

UNITED NATIONS EDUCATIONAL, SCIENTIFIC AND CULTURAL ORGANIZATION

International Coordinating Council of the Man and the Biosphere (MAB) Programme

Thirty third session

Abuja (Nigeria) – Hybrid session

13 – 17 September 2021

ITEM 10 OF THE PROVISIONAL AGENDA: COMPLETION OF THE EXIT STRATEGY AND IMPLEMENTATION OF THE "PROCESS OF EXCELLENCE AND ENHANCEMENT OF THE WORLD NETWORK OF BIOSPHERE RESERVES (WNBR) AS WELL AS QUALITY IMPROVEMENT OF ALL MEMBERS OF THE WNBR"

Part A: Background

1. In 2013, the International Coordinating Council of the Man and the Biosphere (MAB) Programme (hereinafter referred to as “the MAB Council”) adopted an “exit strategy” to improve the credibility and the quality of the World Network of Biosphere Reserves (hereinafter referred to as “the WNBR”) and to help Member States to set the required standards for their biosphere reserves to become fully functional and to conform with the criteria pursuant to the Statutory Framework of the WNBR. In June 2017, at its 29th session, the MAB Council adopted the “Process of excellence and enhancement of the WNBR as well as quality improvement of all members of the World Network” (hereinafter referred to as “the Process of Excellence”) (see Annex 2 hereto). The MAB Council at its 29th session thus decided to complete the “exit strategy” in 2020 (SC-17/CONF.229/15) and to institute the Process of Excellence to ensure that biosphere reserves serve as models for the implementation of the 2030 Agenda and its Sustainable Development Goals (hereinafter referred to as “SDGs”).
1. In July 2018, at its 30th session, the MAB Council decided to establish an ad hoc working group on the Process of Excellence (see Annex 1 hereto, and SC-18/CONF.230/15-rev.2, MAB Council Final Report, 2018).
2. In June 2019, at its 31st session, the MAB Council decided to ask the ad hoc working group to continue its work and to: (a) address permanent mechanisms of quality assurance within the WNBR; (b) further develop the idea of a “short and easy review mechanism, coordinated by the MAB National Committee and/or focal point, five years after the designation or last periodic review report”; and (c) combine this with proposals for a more streamlined periodic review process (see Annex 1: Terms of reference for the ad hoc working group; and Annex 5: Guidelines for five-yearly check-up mechanism for biosphere reserves at the national level).
3. The ad hoc working group held six meetings virtually and prepared draft guidelines to be applied in addition to the provisions of the Seville Strategy for Biosphere Reserves and the Statutory Framework of the WNBR, for the consideration of the MAB Council, **including a decision to be considered by the MAB Council at this session, contained in part B of this document.**

Part B: Proposed decision to be considered by the MAB Council

4. The MAB Council encourages biosphere reserves to undertake five-year (mid-term) self evaluations, and MAB National Committees (aided where necessary and feasible by regional networks) to assess the resulting reports to determine progress in implementation (Annex 5 hereto). The MAB Council also encourages biosphere reserves to seek such guidance and support as is necessary to support completion of the 10-yearly periodic review reports, and, where needed, to request technical support to improve the credibility of the WNBR.
5. The MAB Council recalls its decision of 2017 (SC-17/CONF.229/15) and the provisions of Article 9 of the Statutory Framework of the WNBR, according to which every 10 years after the designation or the positive evaluation of a biosphere reserve designated by UNESCO, the concerned authority should forward a comprehensive periodic review report to the MAB Secretariat.
6. To complement its decisions of 2017 and 2019 on the Process of Excellence, the MAB Council hereby adopts a set of guidelines to support and ensure the implementation of the Process of Excellence, thereby assuring the continuous enhancement and quality improvement of the WNBR (hereinafter referred to as the “MAB Excellence Guidelines”), which are in Annex 5 hereto. The MAB Excellence Guidelines set forth a new mechanism to improve implementation of the Process of Excellence which shall be applied together with the provisions of the Seville Strategy for Biosphere Reserves and the Statutory Framework of the WNBR. Their main purpose is to ensure that biosphere reserves, and the WNBR in its entirety, will serve as models for the implementation of the 2030 Agenda and its SDGs and the Convention on Biological Diversity post-2020 framework as well as subsequent multilateral environmental agreements in these fields. The MAB Excellence Guidelines also include, in Annexes 3 and 4 hereto, flow charts that further illustrate this new mechanism.
7. The MAB Council encourages all Member States, MAB National Committees, biosphere reserves and regional networks to continue sharing their experiences with periodic review reporting within the WNBR and to offer, as appropriate, assistance to individual biosphere reserves in order for them to meet or continue meeting the criteria to remain in the WNBR pursuant to the Statutory Framework of the WNBR.

Annexes

Annex 1: Terms of reference for the ad hoc working group (MAB Council reports from 2018 and 2019)

The Council decided to establish an ad-hoc group working on the “Process of excellence and enhancement of the WNBR as well as quality improvement of all members of the World Network” in order to take advantage of the opportunities of the process beyond 2020.

