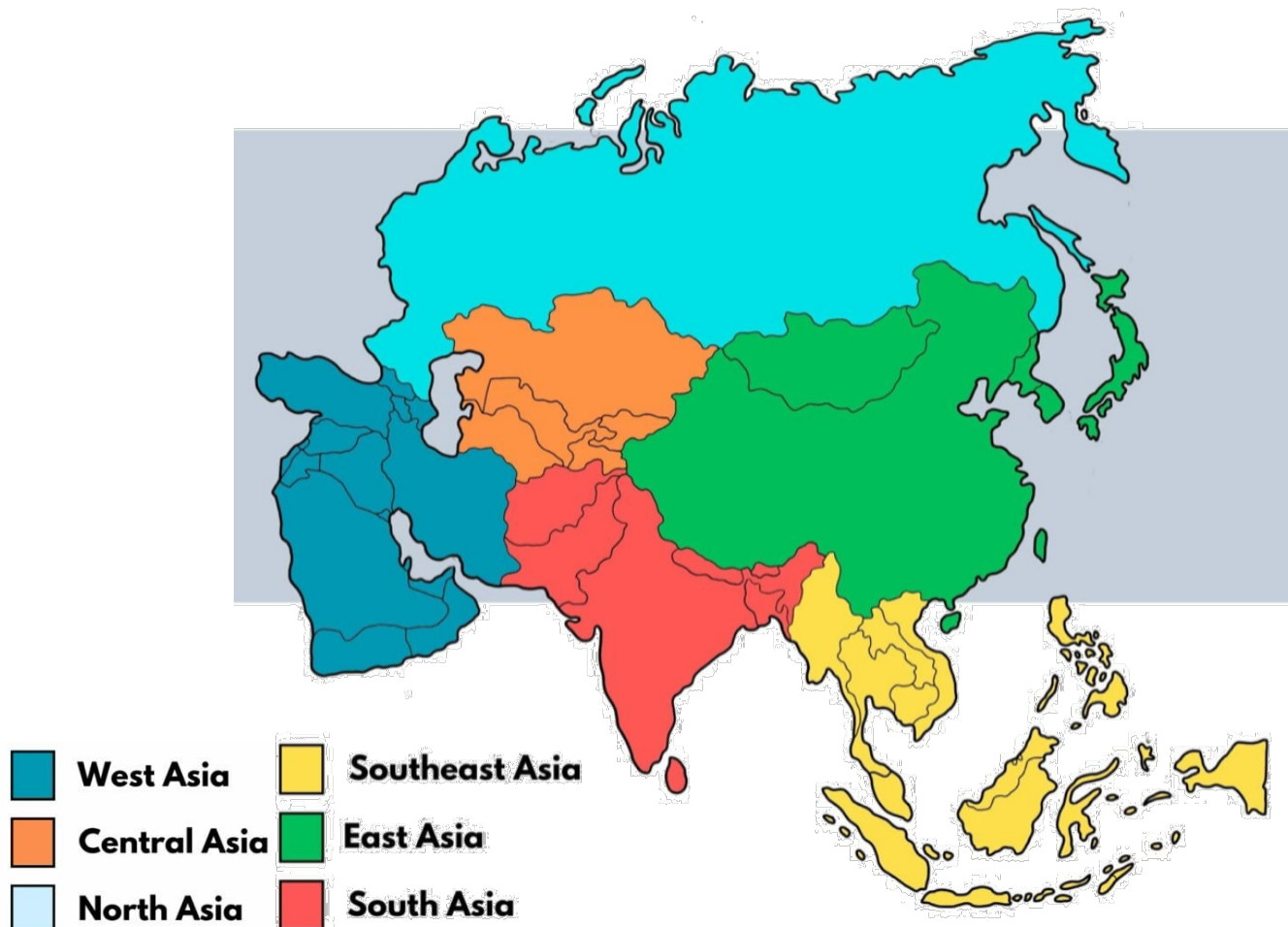
SUBREGION 5: West Asia (18 countries):

Armenia, Azerbaijan, Bahrain, Cyprus, Georgia, Iraq, Israel, Jordan, Kuwait, Lebanon, Oman, Palestine, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Syria, Turkey, UAE, Yemen

SUB-REGION 6: North Asia (1 country):

Russia (Asian region of the Russian Federation)

The 6 different regions of Asia



4.0 ISSUES - CONTRADICTIONS BETWEEN THE CONSTITUTION AND BYE-LAWS & INTERPRETATION

As part of the review, several interpretational issues were examined regarding the compatibility between the ARCASIA Constitution and its Bye-Laws, particularly in relation to membership eligibility and geographic scope.

