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

**UNESCO Headquarters, Paris, Room XII (Fontenoy Building)**  
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**Item 6 of the Provisional Agenda: REPORT BY THE SECRETARY OF THE MAB PROGRAMME**

Since the 26<sup>th</sup> session of the MAB International Coordinating Council (MAB-ICC), MAB has seen many new developments at the national, regional and international levels. This report provides 27<sup>th</sup> session of MAB-ICC with an update on these developments by following sections:

- I. Overall situation of the MAB Programme.
- II. Implementation of the main decisions of the last session of MAB-ICC.
- III. Highlights of MAB networks, actions, communications and partnerships.
- IV. New challenges and opportunities.

**I. Overall situation of the MAB Programme**

1. The MAB Programme within 37C/5<sup>1</sup> is placed to implement one of the six **Main Lines of Actions (MLAs)** under the Natural Sciences, namely 'Strengthening the roles of ecological sciences and biosphere reserves' with the specific **Expected Result** entitled 'Use of biosphere reserves as learning places for equitable and sustainable development and for climate change mitigation and adaptation strengthened, and the ecological and biodiversity sciences reinforced'. Despite the prevailing financial situation of the Organization, the governing bodies of UNESCO have attached a middle high priority to MAB and authorized ecological sciences and MAB Programme around 79% of the total Regular Budget proposed, thus ensuring the basis for the implementation of the MAB Programme.

2. The requests from the Member States remain strong to participate in the World Network of Biosphere Reserves. The MAB-ICC may recall that in June 2014, 13 new sites were added to WNBR, making a total of 631 biosphere reserves in 119 countries including 14 transboundary sites. Data indicates that WNBR has now covered approx. 10,180,000 km<sup>2</sup> of terrestrial, coastal and marine ecosystems of the world, where ecosystem functions and services of great significance are provided, and national and local communities are engaged for common goals and actions for sustainable development. By the 30 September 2014, there were 26 new nomination proposals (including 2 transboundary and 8 re-submissions) to be examined and decided by the current session of MAB-ICC.

3. The quality of MAB and WNBR has been enhanced by the continued implementation of the periodic review process, in particular the implementation of the 'Exit Strategy' for WNBR. The completion of IOS' evaluation of Madrid Action of Biosphere Reserves (2008-2013) has ensured institutional verification and transparency of MAB and WNBR's accountability.

<sup>1</sup> <http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0022/002268/226841e.pdf>

4. A broad-based and inclusive consultation and drafting process for the preparation of the MAB Strategy 2015-2025 has advanced well, with the draft will be presented at the current session of MAB-ICC. The preparation of the new WNBR Action Plan (the post-Madrid Action Plan) will start in 2015.

5. Clearly, the current financial and human resource situation in UNESCO has limited the benefits from and delivery of MAB and the WNBR, particularly in terms of development of new research and capacity building projects for mountain ecosystems and arid/semi-arid zones, as well in the provision of technical training, outreach and communication. One remedial measure to address the shortage of staff is to mobilize Member States to provide professional secondments and JPO (junior professional officer) positions to the MAB Secretariat and to the related UNESCO field offices.

6. At the same time, new progress has been made in the establishment of new partnerships and fundraising, for example the commencement of a FIT project in coastal zones in Latin America (\$1.05 million), the approval by Africa Development Bank (AfDB) for cooperation in Lake Chad in Africa (over \$4.5 million) and approx. \$1.8 from UNESCO Field Offices for different national and regional for MAB activities. A much larger portfolio of funding in support of MAB and WNBR work is provided by Member States through their respective ODA and south-south cooperation modalities. For example, KfW of Germany provided approx. 50 million euro in 2013 for different biosphere reserves in Africa, Asia and Latin America through bilateral cooperation.---

7. Information sharing and timely reporting to Member States has been continued. In addition to the information on MAB provided to the governing bodies of UNESCO, the MAB Secretariat also provided a report to the MAB International Support Group (ISG) in March 2015 about the programme's achievements and challenges, maintained updated on-line information services, as well as distributed the MAB leaflet and a new World Network of Biosphere Reserves (WNBR) map.