1. **The working group has following mandate:**

- To further develop the “Process of excellence and enhancement of the WNBR as well as quality improvement of all members of the World Network” and its implementation;
- To prepare input for discussion and to allow a decision on the Excellence Process and its implementation to be taken by the 32nd Session of the MAB-ICC in 2020.

2. The Council requested the working group to take into consideration the decision taken at the 29th MAB Council session on the “Exit strategy” (see below Annex 2) and the lessons and results learnt from this strategy as well as the periodic review process in general.

3. It furthermore requested the WG to present its findings and recommendations for discussion and consideration to the next 31st session of the MAB Council as to provide further guidance to the process.

4. The Council also requested the Secretariat to call on the Member States to nominate the representatives to the ad-hoc working group by early September.

5. **The members shall be as follows:**

- 2 ICC-members by UNESCO regional group
- The Chairperson of the ICC
- The Chairperson of IACBR

6. The Secretariat indicated that after the approval of the periodic review and follow up recommendations by the MAB Council, 64 sites in 31 countries were still concerned by the excellence process. Delegates expressed their satisfaction on the progress made so far and the need to pursue the efforts in the implementation of the excellence process.

1. Welcomes the intermediate results of the ad-hoc working group established by the MAB Council at its 30th session on the 'Process of excellence and enhancement of the WNBR as well as quality improvement of all members of the World Network', the 'Excellence Process';
2. Notes that the Excellence Process has been adopted by the MAB Council in 2017, and is thus already in force;
3. Calls on the working group to continue its work, in its current composition but with possible changes to be agreed within regional groups, and conclude this work with the aim of its results being adopted by the MAB Council at its 32nd session in 2020;
4. As regards the established mandate of the working group, the MAB Council highlights the need to:
 - Address permanent mechanisms of quality assurance within the World Network;
 - Further develop the idea of a 'short and easy review mechanism, coordinated by the MAB National Committee and/or focal point, five years after the designation, or last periodic review report';
 - and combine this with proposals for a more streamlined periodic review process.

Members of the 2020 Excellence ad hoc working group

Group 1 : Europe and North America

- 1 – Germany : Ms Barbara Engels
- 2 – Sweden : Ms Johanna Mac Taggart

Group 2 : Europe

Slovakia: Mrs. Zuzana Guziova

Group 3 : Asia and Pacific

Australia: M. Peter Bridgewater
Republic of Korea : Ms. Shim, Suk-kyung

Group 4 : Arab States

Oman : Dr. Thuraya Said AISareeri
Sudan : Dr. Suad Ali Mirghani

Group 5: Africa

Madagascar : Dr. BAOHANTA Rondro
South Africa: Dr. Vongani Maringa

Group 6: Latin America and the Caribbean

Haiti : M. Dieufort DESLORGES
Mexico : Mrs. Maria Pia Gallina Tessaro

- President of the MAB Council : Prof Enny Sudarmonowati, Indonesia
- Chair of the Advisory Committee: elected on 25th February 2020
- MAB Secretariat : Meriem Bouamrane

Annex 2: Extract of the decision on the “Process of excellence and enhancement of the WNBR as well as quality improvement of all members of the World Network” (2017 MAB Council report)

The MAB Council decides to complete the “exit strategy” in 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’, to ensure that they serve as models for the implementation of the 2030 Agenda and its Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

The MAB Council decides the following with regard to the sites concerned by the “exit strategy”:

1. **For sites which have provided information and meet the criteria**, the MAB Council warmly congratulates the Member States concerned and expresses its thanks to all stakeholders who have engaged in this important process.
2. Furthermore, the MAB Council encourages the MAB Secretariat, the National Commissions for UNESCO, the National MAB Committees and the concerned biosphere reserves to convey positive messages that inform about and celebrate this success.
3. The Council further acknowledges that certain Member States have decided to withdraw sites under their jurisdiction from the World Network and congratulates them on showing their commitment in this way.
4. **For BR in conflict zones**, the MAB Council decides that these sites remain in the WNBR as long as these conflicts continue. These sites should not be obliged to send a report. The Secretariat and the WNBR will support the BR concerned to the extent possible. When the conflict ceases, the BR should be supported by the National Committee and the Secretariat, the Regional networks and the WNBR including an evaluation of the conditions to advise the BR and the national Committee on how the BR can fulfil its obligations under the Statutory framework.
5. **For transboundary BR**, the MAB Council adopts the following process:
 - a. The Member States must submit the national periodic report by 30 September 2017;
 - b. This information will be evaluated by the IACBR and then the MAB Council in 2018;
 - c. Member States will have the option to provide complementary information after evaluation by the IACBR;
 - d. The MAB Council will determine in 2018 whether the site meets the criteria;
 - e. The MAB Secretariat and the World Network will support the transboundary biosphere reserves in their specific challenges.

