Technical Guidelines for Biosphere Reserves (TGBR)  
Working Group

Terms of Reference

As per decision of the 29th session of the MAB International Coordinating Council (MAB ICC), an informal Working Group, established on a voluntary basis, shall assist the MAB ICC to develop Technical Guidelines for Biosphere Reserves (TGBR) in cooperation with the MAB Secretariat. This document contains the Terms of Reference for the work of this Working Group and its Thematic Sub-Groups.

1. Purpose of the Working Group

The Working Group (WG) is responsible for preparing the structure and content of the TGBR in support of the MAB Secretariat.

The TGBR is a technical tool, which will enable Member States and the MAB ICC to respond more appropriately and in a timely manner to the various practical challenges and technical questions encountered in the implementation of the Seville Strategy and the Statutory Framework of World Network of Biosphere Reserves (WNBR). Providing critical information and clarification on the WNBR, the TGBR primarily assists Member States to nominate new sites, and manage and monitor biosphere reserves; it also fosters the implementation of the current MAB strategy (2015-2025) and the Lima Action Plan (LAP) (2016-2025) and future Strategies and Action Plans.

The TGBR will be an open access web-based document accessible on the UNESCO/MAB website. It is a living document composed of a set of modules on specific themes, which will be gradually completed as required by decisions of the MAB ICC. Such an evolutive and dynamic structure based on independent modules and appendixes will accommodate future additions and changes of the document required by the MAB ICC.

The TGBR should not replicate work already done but rather build on relevant existing materials as much as possible. The drafting process of the modules of TGBR ensures collective contributions from the MAB community, in particular site practitioners and stakeholders involved with development and biosphere reserve management, in order to capture the real experience of the people on the ground and their best examples. As appropriate, items of the TGBR include relevant examples gathered from the WNBR, displaying the wide variety of situations and approaches in individual biosphere reserves as well as the flexibility, creativity and spirit of cooperation of the MAB programme.
2. Mandate of the WG:

To fulfill its mandate, the working group will be organized as follows:

**Working group (WG)**

The members of the WG are experts approved by the Bureau. The WG shall prepare the structure and content of the TGBR. The mandate of the Working Group is two years. Members may withdraw from the WG, with 3 months prior notification. Replacements will be nominated in the same way as initial nominations.

**Thematic Sub-groups (TSGs)**

At its sessions, the MAB ICC defines the themes for the work of the WG. Therefore, to complete the work by theme, the WG shall be divided into Thematic Sub-Groups (TSGs). The number of these will be based on the assignment given by the MAB ICC. TSGs will be dissolved when their specific theme is completed and approved by the MAB ICC. TSG members may be assigned other themes within the time of their mandate (2 years) if the TSG they belonged to has been dissolved.

3. Membership:

The working groups are established as follows:

a. **Expertise and qualification required for the WG Members:** Experienced researchers, site managers, policy makers, conservation specialists who are familiar with MAB and BR theory and practices, especially Seville Strategy, Statutory Framework, MAB Strategy 2015-2025 and LAP 2016-2025. A brief bio-data or summary of resumes will be made available on the MAB Website.

b. **Nomination process of WG:** Member States are invited to nominate names of experts for one or several TSGs.

c. **Composition of TSGs:** The MAB Secretariat shall compile the nominations and prepare the list of the membership of thematic sub-groups, taking into account regional distribution, expertise and gender balance. The size of each TSG should not exceed 15 members.

d. **Approval of WG/TSGs:** The MAB Bureau will review the list prepared by the MAB Secretariat and approve it on behalf of the MAB ICC.
4. Method of work: as a matter of principle, the method of work should be kept as flexible as possible within the agreed overall framework of work.

- Organization of the WG: the entire group of experts comprises the Working Group (WG). The WG shall have a Bureau (WG Bureau) for the period of two years of the mandate comprised of the following members: a Chair (elected), a rapporteur (elected) and one member of each active TSG (designated by the members of the TSG).

- Organization of TSGs: The members of each TSG shall elect a Chair and a Rapporteur for the period of their mandate (TSG Bureau). They designate their representative to the WG Bureau.

- Secretariat: The MAB Secretariat provides the Secretariat of WG / TSGs.