8. MAB continues to be associated with major international processes, providing input towards UNESCO's overall contributions to CBD, IPBES, UNCCD, UNFCCC, Future Earth, the preparation of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG), as well as the UN Secretary General's Science Advisory Board (SAB). The work of MAB – in particular the relevance and added value of the WNBR - contributed to all these input and interventions.

9. The 21<sup>st</sup> session of the Conference of the Parties (COP21) to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) will be held in Paris from 30 November to 11 December 2015. UNESCO is organizing and hosting a large number of events and initiatives leading up to and during COP21, several in cooperation with France as the host country of COP21 (a full list of events and initiatives is available at: <https://en.unesco.org/themes/cop21>). The MAB Secretariat plays an active role in UNESCO's preparation leading up to COP21, and is seeks to ensure that biosphere reserves and WNBR are referred to at key events and in exhibits, such as the joint MAB-IHP exhibit on mountains and climate change. In this context, MAB will build on the outcomes of the 2011 "For life, for the future" Conference on Biosphere Reserves and Climate Change, notably the Dresden Declaration.

10. The MAB Programme is highly relevant to the needs of the Member States and contributes significantly toward UNESCO's Overarching Strategic Objective of Promoting International Scientific Cooperation on Critical Challenges to Sustainable development. MAB and WNBR constitute a central pillar in UNESCO's programmes for sustainable development and play **two vital connecting roles**, namely: a) to connect multi-science disciplines with the new global development agenda, and b) to connect international goals and targets to the concrete, current and diverse development contexts at the globally distributed sites of the WNBR.

## II. Implementation of the main decisions adopted at the 26th session of MAB-ICC

11. MAB-ICC at its last session made series of decisions and recommendations. The following constitutes a brief update on actions taken towards their implementation.

11.1 The calendar of International Advisory Committee for Biosphere Reserves (IACBR) meeting was advanced to the first week of February in order to enable the MAB Bureau sufficient time to examine the Biosphere Reserve dossiers and IACBR recommendations. The report of IACBR was put online by 31 March. The deadline for countries needing to provide additional information as per te IACBR recommendations was set for 30 April 2015. All additional information was put on-line to enable early review by the MAB Bureau.

11.2 New Biosphere Reserves designated in 2014 received UNESCO certificates, signed by the Director-General. Member States with new Biosphere Reserves organized national inauguration ceremonies. Many countries organized special meetings and workshops marking the successful completion of the Periodic Review reporting, and started preparing new management plans. Eight Biosphere Reserve nominations were re-submitted by Member States as a follow-up to MAB-ICC decisions.

11.3 Development of the MAB Strategy 2015-2025 and new WNBR Action Plan continued. In accordance with the decisions of the 26<sup>th</sup> MAB-ICC, the MAB Secretariat facilitated the deliberations of the MAB-ICC as well as the MAB Strategy Group and Roster of Experts towards the development of a MAB Strategy for 2015-2025.

11.4 The strategy development process was outlined in an information document presented to the 196<sup>th</sup> session of the UNESCO Executive Board in April 2015 (document 196 EX/4.INF.4). The Executive Board took note of the process with satisfaction, stressing the importance of MAB and the WNBR for addressing global sustainability concerns and objectives, notably the SDGs. At this MAB-ICC session, the Draft MAB Strategy (ref. SC-15/CONF.2267/7) will be presented for debate, and it is hoped that a consensus can be reached on its adoption. The timing of its adoption is critical, given that the new 38C/5 will be discussed at the coming 38<sup>th</sup> session of the General Conference in October-November 2015.

11.5 The Secretary expresses his great appreciation to all Member States for their rich contributions, as well as to the MAB Strategy Group - consisting of the MAB Bureau and six experts nominated by Member States - which in consultation with the Roster of Experts spared no efforts in providing the MAB-ICC with a coherent and forward-looking draft strategy text.

11.6 In parallel to drafting the new MAB Strategy, the MAB Strategy Group also started to compile inputs for the new MAB Action Plan. The current MAB-ICC session will take stock of the progress made regarding the compilation of the zero preliminary **draft MAB Action Plan**, presented in the format of an information document. The Action Plan will be developed in view of its expected adoption at the MAB-ICC in Lima next year.