6. For BR which have provided comprehensive information, which has been evaluated by the IACBR and the MAB Council, but the site does not meet the criteria, the Council adopts the following process:

- a. The Member States must submit additional information/answers to the MAB Secretariat by 30 September 2017 or 2018;
- b. This information will be evaluated by the IACBR and then the MAB Council in 2018 and/or 2019;
- c. Member States will have the option to provide complementary information after the evaluation by the IACBR;
- d. The MAB Council will determine in 2018 and 2019 whether the site meets the criteria;
- e. In the case the Biosphere reserve meets the criteria, the Council will formally recognise this;
- f. Member States will have the option to submit a new nomination by 30 September 2018 or 2019;
- g. Member States will have the option to request an extension in area, by 30 September 2018 or 2019, as appropriate;
- h. The decision, that the site does not meet the criteria and will therefore no longer be referred to as a biosphere reserve which is part of the Network, will be effective as of the closure of the MAB Council session in 2020.

7. For BR which have provided a Periodic review report or other appropriate information that has not yet been evaluated by the IACBR and the MAB Council, the Council adopts the following process:

- a. The Periodic review report/information received will be evaluated by the IACBR and then the MAB ICC in 2018;
- b. Member States will have the option to provide complementary information either before 30 September 2017 or after the evaluation by the IACBR;
- c. The MAB Council will determine in 2018 whether the site meets the criteria;
- d. In the case the biosphere reserve meets the criteria the Council will formally recognise this;
- e. The decision that the site does not meet the criteria and therefore will no longer be referred to as a biosphere reserve which is part of the Network will be effective as of the closure of the MAB Council session in 2020;
- f. In case that the BR does not meet the criteria, its further consideration will be as described in paragraph 6.

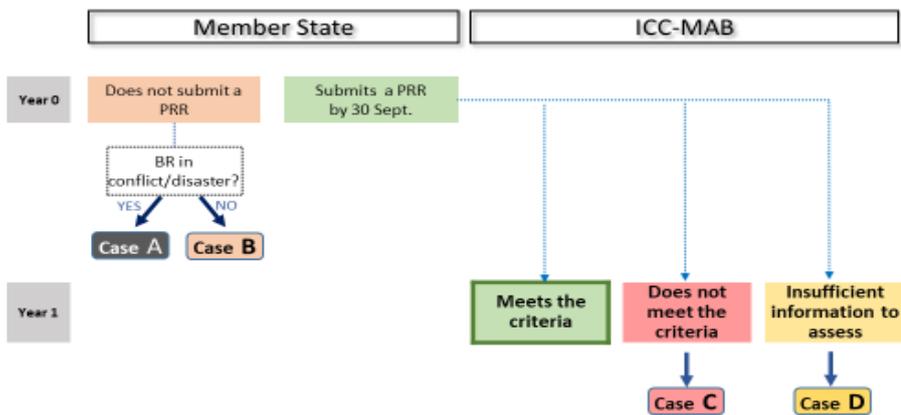
- 8. For BR which have not provided any Periodic review report which allows evaluation as to whether the BR meets criteria, the MAB Council decides** that the site will no longer be referred to as a biosphere reserve which is part of the Network at the closure of the MAB Council session in 2020, and adopts the following process: the Member State may submit:
- a. a periodic review report by 30 September 2017 which will allow the site to follow the process described in paragraph 7; or
 - b. a formal working commitment with an explanation of issues and needs and a detailed workplan and timeline, submitted by 30 September 2017, in order to submit the periodic review report at the latest by 30 September 2018 or 2019; or
 - c. a new nomination form in conformity with the Statutory Framework of the WNBR at its earliest convenience and before 30 September 2019, to be evaluated in 2020 by the IACBR and then the MAB Council.
9. In cases biosphere reserves cannot meet the criteria, the MAB Council encourages the Member State concerned to withdraw the site under the provisions of paragraph 8 Article 9 of the Statutory Framework.
10. With regard to all of these decisions of the Council, the MAB Secretariat will communicate the decision to the appropriate levels of the Member State concerned, with copy to the Permanent Delegation and National Commission for UNESCO, within four weeks of the Council decision, specifying the requirements for each concerned biosphere reserve. Recipients will be asked to confirm the receipt of the communication.
11. The MAB Council asks the MAB Secretariat to be precise in all communications, when transmitting recommendations, decisions, etc.
12. Furthermore, the MAB Council encourages all Member States, the National MAB Committees and biosphere reserves as well as the regional networks to share their experience with periodic review reporting within the WNBR and offer, as appropriate, support to BR in order to meet the criteria.
13. Support to the sites that are not meeting the criteria or have difficulties in reporting the results of their periodic review process are suggested below:
- a. Organizing specific technical workshops targeting the difficulties such as zonation and governance. Host countries should cover the costs of such workshops. Such workshops could also be systematically be organized and facilitated at the regional networks meetings (such as the EuroMAB Network with a support desk workshop being organized for new biosphere reserve proposals and periodic review reports);
 - b. Encouraging eligible National Commissions for UNESCO and MAB National Committees to apply for financial support through the UNESCO Participation Programme;

- c. Requesting existing UNESCO Chairs and Centers (such as ERAIFT, the MAB Chair in France, UNESCO Centre in Spain) to provide courses and training facilities to requesting sites and countries;
- d. Mobilizing the existing expertise and human resources for technical and support missions, including inviting experts of the International Advisory Committee (active and from previous mandate), other biosphere reserves staff, the UNESCO Secretariat and UNESCO Field Offices; whenever possible the costs of travel and lodging should be supported by the host countries, with support from UNESCO, and no fees should be provided as per common practice in the MAB Programme;
- e. Using the operational guidelines (in process) to share typical issues faced by biosphere reserves and solutions, using the diversity of the WNBR;
- f. Using peer periodic review support. A biosphere reserve that meets the criteria can support and guide a site that is having difficulties to undertake the periodic review report and meeting the criteria. This peer process should be done on a voluntary basis.
- g. Member States could be invited to contribute to donate on the MAB fund to support some of the activities mentioned above, in order for the World Network to be used as a powerful tool for enhancing the credibility and quality of its sites and for demonstrating cooperation and solidarity in action.

