

UNITED NATIONS EDUCATIONAL, SCIENTIFIC AND CULTURAL ORGANIZATION

International Co-ordinating Council of the Man and the Biosphere (MAB) Programme

Thirty-first session

UNESCO Headquarters, Paris, Room II (Fontenoy Building)

17 – 21 June 2019

ITEM 5 OF THE PROVISIONAL AGENDA: Report of the Secretary of the MAB Programme

1. This report provides the MAB Council with a brief overall update on the development of the MAB Programme since its last session in Palembang, Indonesia, in July 2018. The report is accompanied by a PPT presentation and is available on-line with other MAB ICC documents.

2. Statutory duties and procedures related to MAB and WNBR

2.1 At the 30th session of the MAB-ICC, which took place in Palembang, Indonesia in July 2018, 24 new biosphere reserves were nominated, including two new countries – Moldova and Mozambique. In addition, the session granted two extensions and/or re-namings of existing reserves, and accepted seven withdrawals (five biosphere reserves in Australia, one in the Netherlands and one in the United States of America). The World Network of Biosphere Reserves (WNBR) now comprises 686 biosphere reserves in 122 countries, including 20 trans-boundary biosphere reserves.

2.2 The MAB-ICC decided to finalize the Exit Strategy by 2020 and to institute a 'Process of excellence and enhancement of the WNBR as well as quality improvement of all members of the World Network'. All biosphere reserves have until 30 September 2019 at the latest to become fully functional and report to the Council if they wish to remain in the Network. An exception is made for biosphere reserves in conflict zones.

2.3 The MAB Council adopted the Global Communication Strategy and Action Plan of the MAB Programme and its WNBR.

2.4 The 25th session of the International Advisory Committee for Biosphere Reserves (IACBR) was held in February 2019, its recommendations communicated by the Secretariat to the MAB Bureau and all the Member States concerned in a timely manner. Among the 20 new biosphere reserve nominations received were three countries aspiring to be included in the WNBR for the first time: the Kingdom of Eswatini, Norway and Zambia.

3. Highlight of MAB activities since the 2018 MAB ICC

3.1 MAB regional and thematic workshops and meetings:

- 6th UNESCO Training Course for Island and Coastal Biosphere Reserve Managers, which took place on Jeju Island, Republic of Korea from 1 to 3 October 2018.
- 12th meeting of the Southeast Asian Biosphere Reserve Network (SeaBRnet) in Legazpi City, Philippines from 25 to 29 March 2019.



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- EuroMAB 2019, from 2 to 5 April 2019 in Dublin, Ireland.
- 9th meeting of the South and Central Asia MAB Network(SACAM) in Bhutan from 25 to 27 April 2019.
- 1st meeting of the Central American Biosphere Reserves from 7 to 9 May 2019 in Copán, Honduras.

3.2 BIOPALT. One of key partnership is the BIOSphere and Heritage of Lake Chad (BIOPALT) project, which is funded by the African Development Bank to the amount of USD 5.6 million. Project activities are managed jointly by the UNESCO MAB Programme, the International Hydrological Programme (IHP) and the World Heritage Centre. The main goal of BIOPALT is to create a transboundary Biosphere Reserve in the Lake Chad Basin. BIOPALT is a technical partner of the African Forest Landscape Restoration Initiative (AFR100), a country-led effort to restore 100 million hectares of land in Africa by 2030. BIOPALT also participated in BAPA+40, the United Nations' Second High-Level Conference on South-South Cooperation, which took place in Buenos Aires, from 20 to 22 March 2019.

3.3 A project on ecosystem restoration has been implemented in the La Selle Biosphere Reserve, Haiti, funded by Spanish Cooperation (AECID) and the Autonomous Authority for National Parks (OAPN) from Spain. The objective of this project is to contribute to sustainable human and economic development in the La Selle Biosphere Reserve.

