

**UNITED NATIONS EDUCATIONAL, SCIENTIFIC AND CULTURAL  
ORGANIZATION**

Man and the Biosphere (MAB) Programme and the World Network of Biosphere Reserves  
(WNBR)

**First Consultation between the Informal Support Group (ISG) for the implementation of  
the Madrid Action Plan (MAP) and the Secretariat of the MAB Programme**

UNESCO Headquarters, Paris, Room XVI (Bonvin Building)  
16 July 2008; 15:00 - 17:30

<http://www.unesco.org/mab/icc/ISG/home.shtml>

**REPORT**

1. The meeting was opened by Mr Ishwaran, the Secretary of the Man and the Biosphere (MAB) Programme. The objective of the meeting was to discuss specific items related to possible updates of the key documents guiding the work of the MAB Programme and its World Network of Biosphere Reserves (WNBR) in light of the implementation of the Madrid Action Plan (MAP). .
2. After the adoption of the agenda, Mr Ishwaran introduced the results of work undertaken by the MAB Secretariat since 22 April 2008 and proposals for a work plan of consultation with the ISG during 2008-2009 (Document SC-08/ISG.1/2). He informed the ISG about the Secretariat's preliminary analysis of statutory and other documents of importance to the MAB Programme and the WNBR.
3. Mr Ishwaran briefly highlighted the key issues that have arisen from the Secretariat's efforts to update the above mentioned documents in light of the implementation of the MAP:
  - a) The absence of Statutes for the MAB Programme;
  - b) The absence of specific rules of procedures for the MAB Bureau;
  - c) Possible need for specific rules governing speaking rights of Members and Observers during the MAB ICC meetings;
  - d) Need for updating specific sections of the Statutes of the IACBR;
  - e) Need for updating, or rethinking the Guidelines for establishing the MAB National Committees to promote co-operation and co-ordination of all MAB and biosphere reserve stakeholders at national level in line with the targets set by the MAP;
  - f) Need for more information from the Member States on the Implementation of the Seville Strategy and the Statutory Framework for the WNBR to identify possible updates of these documents.

4. The subsequent discussion of the ISG can be summarized as follows:
  - Statutes of the MAB Programme – there was a general agreement that there is no need to develop legally binding statutes. However, the Delegates concurred that there is need to create an updated coherent framework document for the Programme and/or a “MAB Mission Statement” highlighting the background of the Programme; clearly identifying its present scope, goals and objectives; as well as its relationships with the WNBR, taking into account new and emerging challenges and the specificity of the MAB Programme and UNESCO as a whole. Once approved by the MAB-ICC, such document might also be proposed for adoption by UNESCO’s General Conference.
  - Statutes of the MAB-ICC and Rules of procedures – the Delegates stressed the importance of application of the already existing rules and highlighted the need for a comparative analysis of working methods of different Intergovernmental Scientific Programmes (ISPs), namely MAB, IHP and MOST.
  - Statutory Framework of the WNBR – the Delegates agreed that any adaptation and updating that might be needed would be best done after the responses from Member States to the questionnaire on the implementation of the Seville Strategy and the Statutory Framework of the WNBR.
  - Delegates agreed that in its efforts to update the relevant documents in light of the implementation of the MAP, the Secretariat needs to work in close collaboration with the legal advisors (LA) of UNESCO so as to ensure the conformity with the rules and regulations of the Organization.
  - Several Delegates noted that the visibility of the MAB Programme and its WNBR as well as the involvement of the countries might be significantly increased and strengthened if the MAB-ICC met more regularly (once a year, instead of once every two years) and took decisions collectively, thus no longer through its Bureau, on the designations as biosphere reserves and the periodic reviews of biosphere reserves designated for a period of over ten (10) years.
  
5. The Delegates also highlighted the importance of a) sharing information, experiences and best practices between individual biosphere reserves; b) reinforcing the relationships between scientists working on-ground and biosphere reserve managers; c) improving the relationships between MAB National Committees, National Commissions for UNESCO and individual biosphere reserves. In this context, the regional networks and the MAB National Committees have a fundamental role to play and this role should be highlighted in the Guidelines for establishing the MAB National Committees.
  
6. Finally, the Delegates stressed the need to increase the use of French language on the MABNet and other WebPages of the Natural Sciences Sector.
  
7. Further to its discussions, the ISG requested the Secretariat to:
  - a) Make available on the MABNet the current versions of all the statutory and other documents relevant to the work of the MAB Programme and the WNBR for comments by the ISG.
  - b) Prepare a draft coherent framework document for the MAB Programme and/or a “MAB Mission Statement” in line with the discussions of the ISG.
  - c) Analyze in comparative manner working methods of the MAB Programme and other ISPs, namely IHP and MOST, and also IOC.
  - d) Prepare draft updated versions of the statutory documents where needed in close collaboration with legal advisors of UNESCO.

- e) Send the above-mentioned documents to the delegates of the ISG for electronic consultation ahead of the next consultation foreseen for November 2008; it was noted that in the interim period up to the next meeting, electronic consultations must be pursued as appropriate.
  - f) Invite the participation of an LA representative at the meetings and in the preparation of updated documents.
  - g) Send circular letters to MAB National Committees highlighting *inter alia* the importance of information sharing and relationships between MAB National Committees and National Commissions for UNESCO.
8. The next meeting of the ISG was scheduled for November 2008.