Annexes 3 and 4

Flow charts

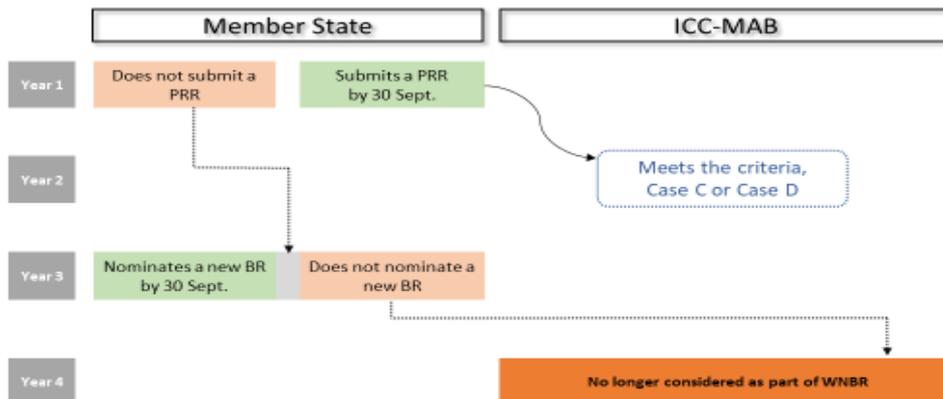
Flow charts on the “Process of excellence and enhancement of the WNBR as well as quality improvement of all members of the World Network”



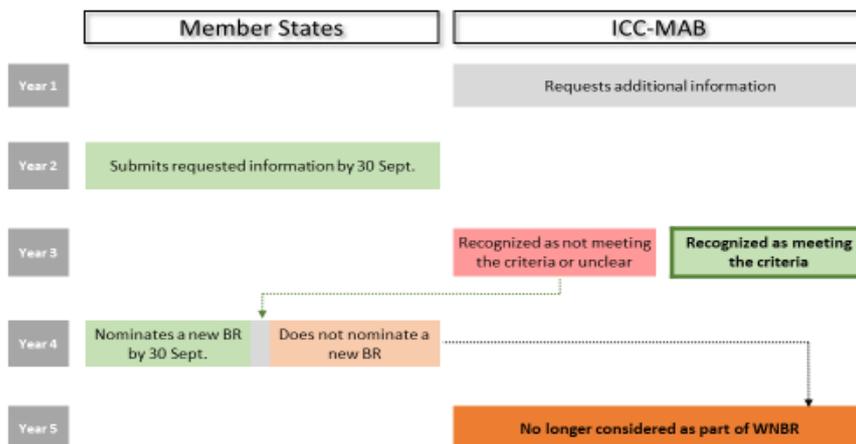
Case A: BR in a conflict/disaster zone



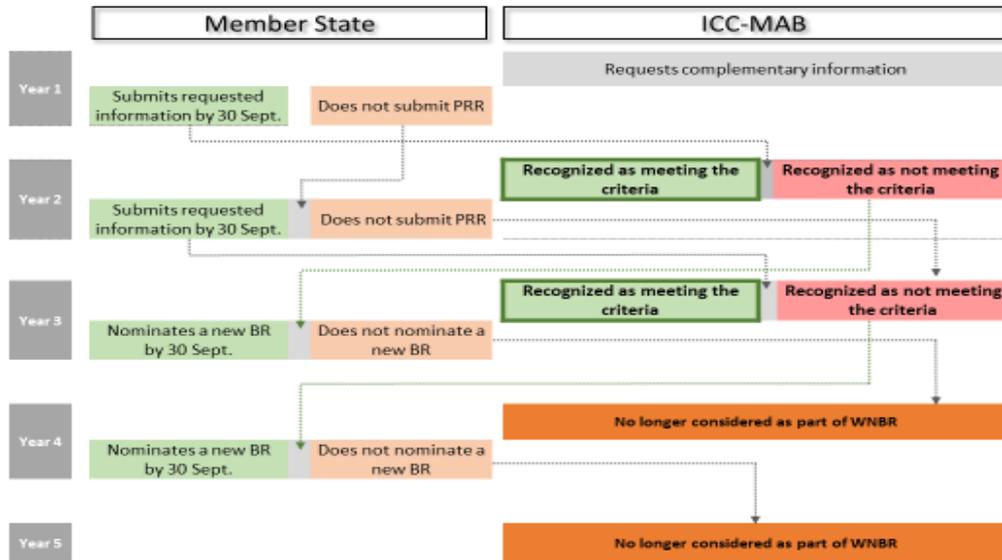
Case B: Does not submit a PRR (BR not in a conflict/disaster zone)