3.4 The First IberoMAB Youth Forum took place in the Transboundary Bosques de Paz Biosphere Reserve, located between Ecuador and Peru, from 5 to 8 December 2018. The forum highlighted the importance of youth participation and rejuvenating MAB biosphere reserves. Eighty-nine participants from 43 biosphere reserves from 23 countries in Ecuador met to discuss the roles of young people who work, study or live in biosphere reserves.

3.5 BRESEP. 'Biosphere Reserves as a Tool for Coastal and Island Management in the South-East Pacific Region', which is coordinated by the MAB Programme with the financial support of the Flemish Government of Belgium. The project was launched in 2014 and ended in December 2018. The BRESEP project aimed to create and strengthen existing biosphere reserves in coastal zones and islands in the South-East Pacific in Chile, Colombia, Ecuador, Panama and Peru, as well as to promote biosphere reserves as a tool of sound innovative practices from a social, cultural and environmental viewpoint that bring added value to local socio-economic activities and, in this way, improve the livelihoods of the region's populations. The main results of the project consisted of the creation of the first transboundary biosphere reserve in South America – Bosques de Paz (Ecuador-Peru), the extension of four biosphere reserves to include coastal or marine areas, the improvement of governance in six biosphere reserves through the creation of a management committee/plan, the organization of over 15 training courses and meetings, the celebration of the first forest fire workshop for biosphere reserves, support for the first IberoMAB Youth Forum, and joint work with the Intergovernmental Oceanographic Commission to improve marine and coastal planning. The second phase of the project is under discussion with the donor.

3.6 IPBES. The 7th Plenary meeting of IPBES took place at UNESCO HQ from 29 April to 4 May. UNESCO MAB participated in the work of the platform since the start through mobilizing its experts, knowledge holders and network of biosphere reserves for the assessment, capacity building as well as communication functions. The first intergovernmental interdisciplinary global scientific report on the state of biodiversity was adopted on 4 May by 132 member states and the report launched at UNESCO on 6th May with the participation of the Director general of UNESCO. Human activities are the main threats to biodiversity loss but local and indigenous



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knowledge are recognized as key to conservation of biodiversity. Solutions include for governments to promote and use more multifunctional and connected sites such as biosphere reserves. The MAB programme will enhance its participation, including in the second work programme and in the scoping phase of the new assessments.

3.7 LVMH new partnership with MAB to support Biodiversity One week after the launch of the IPBES global biodiversity assessment, UNESCO signed a five year partnership with Louis Vuitton Moët Hennessy (LVMH) group to support the work of the MAB programme on biodiversity. Within the scope of this partnership, the LVMH group will be present alongside UNESCO at major international events in the next two years. This agenda includes the IUCN World Congress and the 15th meeting of the Conference of the Parties (COP15) to the Convention on Biological Diversity in November 2020 in Kunming, China. UNESCO MAB will provide scientific support for LVMH Maisons to advance their sustainable sourcing programs via its network of 686 biosphere reserves, as well as the international scientific expertise aggregated via the MAB programme and network.

3.8 GRASP. UN Great Apes Survival Partnership (GRASP), a unique alliance of nearly 100 national governments, conservation organizations, research institutions, United Nations agencies and private companies, coordinated by UNEP and UNESCO. More than 7% of the total range area of great apes is situated in biosphere reserves. Last year, Gombe Masito Ugalla in Tanzania – the area where Dr Jane Goodall began her pioneering study of wild chimpanzees – became a biosphere reserve. On 21 March 2019, an information meeting on the protection of great apes and the current and future role of UNESCO took place at UNESCO Headquarters, in the presence of UNESCO's Director-General and the Director of the Musée National d'Histoire Naturelle (France). The 13th meeting of the Executive Committee took place at UNESCO, HQ from 2 to 3 May 2019.

3.9 MAB contribution to UNESCO activities on climate change. The 24th Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change was held from 2 to 15 December 2018 in Katowice, Poland. MAB representatives participated in several UN side events and sessions organized at national pavilions at the COP, highlighting the contributions of biosphere reserves as climate change observatories, and promoting climate science, monitoring, mitigation and adaptation actions in line with the Paris Agreement and the 2030 Agenda.