4.1 Under Constitution Clause 4.0. – Membership, there are 3 categories of nations that are eligible to be Members of ARCASIA:

- (a) *the founding members Institutes, Hong Kong, India, Malaysia, Pakistan, Singapore and Sri Lanka*
 - (b) *any other national institute of Architects in Asia as may be admitted by the Council, and*
 - (c) *any independent Institute of Architects of a territory within a nation in Asia, accepted as such by the national Architects of that nation, as may be admitted by the Council*
- (As shown in Schedule A below)**

Both categories (b) and (c) make specific reference to Schedule A in the Constitution, which is a pictorial map that clearly defines the boundary of nations eligible to be a member of ARCASIA. The use of map in Schedule A is a deliberate geographic restriction.

4.2. Although Byelaw clause 2.0 refers to '*Asian region that is internationally accepted region as defined by United Nations*', under established legal principles of interpretation:

- Specific provisions (such as Schedule A) prevail over general clauses (such as the UN reference in the Bye-Laws).
- Where there is conflict between a constitution and its bye-laws, the constitution takes precedence.
- The Constitution and Bye-Laws must be read together, with the Constitution serving as the overriding authority in any area of inconsistency.

4.3 In legal interpretation, the original intent of the founding members and the principle of business efficacy are critical considerations. ARCASIA was clearly established to promote regional collaboration within a culturally cohesive and operationally manageable geographic zone. (Refer to Clause 5 for further details.

5.0 FOUNDER'S OBJECTIVE, PAST PRECEDENTS AND CONSISTENT APPLICATIONS

5.1 Founding Context and Membership – Limited to Regional Institutes

ARCASIA was conceived in 1967 at the CAA Conference in New Delhi by six founding institutes: India, Sri Lanka, Pakistan, Malaysia, Singapore, and Hong Kong, who identified the need for a platform to address architectural matters of immediate relevance to their shared geographic and professional contexts.

From the founding records and early constitutions emphasize that ARCASIA serves "**...a platform to deal with matters of more immediate importance to the region.**" with no indication of intent to encompass all subregions of Asia. This regional scope was grounded in cultural proximity and shared challenges, particularly among South and Southeast Asian institutes.

Past ARCASIA Chairman Ar. Akeel Bilgrami, who helped draft the ARCASIA By-laws and contributed to the ARCASIA History Book, reaffirmed in a consultation on 30 June 2025 that the organisation was never intended to include all countries in Asia as defined by the United Nations. He confirmed that the inclusion of a boundary map in the Constitution was a deliberate act of defining intended membership, a view consistently echoed by other past Chairmen over the years.

5.2 The Creation of a Constitution with a Deliberately Specific Boundary (Schedule A)

Clause 4.0 of the ARCASIA Constitution includes a boundary map (Schedule A) that visually defines eligible countries and territories. Notably, it excludes West, Central, and North Asia, despite many of those regions having established architectural bodies since the 1970s. Even within South Asia, countries such as Afghanistan and Iran were omitted.

The use of a boundary map in a constitutional document reflects a clear and intentional geographic limitation. It removes ambiguity and reinforces that ARCASIA was conceived as a regional, not continental entity.

5.3 Consistent Application of Boundary in Membership Decisions

Over the years, ARCASIA has consistently upheld its defined boundary in membership-related decisions:

- In 1995 (16th Council Meeting), RAI (Australia) was denied Observer status, citing lack of constitutional provision as Australia was outside the defined region.
- In 2003 (24th Council Meeting), the application from Russia was not accepted. ARCASIA first Chairman and advisor Ronald Poon noted that “Asia” must be interpreted in line with ARCASIA Constitution.
- In 2004 (25th Council Meeting), Advisor Ronald Poon reiterated that ARCASIA members must “share Asian culture.” This underscores that geography alone was never the sole criterion for membership.

These decisions demonstrate strict adherence to the founding intent. If ARCASIA had aspired to pan-Asian inclusion, these cases would have prompted expansion or a revised admission policy.