Case C: Does not meet the criteria

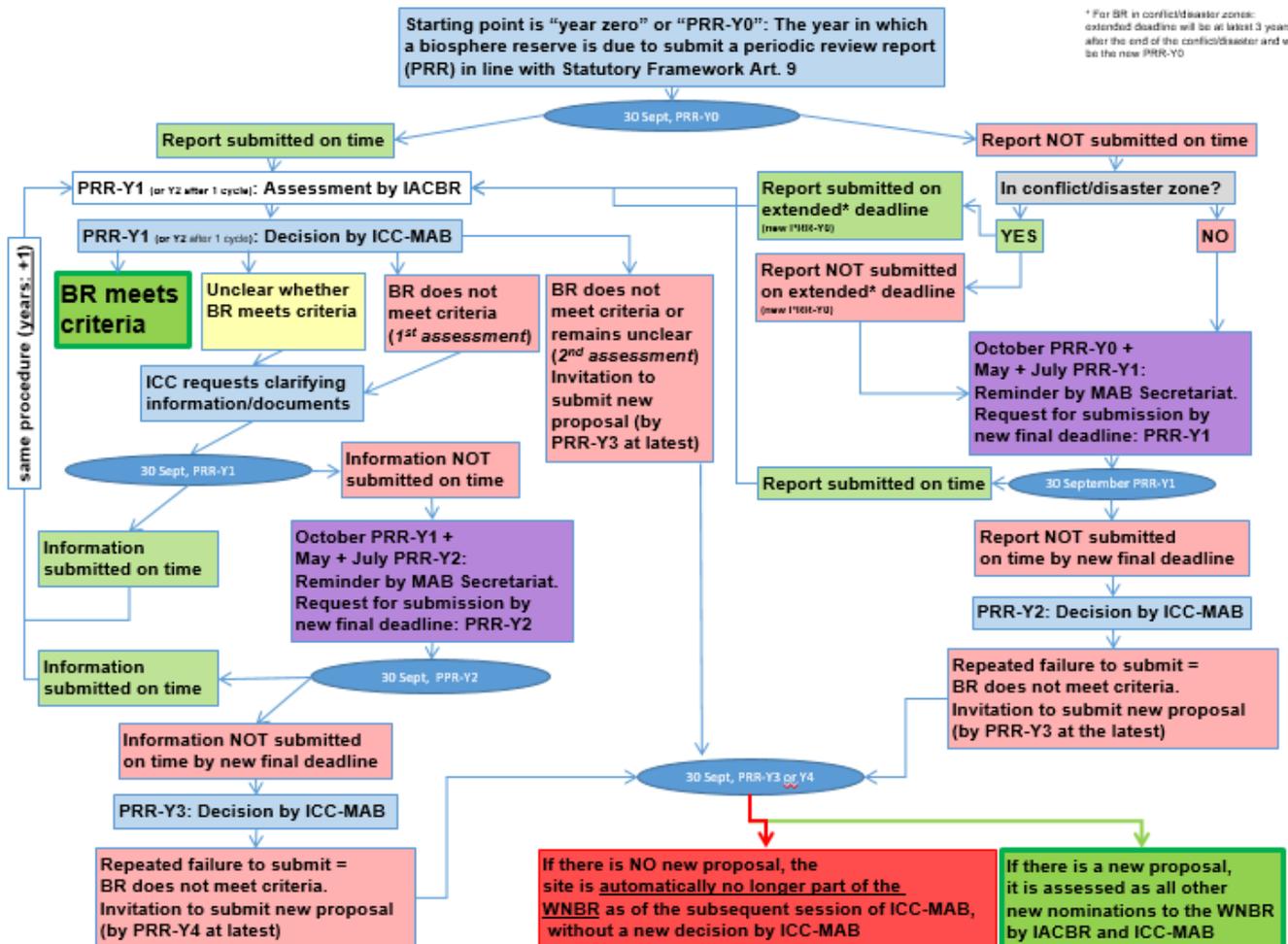


Case D: Insufficient information to assess



Abbreviations

ICC-MAB	International Coordinating Council of the Programme on Man and the Biosphere
BR	Biosphere reserve
IACBR	International Advisory Committee for Biosphere Reserves
PRR	Periodic review report
WNBR	World Network of Biosphere Reserves



Annex 5: Guidelines for five-yearly check-up mechanism for biosphere reserves at the national level

Purpose: To establish a short and easy review mechanism, coordinated by the MAB National Committee and/or focal point, five years after the designation of a biosphere reserve (BR), or last periodic review report (PRR). This mechanism should be the foundation for dialogue between MAB National Committees, National Commissions for UNESCO and/or MAB focal points and biosphere reserve management bodies, in order to ensure the facilitation of ongoing review and the 10-yearly periodic review process, thus ensuring well-functioning biosphere reserves and excellence within the World Network of Biosphere Reserves.