- Means of communication and meetings: The WG and each TSG shall conduct their business primarily using e-mail and the online facilities for virtual meetings.
  
  o The WG and TSGs shall meet virtually as needed based on the relevance vis-a-vis the overall road map.
  o The Chair of the WG (respectively the Chairs of the TSGs), in consultation with the MAB Secretariat, will schedule the meeting and produce and issue a draft agenda to members of the WG/TSG at least 15 working days before each meeting.
  o Members will be invited to contribute items to the agenda if they wish.
  o The quorum for each meeting shall be at least half of the members of the respective WG or TSG.
  o The Rapporteur of the WG/TSG, with support of MAB Secretariat and in consultation with the respective Chair, will circulate minutes of each meeting, including action points and responsibilities, to all members no later than one week after the meeting.
  o The WG bureau shall meet every two months with an agenda that will include monitoring progress against achievement of objectives set by the WG and TSGs, any problems or issues encountered and examples of good practice. These meetings will be scheduled at least 15 working days in advance.

- Face to face meetings: Taking advantage of the MAB ICC, informal meetings of the WG and its TSGs may be organized by the MAB Secretariat to coincide with MAB ICC. Member States should support their experts’ attendance costs. The agenda of these meetings will be decided by the WG Bureau and circulated at least one month prior to the MAB ICC.
- **Reporting:** The WG shall report to the MAB Bureau, which has been entrusted by the MAB ICC to approve the work of the WG. With clearance from the WG Bureau and the MAB Bureau, the Secretariat brings forward the draft item in the form of a MAB ICC document for consideration by the MAB ICC.

- **Working language:** The main working language of the WG and TSGs is English.

- **Budget:** participation in activities of working groups is expected to be covered by Member States’ voluntary contributions. No allowances, transportation or other financial benefits will be paid by UNESCO.

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5. **Objectives and expected results**

The objectives and expected results of the WG and its TSGs are to prepare the Technical Guidelines for Biosphere Reserves for approval of the MAB Bureau through the following actions:

5.1 **Working Group:**

i. Review the layout and the table of contents of the Prototype of Technical Guidelines of BR prepared by the MAB Secretariat for the 29th session of MAB ICC [https://en.unesco.org/op-wmb](https://en.unesco.org/op-wmb) based on the discussions held by the MAB ICC at its 29th and 30th sessions respectively and prepare the first draft layout and table of contents of the TGBR;

ii. Circulate through the MAB Secretariat, the first draft of the layout and the table of contents of the Prototype of TGBR for inputs and comments by the MAB national committees;

iii. Prepare updated versions of the draft layout and table of contents of the TGBR based on inputs and comments received from the MAB National committees and consolidated by the MAB Secretariat;

iv. Prepare the final draft layout and table of contents of the TGBR for review by the MAB Bureau and for its approval.

v. Review and approve the draft of completed items of the TGBR and submit the draft to the MAB Bureau.

vi. Oversee the production of the content of the TGBR and decide about the possible need for additional generation of input and comments by MAB national committees.
vii. Work in close interaction with the International Advisory Committee for Biosphere reserves (IABCR) in order to take advantage of the experience and knowledge of the members of the IABCR and will seek their advice, comments and inputs as appropriate.

5.2 Technical Sub-Groups:

i. Prepare the drafting of content of the 4 identified priority areas based on draft input provided by the Secretariat:

   1. Zonation of BRs
   2. Governance of BRs
   3. Policy and management & Business Plans of BR
   4. Data management and monitoring

   including specific reflection on cross cutting themes pertaining to the Excellence Process.

   If the MAB ICC decides to add new themes, related new TSG may be established.

   If needs be, additional experts will be nominated and selected under the same procedure described above within the duration of the mandate of the WG.

ii. Circulate, through the MAB Secretariat, the first draft of completed items of the TGBR for inputs and comments by MAB National committees;

iii. Prepare updated versions of the draft of completed items of the TGBR for inputs and comments based on inputs and comments received from MAB national committees and consolidated by MAB Secretariat;

iv. Prepare the final draft of completed items of Technical Guidelines of BR for review by the WG and later the MAB Bureau and for its approval no later than one month prior to the session of the MAB ICC of the year when its mandate ends.

5.2 Consistency of the work

Throughout its mandate, the Bureau of the WG will review the work of the TSGs to ensure consistency of the entire document.

To insure that the work of the WG is consistent with practices worldwide and in particular, to take advantage of the sum of knowledge and experience accumulated by the members of the International Advisory Committee for Biosphere Reserves on matters pertaining to the WNBR, the WG will seek advice and contribution from the IABCR to its work as appropriate.