

## **REPORT ON ACTIVITIES RELATING TO MAB COMMITTEE**

1. The **National Report on MAB Activities**, i.e. a national report on implementation of activities relating to national biosphere reserves and UNESCO programme “Man and Biosphere” (MAB), has been drafted and submitted to the Serbian National Commission for Cooperation with UNESCO (20.06.2018).
2. **The MAB National Committee of Serbia** was established by Decision No. 119-01-72/2018-04; the mission of the aforementioned Committee is to: cooperate with the Serbian National Commission for Cooperation with UNESCO and where necessary, with the National Committees in other countries; provide national participation in meetings of the International Co-ordinating Council of the Man and the Biosphere Programme (MAB-ICC) composed of 34 Member States; take part in making decisions regarding the sustainable use of natural resources at the national level; implement monitoring and supervisory activities in Biosphere Reserves in the Republic of Serbia; provide adequate organizational conditions for the involvement and participation of local self-governments, civil society organizations, as well as all users of the mentioned areas in planning and performing the activities relating to biosphere reserves; organize periodic meetings and prepare reports on national activities which are to be submitted to the MAB Secretariat (Man and the Biosphere Programme UNESCO) at least biannually.
3. In the period from 23 to 28 July 2018, the representatives of the Ministry of Environmental Protection and the Institute for Nature Conservation of Serbia attended the 30<sup>th</sup> Session of the International Co-ordinating Council (ICC) of the Man and Biosphere Programme (MAB-ICC), UNESCO, Palembang, South Sumatra, Indonesia. The event was attended by 369 delegates from 54 countries, of which 31 were Member States and 23 countries participated as observers – including the Republic of Serbia.
4. In 2018, the following activities were implemented in accordance with the Action Plan for the **Biosphere Reserve “Golija-Studenica”** (2016-2020):
  - a. A 16-minute film on the natural, cultural and spiritual heritage of the Nature Park “Golija” and Biosphere Reserve “Golija-Studenica” was made for the purposes of presentation and popularization of the mentioned protected area;
  - b. The project “Golija – A transition from planning to development” was completed. During the 18 months of the implementation of the project, the goal of which was to create conditions for sustainable development of the Nature Park “Golija” and Biosphere Reserve “Golija-Studenica”, relevant detailed regulation plans of the corridor

infrastructure in the area regulated by the spatial plan for special-purpose area the Nature Park “Golija” were developed, together with the proposals relating to the adequate models for managing the socio-economic development of this area and the action plan for the development of Golija.

- c. The following research projects relating to the NP “Golija” and BR “Golija-Studenica” were implemented: Exploration of cultural heritage; Conservation and directed use of the gene pool of rare and endangered forest tree species; Inventory and mapping of habitat types of rare and endangered species; Monitoring of entomofauna diversity; Sustainable tourism; Monitoring of protected animal species and Monitoring of bears.

We would like to bring special attention to the project “Monitoring of the brown bear in the Nature Park Golija”, which was created and implemented in line with the sustainable development goals, more precisely the goal 15. Life on earth, goal 16. Peace, justice and strong institutions and goal 17. Partnerships for the goals. In 2018, the results of the project were presented to the local community living in the area belonging to the biosphere reserve, in order to show that humans and brown bears can coexist together successfully in the protected area. Furthermore, the information boards displaying the basic information on the brown bear, its behavior and habits, signs of its presence and recommendations on how to behave when driving through bear habitat in order to avoid possible unpleasant situations were put up.

5. **“Bačko Podunavlje” Biosphere Reserve** was inscribed on the UNESCO World Heritage List on 14.07.2017. The Institute for Nature Conservation of Vojvodina Province is responsible for all coordination and administrative activities. Since the moment this Biosphere Reserve was inscribed on the UNESCO World Heritage List, the activities relating to improving its visibility have been carried out, especially through the promotion of the Biosphere Reserve and education of the local population, the establishment of adequate management practices and participation in international projects, as well as by improving and strengthening professional capacities.