5.4 Absence of Engagement with Asia Subregions & Member Recruitment Within Constitutional Boundary

Since its inception, ARCASIA has expanded from 6 to 24 member institutes, all within the boundary defined in Schedule A. There has been no outreach to, or membership invitations extended to, institutes in West, Central, or North Asia, despite their professional standing.

By contrast, membership expansion has remained focused on South, Southeast, and East Asia, with recent additions including North Korea, Myanmar, Cambodia, and the Maldives.

If broader continental inclusion had been part of the original vision, one would expect at least observer invitations or engagement efforts over the past five decades and yet none have occurred. This absence points to deliberate regionalism.

5.5 UIA Regional Structure Supports a Regional Identity

The International Union of Architects (UIA) divides the world into distinct regions. Countries in West and Central Asia fall under UIA Region II (Central and Eastern Europe and the Middle East), while nearly all ARCASIA members belong to UIA Region IV (Asia and Oceania). ARCASIA’s alignment with Region IV reinforces its identity as a subregional entity rather than a pan-Asian organisation, consistent with its founding purpose.

5.6 Founders' Statements and First Council Meeting Resolutions

From the First Formation Council (1969–1971) to the formal establishment in 1979, ARCASIA’s leaders were clear in shaping a Council of Presidents with a defined regional scope. The adoption of a constitution incorporating specific eligibility criteria and a boundary map signals their intent for clarity, focus, and manageability and not indefinite geographic expansion.

6. Scenarios Considered in this Review

- **Scenario 1: Retain the current ARCASIA boundary as defined in the Constitution.**
- **Scenario 2: Expand to include all countries listed under the United Nations' definition of Asia (52 countries & territories).**

6.1 Scenario 1: Retain the Current ARCASIA Boundary as Defined in the Constitution

a. Overview

Scenario 1 pertains to maintaining ARCASIA's existing geographical boundary as defined in Schedule A of the Constitution, reaffirming its identity as a regional organisation grounded in shared professional values, cultural alignment, and manageable operational scope. This approach aligns with the founding vision and preserves the institutional integrity built over more than five decades.

Retaining the current boundary continues ARCASIA's long-standing focus on member institutes from South, Southeast, and East Asia—countries that fall within UIA Region IV (Asia and Oceania). It avoids the complications of including countries situated in UIA Regions II and preserves ARCASIA's established role within its current jurisdiction.

b. Advantages of Retaining the Current Boundary

Retaining the current boundary provides institutional, legal, and operational stability. It:

- Preserves and upholds ARCASIA's original regional identity, vision, and founding intent, as articulated at its inception.
- Avoids the need for substantive constitutional amendments, which would otherwise require extensive member consultation and legal review.
- Maintains ARCASIA as a culturally and operationally cohesive body, with diversity that is aligned and manageable across its existing zones.
- Reinforces institutional precedent by maintaining consistency with past Council decisions and the long-standing practice of excluding out-of-boundary applications.
- Safeguards ARCASIA's identity within UIA Region IV, preventing jurisdictional overlaps or conflicts with UIA Regions II and V.

This scenario allows ARCASIA to continue evolving its programmes and partnerships within its defined scope, without disruption to its structure or governance.

c. Challenges and Limitations

While Scenario 1 offers strategic continuity, it may present the following perceived limitations:

- Missed opportunities to engage with architecturally significant and emerging regions such as Central Asia and the Gulf States.
- A perception of exclusivity or lack of responsiveness to broader Asian integration efforts.
- Limited inclusivity in a globally interconnected professional landscape.

However, these challenges can be mitigated through alternative engagement models, such as inter-regional collaborations on specific projects, academic exchanges, or technical partnerships without the need to expand formal membership.

d. Implications of Scenario 1

The following are the implications:

- There will be no impact on ARCASIA's current structure or framework. The existing zone system, committee structures, financial arrangements, and membership protocols remain intact.
- ARCASIA will continue to focus on its existing objectives, strengthening collaboration among current member institutes in line with the founding purpose of promoting regional professional development, mutual support, and cultural exchange.
- To ensure clarity and alignment, the OBs recommended for the Constitution and Bye-Laws to be amended to eliminate any potential misinterpretations or inconsistencies, reinforcing the legal and structural coherence of ARCASIA's governance (refer to the proposed amendments)

This approach preserves ARCASIA's strength as a unified regional organisation while keeping open non-membership avenues for broader professional engagement, without compromising its core identity.

