

UNITED NATIONS EDUCATIONAL, SCIENTIFIC AND CULTURAL ORGANIZATION

International Coordinating Council of the Man and the Biosphere (MAB) Programme
Twenty-seventh session

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Item 17 of the Provisional Agenda: PROPOSITION FOR DEVELOPING BIOSPHERE RESERVES OPERATIONAL OR APPLICATION GUIDELINES FOR THE MAB PROGRAMME AND ITS WORLD NETWORK OF BIOSPHERE RESERVES (WNBR)

1. The MAB Programme and the WNBR are planned, financed and implemented within the frameworks of UNESCO Mid-term Strategy (C/4) and biennium workplans (C/5s), benefiting the overall programme guidance of the Seville Strategy and the Statutory Framework of the World Network of Biosphere Reserves. Under this overall provision, MAB and WNBR also develop specific strategies and action plans to enhance programme implementation for a specific period of time, such as the Madrid Action Plan (2008-2013) and the forthcoming MAB strategy (2015-2025) and its related Action Plan (2016-2025).
2. The Seville Strategy sets MAB's vision for Biosphere Reserve development in the twenty-first century with concept and philosophy, strategic goals and objectives as how the MAB Programme and Biosphere Reserves should function, whereas the Statutory Framework provides clear institutional and legal definitions on Biosphere Reserves, selection criteria, functions, designation procedures, publicity, participation, networking, periodic review and the Secretariat. These two instruments, established by UNESCO at its 28th Session of General Conference in 1995 are long-term and essential building blocks for MAB and WNBR.
3. With continued growth in number of Biosphere Reserves, the greatly enriched site practices and diversity in conservation and development context, new and technical challenges encountered in the MAB and WNBR applications, it becomes imperative that *a technical manual or a set of application guidelines* be developed for the MAB Programme and its World Network of Biosphere Reserves (WNBR). Examples of the needs, among others, can be seen through various questions about the Biosphere Reserve zonation during the debates at recent MAB ICC sessions, concerns over infrastructure development through or near certain Biosphere Reserves, transboundary conservation cooperation and how to best integrate the biodiversity conservation with cultural diversity protection and promotion.
4. The initial discussions with the members of the International Advisory Committee for Biosphere Reserves (IACBR) and countries have confirmed the necessity for such application guidelines. It is noted that such instruments as operational guidelines are common in the intergovernmental programmes, conventions and networks that are cooperating with MAB, including e.g. World Heritage Convention and Ramsar Convention.
5. It is stressed that the proposed operational or application guidelines will be complementary tools to the Seville Strategy and Statutory Framework. It will be neither altering the fundamental concepts and definitions about MAB and WNBR in anyway, nor limiting the flexibility, creativity or the spirit of cooperation of the MAB Programme and WNBR. It would facilitate the Member States, the governing bodies of MAB (MAB ICC and MAB Bureau), IACBR and the Secretariat to respond more

appropriately to the various practical challenges and technical questions being encountered in the implementation of the Seville Strategy and the Statutory Framework.

6. The proposed application guidelines will be a living MAB document, standing for and subject to further additions and continued adjustment, revisions and changes by the decisions of MAB ICC. Examples of possible items of technical guidelines may include:

- How to best apply Biosphere Reserve zonation schemes under different ecological and socio-economic and cultural contexts, taking into legal and institutional settings;
- Specific guidelines on cluster and serial sites identification and designations;
- Specific guidelines for legal recognition of biosphere reserves at national level;
- Guidelines/recommendations in the development of thematic and regional networks;
- The use of logos of UNESCO, MAB and sites and the brands with cooperative partners;
- Biosphere Reserve documentation archiving, data management including specifications on maps as well as partnership with other global biodiversity related information facilities;
- Ways to handle local products and services generated from respective Biosphere Reserves;
- Integrated guidelines and policies regarding transboundary Biosphere Reserve development on the basis of MAB policies and practices;
- Biosphere Reserve visibility and use of social media tools and platforms;
- MAB and WNBR publications;
- Compilation of all forms of nominations and reporting for Biosphere Reserves.

7. The MAB ICC is invited to decide if the operational or application guidelines for the MAB Programme and the WNBR should be developed, and if so, to provide specific guidance for it's the follow up action.