Actions:

This purpose can be achieved through the MAB National Committee and/or focal point:

- organizing at least quarterly meetings with and for BR coordinators/managers to share and learn from each other (such meetings should normally be held virtually);
- organizing annual site visits and learning journeys for members of the MAB National Committee and, where possible, biosphere reserve coordinators/managers, with a biosphere reserve hosting the MAB National Committee meeting, so that challenges can be addressed, and solutions discussed on site;
- requesting biosphere reserves to submit annual reports to the MAB National Committee and National Commission for UNESCO;
- identifying common themes amongst the biosphere reserves and supporting the development and implementation of projects around those themes to increase communication between the biosphere reserves, as well as their financial sustainability and thus strengthen the national network;
- calling for peer support from neighbouring countries by using existing networks, e.g. regional MAB networks and regional meetings of National Commissions for UNESCO;
- coordinating a short, informal and simple review mechanism, five years after the designation or last periodic review report of each biosphere reserve.

The informal five-year review for each biosphere reserve will help to monitor its progress especially in implementing the current MAB Strategy and Action Plan, together with relevant globally agreed goals and targets e.g. SDGs of the 2030 Agenda, and the 2050 Vision for Biodiversity. It will also allow a quick check on the current status of zonation, activities within the zones and progress in involving all stakeholders in the running and management of the biosphere reserve.

The mechanism could take the form of an online survey, interviews with the coordinator/manager and key stakeholders, a site visit and dialogue, depending on the needs, complexity and financial status of the BR. This could be done as a Master's thesis or project by a student, or staff member, at an academic institution with links to the university, or by the focal point or a member of the MAB National Committee, or by a small team.

Issues to address in the review could include:

- *Zonation – is the zonation fit for purpose, or should any adjustments be made because of changing circumstances, to be included in the periodic review?*
- *Governance structure – does this help the biosphere reserve to fulfill its three functions adequately? If not, what changes could be made?*

- *Biosphere reserve organization – does it have a clear mandate, is it sufficiently staffed and adequately financed, does it have a business plan, and how does the BR involve stakeholders in co-creating processes to achieve its goals?*
- *Ongoing challenges in the biosphere reserve – are there processes in place to find solutions to those challenges, if not, what is lacking and what types and sources of support are needed and/or available?*
- *Partnerships with the private and social sectors (including businesses and social enterprises) – what partnerships/mechanisms exist (including branding), and how are they contributing to the goals of the biosphere reserve?*
- *Knowledge gaps – are there academic institutions working on knowledge gaps relating to regional sustainability challenges? How is traditional and place-based knowledge brought to discussions of management?*
- *Education and training – what partnerships exist with schools, colleges, universities and other relevant institutions to facilitate understanding of the biosphere reserve and contribute to its sustainable development?*
- *Monitoring and evaluation – is there a mechanism in place for appropriate monitoring to ensure an effective periodic review process?*
- *Contribution to relevant globally agreed goals and targets – how does the biosphere reserve contribute to these, and what good examples could be communicated to inspire other biosphere reserves and increase national recognition of the contributions of biosphere reserves to these goals and targets?*

Annexe 6: Guidelines on the Process of Excellence and Enhancement of the World Network of Biosphere Reserves (WNBR)

1. This document sets out the Guidelines on the Process of Excellence and Enhancement of the World Network of Biosphere Reserves (WNBR) (hereinafter referred to as “the MAB Excellence Guidelines”) that establish a permanent Process of Excellence that shall apply, together with the Seville Strategy for Biosphere Reserves and the Statutory Framework of the WBNR, to all cases of periodic review of biosphere reserves that are part of the WNBR, including transboundary biosphere reserves. The term “criteria” in the MAB Excellence Guidelines is used to refer to the criteria in Article 4 of the Statutory Framework of the WNBR.
2. In order to make this process as clear as possible, a clear numbering system is applied to the years of this decennial process. The year in which a periodic review report (PRR) is submitted or is due at the latest, i.e., 10 years after the designation of a biosphere reserve by UNESCO or its positive evaluation by the MAB Council, is referred to as “PRR-Y0”; all subsequent years are referred to accordingly, e.g., the next year is “PRR-Y1”.
3. Each periodic review report is subject to assessment by the International Advisory Committee for Biosphere Reserves (IACBR) and a decision by the International Coordinating Council of the Programme on Man and the Biosphere (ICC-MAB or “the MAB Council”) in the subsequent year, PRR-Y1.
4. At least 12 months before the deadline of 30 September of the year in which a periodic review report is due (PRR-Y0), the MAB Secretariat will send a formal communication to the Member State concerned, the respective National Commission for UNESCO and MAB National Committee, and the biosphere reserve concerned, requesting the submission of the report.
5. **For biosphere reserves in areas of international or national conflict or major disasters:** if a biosphere reserve is located in an area affected by a conflict or disaster that is recognized as such by relevant United Nations bodies, the concerned State will not be obliged to submit the periodic review report within the deadline set forth in paragraph 2 above. The MAB Secretariat shall instead request that any due report is provided no more than three years after the official recognition of the end of the conflict or disaster. This year shall be referred to as “conflict or disaster, extended PRR-Y0”. The Secretariat, the WNBR, the respective MAB National Committee and the regional networks will provide assistance to the biosphere reserve concerned to the extent possible.
6. **For biosphere reserves that have submitted their periodic review report in PRR-Y0 and have been found by the IACBR and the MAB Council to meet the criteria in PRR-Y1,** the MAB Council will formally recognize this in PRR-Y1 and will encourage the MAB Secretariat, National Commissions for UNESCO, MAB National Committees and biosphere reserves concerned to convey positive messages to celebrate this success.
7. **For biosphere reserves that have submitted their periodic review report in PRR-Y0 and have been found by the IACBR and the MAB Council (in PRR-Y1) not to meet the criteria,** the following process applies:

- a. The MAB Council will provide advice and specific recommendations to the biosphere reserve concerned in order for it to adopt measures necessary to meet the criteria (in PRR-Y1).
 - b. The Member State concerned must submit additional information/answers to the MAB Secretariat at the latest by 30 September in PRR-Y2. If such information is not provided in PRR-Y2, the MAB Secretariat will send, at the latest by May and July of PRR-Y2, two additional reminders to the Member State concerned, the respective National Commission for UNESCO and MAB National Committee, and the biosphere reserve concerned, requesting submission by the final deadline of 30 September in PRR-Y2. The submitted information will then be evaluated by the IACBR and then the MAB Council in PRR-Y3.
 - c. The Member State concerned will again have the option to provide complementary information after the evaluation by the IACBR (in PRR-Y3, at the latest).
 - d. The MAB Council will determine at its session in PRR-Y3, at the latest, whether the biosphere reserve meets the criteria.
 - e. Should the MAB Council find that the biosphere reserve meets the criteria in PRR-Y3, the MAB Council will formally recognize this in accordance with paragraph 6 above.
 - f. Should the MAB Council find that, after one such resubmission of requested information/documents, the biosphere reserve still does not meet the criteria or that it remains unclear whether they are met, the MAB Council will formally recognize this and decide that, unless a successful nomination form is submitted and approved, the biosphere reserve will no longer be referred to as a biosphere reserve that is part of the WNBR, as of the closure of the MAB Council session in PRR-Y5. The Member State concerned will have the option to submit a new nomination form for the biosphere reserve under review by 30 September in PRR-Y4, at the latest. If a nomination form is not submitted to the Secretariat in PRR-Y4 and approved by the MAB Council at its session in PRR-Y5, the Council will, at this session, confirm its decision that the biosphere reserve will no longer be part of the WNBR. In cases where a biosphere reserve cannot meet the criteria, the Council encourages the Member State concerned to withdraw the biosphere reserve under the provisions of Article 9, paragraph 8, of the Statutory Framework of the WNBR.
8. **For biosphere reserves that have provided a periodic review report and/or other information on time, but which is considered insufficient by the IACBR and the MAB Council (in PRR-Y1) to assess whether the biosphere reserve meets the criteria, the following process applies:**
- a. The Member State(s) concerned will be invited to provide clarifying complementary information and/or documents after the evaluation by the IACBR in PRR-Y1; if the information and/or documents submitted are still insufficient to assess whether the criteria are met, the MAB Council (in PRR-Y1) will provide specific advice and recommendations as to which information and/or documents are requested by 30 September in PRR-Y1.
 - b. If such information and/or documents are provided by that deadline, the IACBR and the MAB Council will determine in PRR-Y2 whether the biosphere reserve meets the criteria. The Member State(s) concerned will have the option to provide complementary information after the evaluation by the IACBR in PRR-Y2.

- c. Should the MAB Council, at its session in PRR-Y2, find that the biosphere reserve now meets the criteria, it will formally recognize this (in accordance with paragraph 6 above).
 - d. Should the MAB Council, at its session in PRR-Y2, find that the biosphere reserve does not meet the criteria, the Council will formally recognize this and decide that, unless a successful nomination form is submitted and approved, the biosphere reserve will no longer be referred to as a biosphere reserve that is part of the WNBR, as of the closure of the MAB Council session in PRR-Y4. If it remains unclear whether the criteria are met, the Council will deem this equivalent to not meeting the criteria, and therefore the same procedure will apply. In either case, the Member State(s) concerned will have the option to submit a new nomination form for the biosphere reserve under review by 30 September in PRR-Y3 at the latest. If no nomination form is submitted and approved by the MAB Council at its session in PRR-Y4, the Council will, at this session, confirm its decision that the biosphere reserve will no longer be considered as part of the WNBR. In cases where a biosphere reserve fails to meet the criteria, the Council encourages the Member State concerned to withdraw the biosphere reserve under the provisions of Article 9 of the Statutory Framework of the WNBR.
 - e. If information and/or documents are not provided by the deadline, in accordance with paragraph 8 a above (30 September PRR-Y1), the MAB Secretariat will issue a reminder to the Member State concerned, the respective National Commission for UNESCO and MAB National Committee and the biosphere concerned, at the latest two months after the deadline, setting a new, final deadline of 30 September in PRR-Y2, and it will send two additional formal communications to these entities at the latest by May and July before the deadline of 30 September in PRR-Y2.
 - f. If information and/or documents are provided by that new deadline, paragraphs 8 b to d above apply, as appropriate.
 - g. If information and/or documents are not provided by that new deadline, at its session in PRR-Y3, the Council will formally recognize the repeated failure to submit information as equivalent to not meeting the criteria, and decide that, unless a successful nomination form is submitted and approved, the biosphere reserve will no longer be referred to as a biosphere reserve that is part of the WNBR, as of the closure of the Council session in PRR-Y5. The Member State(s) concerned will have the option to submit a new nomination related to the biosphere reserve under review by 30 September in PRR-Y4, at the latest. If no nomination form is submitted and approved by the Council at its session in PRR-Y5, the Council will confirm, at this session, its decision that the biosphere reserve will no longer be considered as part of the WNBR. In cases where a biosphere reserve cannot meet the criteria, the Council encourages the Member State concerned to withdraw the biosphere reserve under the provisions of Article 9, paragraph 8, of the Statutory Framework of the WNBR.
9. **For biosphere reserves that are not in conflict/disaster zones and which fail to provide a periodic review report PRR-Y0**, the following process applies:
- a. The Secretariat will send a formal communication to the Member State concerned, the respective National Commission for UNESCO and MAB National Committee as well as the biosphere reserve concerned, at the latest two months after the deadline of 30 September of the year PRR-Y0 in which the periodic review report was due, requesting for submission in PRR-Y1. It will send two additional formal communications to these authorities, at the latest by May and July before the deadline of 30 September in PRR-Y1.