Proposed Amendment to Constitution & Bye-Law to improve clarity and avoid confusion: - (To be tabled for Council Approval in the next Council Meeting)

Constitution: 4.0 MEMBERSHIP

The membership of ARCASIA shall consist of:

- a) the founding member Institutes, Hong Kong, India, Malaysia, Pakistan, Singapore and Sri Lanka.
- b) any other national Institutes of Architects in **a part of Asia** as may be admitted by the Council,
and
- e) any independent Institute of Architects of a territory within a nation in **a part of Asia**, accepted as such by the national Institute of Architects of that nation, as may be admitted by the Council, **in accordance with the map shown in Schedule A.**
(As shown in Schedule A)

Bye-Law: 2.0 MEMBERSHIP

- 2.1 — ~~The Asian Region is the internationally accepted geographic region as defined by the United Nations.~~
The membership of ARCASIA shall be as per those defined under the Section 4 of the Constitution.

2.2 ARCASIA NEW MEMBERSHIP

Any national Institute of Architects from a country **or territory of the Asian region within the ARCASIA boundary, as in Section 4 of the Constitution that is** not yet represented in the Council **and wishes wishing** to join ARCASIA must submit through its President a written application to the President who shall, prior to putting up to the Council, gather all the necessary information about that Institute and determine:

6.2 Scenario 2: Full Expansion to Include All UN-Defined Asian Countries

a. Overview

This scenario explores expanding ARCASIA's membership to include all 52 countries and territories classified under the United Nations definition of Asia, effectively doubling its current membership base of 26.

The additional 26 countries include:

- **West Asia** (18 countries): Armenia, Azerbaijan, Bahrain, Cyprus, Georgia, Iraq, Israel, Jordan, Kuwait, Lebanon, Oman, Palestine, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Syria, Turkey, United Arab Emirates, Yemen
- **Central Asia** (5 countries): Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan
- **North Asia** (1 country): Russia (Asian region)
- **South Asia** (2 countries): Afghanistan, Iran

Several of these countries, namely Turkey, Armenia, Georgia, Azerbaijan, Israel, Palestine, and Russia, are currently classified under UIA Region II (Central and Eastern Europe and the Middle East), raising potential concerns over jurisdictional overlap and conflicting regional affiliations.

b. Perceived Benefits of Expansion

A full expansion would transform ARCASIA into a truly pan-Asian organisation, enhancing its:

- Global visibility and diplomatic reach
- Access to architecturally prominent and resource-rich regions (e.g., Gulf States, Turkey)
- Geographic and economic diversity
- Pan-Asian collaboration, innovation, and cross-cultural exchange

c. Constitutional and Structural Implications

ARCASIA's current structure is built on a three-zone model:

- Zone A: South Asia
- Zone B: Southeast Asia
- Zone C: East Asia

Expanding to include 52 member institutes would necessitate a full constitutional amendment, including:

- Reconfiguring zones to accommodate new members. Proposed additions could include:
 - Zone D: West Asia
 - Zone E: Central Asia
 - Zone F: North Asia/Russia
- Increasing the number of Zone Vice Presidents.
- Amending electoral procedures and redefining the composition of the Council and Office Bearers.
- Expanding committee membership and representation across all ARCASIA Committees.

This restructuring would significantly increase the size and complexity of Council meetings, administrative operations, coordination efforts and logistical support. It would also slow down decision-making and increase administrative demands on the ARCASIA Secretariat.

d. Financial Impact

d.1. Hosting Burden

Under the current model, the host institute is responsible for financing the following:

- Accommodation (5 nights) and registration for 24x 2 official delegates
- Accommodation (6 nights), registration and transport for Office Bearers and Committee Chairs.
- Hosting all official functions, receptions, committee meetings, and ceremonies.

With 52 member institutes, this would more than double the hosting burden. Specifically:

- 52 x 2 Official delegates would require full sponsorship for accommodation, congress/forum registration and local hospitality
- Each of the five standing committees would require 52 delegates.
- Event venues must be significantly larger to accommodate the expanded participation.

d.2. Cost Sustainability

This exponential increase in cost may deter member institutes from bidding to host ARCASIA events. A revised model, similar to the Architects' Council of Europe (ACE) may need to be adopted, where:

- Each institute pays for its own participation in Council meeting, Forum/Congress
- The host provides limited ceremonial hospitality and support for Office Bearers and invited guests.

