

**The 31st Session  
of the International Coordinating Council (ICC) of the MAB**

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**National Report  
of the Republic of Korea**

The **MAB National Committee of the Republic of Korea (ROK-MAB)**, which was established under the Ministry of Environment, promotes and supports nomination and management of Biosphere Reserves (BRs), research projects, training and awareness-raising, and international cooperation, as well as contributing to development and implementation of relevant government policies. The ROK-MAB plans and operates its activities in accordance with the ROK MAB Strategy and Action Plan (2015-2025), contributing to implementing the Lima Action Plan 2016-2025 (LAP).

As of May 2019, the Republic of Korea (ROK) has six Biosphere Reserves that are part of the World Network of Biosphere Reserves: Mount Sorak (designated in 1982), Jeju Island (2002), Shinan Dadohae (2009), Gwangneung Forest (2010), Gochang (2013) and Suncheon (2018).

The national report below give a brief introduction to the major MAB activities that have been carried out in the ROK since the last International Coordinating Council (ICC) of the MAB, held in July 2018.

**1. International Forum on the Implications of Protected Areas for the Achievement of SDG 15**

On 15 November 2018, the Korean National Commission for UNESCO and ROK-MAB held the ‘International Forum on Implications of Protected Areas for the Achievement of SDG 15’ in Suncheon City, along with the designation of Suncheon Biosphere Reserve. Experts from the ROK and abroad shared their experiences in working towards SDG 15 (Life on land) through protected areas, and offered examples of international cooperation in Biosphere Reserves. In particular, representatives from the MAB National Committees of France and of Japan shared examples of how education courses on sustainable development

and nurture of global experts can help Biosphere Reserves contribute to achieving the SDSs.

Together with this event, the Korean National Commission for UNESCO and the ROK-MAB also published a guidebook on the SDG 15 entitled ‘Our Sustainable Biodiversity,’ to help the general public more easily understand the status and challenges of biodiversity conservation, and so promote the achievement of SDG 15.

\* Relevant LAP Actions:

A1.1. Promote BRs as sites that actively contribute to achieving the SDGs

## **2. Nomination and Designation of Biosphere Reserves**

In 2015, the ROK-MAB developed the ROK’s ‘National Guidelines for BR Criteria and Application,’ together with ‘ROK-MAB Strategy and Action Plan (2015-2025),’ to enhance the participation and cooperation of relevant stakeholders and to systemize the process for BR applications in the ROK. In accordance with the guidelines, the ROK-MAB provides support on the BR nomination process to local governments and other related entities through a working group consisting of ROK-MAB members and experts.

Following the designation of Suncheon Biosphere Reserve at the 30th session of the MAB-ICC in July 2018, nominations were submitted by the ROK to UNESCO in September 2018 for the designation of Gangwon Eco-peace and Yeoncheon Imjin River Biosphere Reserves and for the extension of Jeju Island Biosphere Reserve to cover the whole of Jeju Island, as well as its adjacent marine areas. The ROK is hopeful that these nominations will be successful. The ROK-MAB working group is also currently involved in preparing a new nomination for the island of Wando.

In the meanwhile, the ROK-MAB has also revised the national guidelines to adjust the domestic timeline for BR applications and to add detailed instruction on drawing up the application document. The ROK-MAB will be happy to share its experience in developing and revising the national guidelines, which it believes could be useful for the development of the Technical Guideline for the BRs that are to be facilitated by MAB-ICC.

### **3. 2019 National MAB Youth Forum in ROK**

Encouraged by the successful outcomes of the 2017 MAB Youth Forum and the Recommendations of the 15th EABRN Meeting (May 2018, Almaty, Kazakhstan), the ROK-MAB, Korean National Commission for UNESCO and Gochang County will hold the first national MAB Youth Forum in Gochang BR from 9-12 July 2019. This forum will offer young people an opportunity to improve their understanding of MAB and to share details of activities that young people are undertaking in Biosphere Reserves, including research, education, and startup commercial activities, to encourage further youth involvement in activities related to Biosphere Reserves.

### **4. The proposal of the Global Research and Training Center for Internationally Designated Areas**

In March 2019, the ROK government submitted a proposal to UNESCO for the establishment in Jeju Province, ROK of a Global Research and Training Center for Internationally Designated Areas (IDAs) as a category 2 center under the auspices of UNESCO. The proposed center aims to improve the conservation and management effort of IDAs and MIDAs (Multi-IDAs) through research and training that contributes to environmental conservation linked to the SDGs and other multi-lateral environmental conventions. The center will be the first of its kind to address typical issues, common as well as complementary, in all four categories of the IDAs, i.e. Biosphere Reserves, Natural World Heritage sites, UNESCO Global Geoparks, and Ramsar sites.

The ROK believes that the proposed center will bring great benefits to implementing of the ‘Process of excellence and enhancement of the WNBR as well as quality improvement of all members of the world network’ adopted by the MAB-ICC in 2017, particularly through the provision of courses and training facilities to Member States and BRs that request these. Members of the MAB ICC are kindly invited to support the proposal.

**\* Relevant LAP Actions:**

A4.1. Establish partnership w/ universities/research institutions to undertake research, especially UNESCO Chairs and Centers

A4.2. Establish partnership w/ educational and training institutions, especially UNESCO Chairs, Centers and Associated schools, to undertake education, training and capacity building activities aimed at BR stakeholders, including managers and rights holders, taking into account the SDGS

## **5. Other matters**

With regard to the adoption of the Global Communication Strategy and Action Plan for the Lima Action Plan at the last session of the MAB-ICC, the ROK-MAB produced one minute video, called #ProudToShare on Seorak BR and has provided it to the MAB Secretariat. The ROK-MAB will encourage other BRs in the ROK to provide similar one minute videos by the end of 2019.