3.10 The 3rd Huangshan Dialogue on UNESCO Sites and Sustainable Development was held in Huangshan, China, from 31 October to 3 November, and focused on the importance of Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR)-related activities in UNESCO biosphere reserves.

3.11 The MAB Secretary participated in the 4th Meeting of the Coordination Board for the Establishment of the Transboundary Mura-Drava-Danube Biosphere Reserve, which took place in Velika Polana, Slovenia, in January 2019. The meeting forms part of the process for the establishment of the first transboundary biosphere reserve to encompass five countries: Austria, Croatia, Hungary, Serbia and Slovenia.

3.12 'Economic valuation of ecosystem services in biosphere reserves' (EVAMAB), which is funded by the Belgian Federal Science Policy Office (BELSPO). The project is testing effective rapid assessment methods in four selected African biosphere reserves: Pendjari Biosphere Reserve (Benin), Lake Tana Biosphere Reserve (Ethiopia), Mount Elgon Biosphere Reserve (Uganda) and Lake Manyara Biosphere Reserve (Tanzania). The project aims to assess the economic value of ecosystem services. The closing workshop of the project was held in Lake



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Tana BR, Ethiopie from 13th to 17th May 2019. A Manual for Valuation of Ecosystem services for african BR will be one of the may output of this project. .

3.13 Furthermore, The Congo Basin Forest Partnership held its 18th plenary meeting in Brussels in November 2018. This followed by the International Conference of Ministers in charge of Defence, Security and Protected Areas on the fight against poaching and other cross-border criminal activities, which was held in N'Djamena, Chad, on 23–25 January 2019. Explicit mention was made of UNESCO and its MAB Programme in the N'Djamena Declaration, as responsible for facilitating 'the setting up and operation of a transhumance consultation framework which would make it possible to analyse the fundamental questions transboundary transhumance and to develop appropriate solutions'.

4. Improving participation, quality and the related instrumentation of WNBR

4.1 Technical Guidelines for Biosphere Reserves (TGBR). The MAB Secretariat has been directed to develop an electronic and open access web-based living document compiling contributions and experiences from the MAB community on specific items. An online draft prototype is accessible for demonstration purposes only. The 30th session of the MAB Council approved the ToRs and road map of the Working Group (WG), highlighting the synergy between the WG and the IACBR. The composition of the WG has been finalized and is now operational. All groups are well balanced in terms of gender and regional representation.

5. Conclusion

5.1 The implementation of MAB Strategy and Lima Action Plan continues as foreseen, following the overall targets of the Agenda 2030 for Sustainable Development and the Paris Agreement on Climate Change.

5.2 It is very important for the MAB and its WNBR to keep this continuity, finalise the excellence strategy next year and to establish the Technical Guidelines for Biosphere Reserves. The MAB agenda continues to mobilise all stakeholders at the local, national, regional and global level.

5.3 The MAB Programme seeks constantly for new partnerships, like LVMH, in order provide full support to its stakeholders, particularly young people involved in the programme. MAB continues constantly to invest in new ideas and concepts for the implementation of the SDGs.

5.4 Concerning the WNBR, and following the appeal of the Director General of UNESCO, the MAB Programme would like to invite all Member States of UNESCO to join actively the Programme by establishing MAB National Committees and more and larger Biosphere Reserves dedicated to biodiversity conservation and integrated sustainable development.

5.5 The last IPBES 7 Meeting held in Paris a month ago highlights the importance of integrated concepts for biodiversity and engagement of local population. The possible loss of 1 million species in the coming years is an alarming signal that urgent action is needed to preserve the world's biodiversity. Biosphere Reserves are excellent tools in this process as well as other UNESCO designations. It is not too late to act and urgent action is needed



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6. The MAB Council is invited to review the report and guide the Secretary to improve the service of the Secretariat in all aspects concerned.