This would require formal constitutional changes and clear financial policies to be developed and agreed upon by all members.

d.3 Establishment of Permanent ARCASIA Secretariat

The scale of operations may necessitate the establishment of a permanent secretariat, which would, in turn, carry substantial financial implications.

e. Cultural, Geopolitical, and Identity Challenges

The proposed expansion introduces diverse countries with differing:

- Political systems, legal frameworks, and languages
- Cultural values and architectural contexts
- Geopolitical tensions, which could impact ARCASIA proceedings

Moreover, many proposed new members do not share ARCASIA's traditional Asian cultural heritage or architectural challenges. This could lead to a dilution of ARCASIA's regional identity and overextension of its mission.

f. Overlapping Regional Affiliations

Twelve countries proposed under Scenario 2 are currently classified under UIA Region II, including:

- Armenia, Azerbaijan, Cyprus, Georgia, Israel, Lebanon, Palestine, Russia (partly in Asia, but the UIA classifies it entirely under Region II), Turkey, Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan.

Their inclusion in ARCASIA (UIA Region IV) could lead to jurisdictional overlaps, potential inter-organisational rivalry, and confusion within the UIA system.

g. Administrative Load and Governance Risk

Expanding to 52 members would impose substantial administrative burden on the ARCASIA Secretariat, including:

- Increased coordination and documentation.
- Travel and correspondence management.
- Language related services.
- More complex voting and consensus-building processes.

h. Founding Vision and Institutional Integrity

ARCASIA was founded with a clear regional focus, to unite South, Southeast, and East Asian architects who share common professional challenges and socio-cultural values. The proposed expansion risks:

- Contradicting this original vision.
- Undermining the institutional cohesion developed over 50 years.
- Introducing political sensitivities related to eligibility and inclusion.

i. Other Impacts of Expansion

- Loss of Agility: Decision-making slows with a larger, more diverse Council.
- Visa and Travel Inequality: Some countries may face restrictions in attending meetings or hosting events.
- Dilution of Representation: Smaller or less-resourced institutes may lose visibility.
- Reputational Risk: Failure to manage expansion equitably could harm ARCASIA's credibility.

j. Implications of Adoption

While Scenario 2 offers theoretical benefits—broader reach, pan-Asian status, and increased global standing, these must be carefully weighed against the risks of governance complexity, constitutional disruption, financial unsustainability, and dilution of ARCASIA's regional identity.

To pursue this scenario, a formal constitutional amendment process must be initiated, accompanied by:

- A formal constitutional amendment process
- A complete and comprehensive review of governance, financial impact, funding mechanism, and operational structures.
- The development of legally consistent, transparent, and objective membership criteria.
- Stakeholder consultations with existing members to ensure alignment and consensus.

7. Conclusion

The review on boundary expansion has been completed in accordance with the Council's mandate and thoroughly deliberated by the Office Bearers.

While the idea of expanding ARCASIA to include all UN-defined Asian countries may appear attractive in principle, such a shift would necessitate a fundamental restructuring of ARCASIA's Constitution, governance framework and funding model. It risks overextending the organisation, potentially doubling its size and financial obligations, while diluting its cohesion and eroding its distinct regional identity.

Drawing from historical records, constitutional provisions and established precedent, the Office Bearers are of the considered view that ARCASIA was conceived as a regional organisation with a clearly defined boundary, not as a pan-Asian entity.

Its strength has long resided in this focused and cohesive framework, which has enabled sustainable operations, cultural alignment and meaningful professional collaboration over the past five decades.

Even within the current boundary, the organisation faces challenges arising from political tensions and conflicts between some member institutes, which require time, diplomacy, and resources to manage. ARCASIA must prioritise strengthening its internal governance, communication, and institutional management to ensure its full potential is realised before considering any expansion of its boundary. Under the present structure, ARCASIA is not yet ready to absorb further complexity that would come with an enlarged membership.

8. Recommendation

The Office Bearers therefore recommend that ARCASIA retain its current boundary as delineated in Schedule A of the Constitution, to preserve its institutional identity, integrity and long-term viability. Engagement with institutes beyond this boundary may continue through non-membership avenues such as academic exchange, technical cooperation and inter-regional initiatives, without altering the formal membership structure.

In addition, the Office Bearers recommend that the ARCASIA Constitution and Bye-Laws be amended to enhance clarity and reduce the risk of misinterpretation. These proposed amendments will be tabled for consideration at the next Council meeting.