- b. In cases where no periodic review report or any other information has been received by the deadline of 30 September of the year PRR-Y1, the Member State(s) may submit a new nomination for the same biosphere reserve, by 30 September in PRR-Y3, at the latest. If no nomination form is submitted and approved, the MAB Council at its session in PRR-Y4 will confirm its decision that the biosphere reserve will no longer be considered as part of the WNBR. In cases where a biosphere reserve cannot meet the criteria, the Council encourages the Member State concerned to withdraw the biosphere reserve under the provisions of Article 9, paragraph 8, of the Statutory Framework of the WNBR.
 - c. In cases where a periodic review report or any other information has been received by the deadline of 30 September of PRR-Y1, the process as in paragraphs 6, 7 or 8 above will apply, with an additional year provided (replacing PRR-Y0 by PRR-1 in all cases, etc.).
10. **For transboundary biosphere reserves (TBR)**, the periodic review reports for the national biosphere reserves concerned and, in addition, the periodic review report for the TBR as a whole, should be submitted at the same time in PRR-Y0. The IACBR will evaluate, and the MAB Council will decide, whether the submitted reports are sufficient to assess whether the criteria are met or not for each national component of the TBR according to the Statutory Framework of the WNBR, and for the TBR as a whole according to the Pamplona recommendations. Paragraphs 6 to 8 above apply correspondingly for both the national components and the TBR as a whole, with the following specifications:¹
- a. If at least one national component of a TBR is located in the area of a recognized international or national conflict or major disaster, the TBR as a whole will be treated as a biosphere reserve in a conflict/disaster zone with corresponding implications for delaying the year of reporting (see paragraph 5 above).
 - b. If the MAB Council finds that all national components forming the TBR meet the criteria of the Statutory Framework of the WNBR, but the TBR does not meet the Pamplona recommendations, or the information is insufficient to assess whether the Pamplona recommendations are met, the MAB Council will confirm the national status (see paragraph 6 above) and will maintain the TBR status during the period of possible submission of additional information in accordance with paragraphs 7 and 8 above. If the steps described in these paragraphs are not successfully undertaken, the TBR status will cease at the time of the corresponding MAB Council session, without implications for the status of the national biosphere reserves.
 - c. For a TBR with two national components, if the MAB Council finds that only one of these two national components meets the criteria of the Statutory Framework of the WNBR, and also that the TBR meets the Pamplona recommendations, the MAB Council will confirm only the national status of the biosphere reserve that meets the criteria (see paragraph 6 above). The national component of the TBR that has not provided a report, or has provided insufficient information, or has been found not to meet the criteria will have the opportunity to submit additional information in accordance with paragraphs 7 to 9 above. If the steps described above do not lead to the MAB

¹ In all of the cases a-d, , consideration should be given to re-issuing certificates for national or transboundary BR as appropriate to each situation.

Council's formal recognition of the respective national biosphere reserve as meeting the criteria of the Statutory Framework of the WNBR, the TBR status will cease.

- d. For a TBR with more than two national components, if the MAB Council finds that at least two, but not all, of these national components meet the criteria of the Statutory Framework of the WNBR, and also that the TBR meets the Pamplona recommendations, the MAB Council will confirm the national status of each biosphere reserve that meets the criteria (see paragraph 6 above), as well as the status as a TBR. National components of a TBR that have not provided a report, or have provided insufficient information or have been found to not meet the criteria will have the opportunity to submit additional information in accordance with paragraphs 7 to 9 above. If the steps described above have been completed but without success, then the joint TBR nomination form shall be resubmitted to include only the respective national components that have been recognized as meeting the criteria.
11. The MAB Secretariat will formally communicate all decisions of the MAB Council to the concerned Member State, Permanent Delegation, National Commission for UNESCO, MAB National Committee and biosphere reserve concerned, within four weeks of the MAB Council decision pursuant to paragraphs 7, 8 and 9 above. Recipients will be asked to confirm receipt of these communications.