Promotion activities: in 2017, the year when “Bačko Podunavlje” Biosphere Reserve was declared a World Heritage Site, the information on this biosphere reserve was presented in the town of Sombor at an official event which was attended by the Minister of Environmental Protection, the General Secretary of the National Commission for Cooperation with UNESCO, the Provincial Secretary for Urban Planning and Environmental Protection, the mayor of Sombor, managers/managing authorities of protected areas, representatives of non-governmental organizations - WWF, IUCN, the local civic associations, the academic community and others. During the event celebrating the European Heritage Days in Vienna (23.09.2017) the certificate of inscription of the “Bačko Podunavlje” Biosphere Reserve on the List of World Heritage was presented to the

representatives of local authorities, managers of protected areas (4) and the Institute for Nature Conservation of Vojvodina Province; this event was also attended by the representatives of the Government of the republic of Serbia and the representatives of the Government of the Autonomous Province of Vojvodina. In addition, “Bačko Podunavlje” Biosphere Reserve was presented at the international workshop “UNESCO Man and Biosphere” in Georgia.

“Bačko Podunavlje” Biosphere Reserve Day was celebrated on 16.07.2018. The event was organized in cooperation with the Municipality of Bačka Palanka and the manager of the Nature Park “Tikvara” in Bačka Palanka. It was attended by the representatives of the republic and provincial authorities, representatives of municipalities, local civic associations that foster traditional activities and managers of protected areas.

The Institute for Nature Conservation of Vojvodina Province and the Provincial Secretariat for Urban Planning and Environmental Protection published a monograph titled “Bačko Podunavlje” Biosphere Reserve - Nature and People”.

For the purpose of capacity building and strengthening, the representatives of the Institute for Nature Conservation of Vojvodina Province participated at the MAB Youth Forum in 2017 and 2018, respectively, as well as at the International Academy on Sustainable Development in 2017.

In the mentioned period, especially following the inscription of the Biosphere Reserve on the World Heritage List, a number of articles reporting on the “Bačko Podunavlje” Biosphere Reserve were published in Serbian newspapers, while electronic media broadcasted the event stories and special programmes. They all reported on the “Bačko Podunavlje” Biosphere Reserve and its inscription on the World Heritage List. “Bačko Podunavlje” Biosphere Reserve is still in the news and represents a current and interesting topic.

Development of the Joint Work Plan – Management: at the end of 2017, the Co-ordinating Council of the Biosphere Reserve was established and it consists of delegated representatives of local governments, protected area managers and representatives of civil society. The structure of the Co-ordinating Council was presented and explained. After reviewing all proposals from the meeting, three common aspects were identified, which also represent the main features of biosphere reserves: 1. Protection of natural resources through the protection of biodiversity, revalorization/ reappraisal of values, improvement of protected area through protection activities, the development of integrated water resources management 2. Sustainable development through the development of rural tourism, branding, increasing the standard of living of local communities, implementation of projects and providing funds for the implementation of innovative sustainable solutions. 3. Logistical support through training programmes and workshops, organizing a network

of training centers, cross-border networking, as well as local networking, the development of a single database, exchange of knowledge and experience among rural communities.

International projects: two-and-a-half-year project “coop MDD” is co-financed by the European Union through the programme “Interreg Danube Transnational IPA”. The project aims to harmonize management practices in 12 protected areas located in five countries (Austria, Slovenia, Hungary, Serbia and Croatia) in order to ensure the environmental integrity of the planned 5-country UNESCO Transboundary Biosphere Reserve “Mura-Drava-Danube” - a truly European treasure and a stunning river landscape also known as the “Amazon of Europe”. The project “coop MDD” is linked to and builds on the development of the “Bačko Podunavlje” Biosphere Reserve; it also aims to develop a joint Management Programme for the future 5-country UNESCO Biosphere Reserve “Mura-Drava-Danube”, as well as support the work and activities relating to the “RIVER’S COOL”.

<http://www.interreg-danube.eu/approved-projects/coop-mdd>

The project “Establishing a forum of stakeholders of Nature Park Tikvara and Municipality of Bačka Palanka” aimed to improve the management practices implemented in relation to the Nature Park “Tikvara” as a part of the “Bačko Podunavlje” Biosphere Reserve through the effective participation of local stakeholders, better understanding of integrative protected area management through raising awareness on the socio-economic potential provided by the protected areas and building capacity for international and cross-border cooperation relating to the “Bačko Podunavlje” Biosphere Reserve. The relevant stakeholders took part in this project, thus helping to establish the first local forum “Forum of Stakeholders of Nature Park Tikvara and Municipality of Bačka Palanka”, which is the first local forum of this type in a series of other local forums that will facilitate the planning and implementation activities relating to the “Bačko Podunavlje” Biosphere Reserve in an organized manner. The mentioned local forum consists of 15 members from all relevant sectors. During the project implementation, two workshops and two training sessions were organized with the help of professional staff from the Institute for Nature Conservation of Vojvodina Province. The workshops and trainings were organized for all users of NP Tikvara, the manager managing authority of the NP Tikvara and other stakeholders in order to raise awareness on the importance of this protected area located in the immediate vicinity of Bačka Palanka, on its values, biodiversity and ecosystem services, with an emphasis on exceptional opportunities that it offers (tourism, hospitality industry and services, cross-border cooperation) and which are further supported by the fact that “Bačko Podunavlje” Biosphere Reserve was inscribed on the World Heritage List.

6. Participation of the Republic of Serbia in the process of the extension of the World Heritage Site “**Primeval and Ancient Beech Forests of the Carpathians and other**

**Regions of Europe**”: in February 2019, the Republic of Serbia submitted its new Tentative List for the planned expansion of the National Park “Fruška Gora” (the first-degree protected areas “Papratski do” and “Ravne”), the National Park “Tara” (the first-degree protected areas “Zvezda” and “Rača Gorge”) and the National Park “Kopaonik” (the first-degree protected areas “Kozije stene” and sites “Metode”, “Jelak” and “Duboka”).

7. In accordance with the conclusions of the ninth joint session of the Government of the Republic of Serbia and the Government of Republika Srpska, the first meeting on establishing the **Cross-Border Biosphere Reserve “Drina”** was held on 25.04.2019 at the Ministry of Physical Planning, Civil Engineering and Ecology of Republika Srpska. The meeting was attended by the representatives of the competent ministries of the Republic of Serbia and Republika Srpska, as well as the representatives of the Institute for Nature Conservation of Serbia, the Republic Institute for Protection of Cultural, Historical and Natural Heritage of Republika Srpska, members of the State Commission for Cooperation of BiH with UNESCO and Head of the Office of UNESCO in Sarajevo. It was agreed that the relevant ministries should establish a working group that would work on the preparation of activities relating to the establishing of the aforementioned Cross-Border Biosphere Reserve “Drina”. The work group is to include the representatives of the relevant ministries, the managing authorities of the Cross-Border Biosphere Reserve and the aforementioned Institutes. It was also agreed that Ministry of Physical Planning, Civil Engineering and Ecology of Republic of Srpska should address the State Commission for BiH cooperation with UNESCO and inform it about this initiative, while the Ministry of Environmental protection of the Republic of Serbia was tasked to address the MAB Committee and Commission of the Republic of Serbia for UNESCO.

8. Participation at the 5th session of the Co-ordinating Council for establishing **Biosphere Reserve “Mura-Drava-Danube”** (Mureck, Austria, 6 - 7.5.2019): at the aforementioned meeting, the upcoming work tasks to be implemented by a consultant were defined, as well as the manner in which the results will be integrated in the report of the consultant and future steps - including the request for submitting relevant maps. Furthermore, future activities to be implemented by the Co-ordinating Council were also considered and it was agreed that these would include the following: determining/identifying important requests for changes/amendments or provision of additional information in relation to the report of the consultant drafted for the period until 14 May 2019; involving and informing stakeholders at the national and local levels; considering the issues relating to the national contacts and capacity to sustain the timely cooperation.