11.7 Implementation of the Exit Strategy continued during last 12 months, and progress will be reported under item 8 of the Agenda (ref. SC-15/CONF.227/7). The document reports on the progress made and the challenges encountered. While noting the significant progress made in the implementation of the Exit Strategy, the Secretary is of the opinion that MAB ICC would need to a) revisit the time framework of the Exit Strategy, b) review the evaluation methodologies and c) respond to the growing requests from Member States for technical support and for additional time to make the required improvements, especially concerning zonation.

11.8 Regarding the composition of the International Advisory Committee for Biosphere Reserves (IACBR), at the 26<sup>th</sup> session of MAB-ICC, "It was noted that they are invited to serve in their personal capacity and are chosen to ensure geographical representation. It was suggested that members of the Advisory Committee should not represent their countries in the Council, and should certainly not be members of its Bureau". The Secretary reports that six members of IACBR have been renewed, selected by the Director-General in their personal capacity, none of whom are Members of the MAB Bureau. The issue of IACBR members being part of country

delegations to the Council will be further clarified in the discussion regarding the programme governance mechanism.

11.9 Also at the 26<sup>th</sup> session of MAB-ICC, “It was proposed that the criteria by which the Advisory Committee makes its decisions be available on the MAB website so that all Biosphere Reserves and National Committees clearly understand the processes used to assess proposals and periodic reviews.” The Secretary reports that a) the criteria are the exactly same as are provided in the Statutory Framework of the World Network of Biosphere Reserves which is available from the UNESCO MAB website, and b) the specific application of the criteria by the IACBR in their evaluation work will be addressed and formulated through the suggested Biosphere Reserve Application Guideline (ref C-15/CONF.227/16).

11.10 Progress has also been made in terms of biosphere reserve documentation management. To protect historical documents and to comply with UNESCO’s overall open access policy - as well as taking into account the space limitations resulting from the relocation of MAB Secretariat to the Fontenoy Building - all existing nomination files and related information on the Biosphere Reserve nominated during the 1976 and 1977 (concerning 116 sites) have been transferred to the UNESCO Archive, to be made available as open access resources. A unique six character identification code has been defined for each Biosphere Reserve – consisting of a three character country ISO Code plus three letters from the BR name. This archiving work will continue after the Council, with the MAB Secretariat retaining BR dossiers from the ten most recent years.

11.11 Regarding the audit of MAB programme governance, the Secretariat provided all technical support and facilitation required to the External Auditors and to MAB Bureau members. A document on the governance issue drawing on the interim report of the External Auditors is provided to this Council.

### **III. Highlights of MAB networks, actions and partnerships**

#### ***Highlights of MAB Network meetings***

12. During the last 12 months, despite the continued constraints on the regular budget in UNESCO, most MAB thematic and regional networks continued their cooperation, often with additional support from national committees and partners. The following list of MAB meetings (in chronological order) provide some examples:

- 4<sup>th</sup> Meeting of the Global Network of Island and Coastal Biosphere Reserves, in the Palawan Biosphere Reserve, Philippines from 16 to 21 June 2014.
- NORDMAB network meeting, Turku, Finland, from 30 September to 4 October 2014
- Technical Meeting of Australian Biosphere Reserves and Representatives of the World Network of Island and Coastal Biosphere Reserves, Noosa Australia, from 15 to 18 November 2014
- Workshop on Capacity Development Session on climate change in island and coastal Biosphere Reserves within the the IUCN World Parks Congress 2014 in Sydney, from 12–19 November 2014)
- 6<sup>th</sup> South and Central Asia MAB Network (SACAM) meeting in Islamabad, Islamic Republic of Pakistan from 3 to 5 December, 2014
- 8<sup>th</sup> South East Asia Biosphere Reserves Network (SeaBRnet) Meeting, in Siem Reap, Cambodia, on 15 December and the Asia Pacific Workshop on Strengthening Capacity for Management of Biosphere Reserves and Protected Areas, in Siem Reap, Cambodia, from 18-19 December 2014.

- Biosphere Reserves as tools for Landscape Governance organized in Windhoek, Namibia, from 1 to 5 December by Namibian National Commission for UNESCO, the German Federal Agency for the Environment (BfN) and the IUCN.
- AfriMAB Southern Africa sub-regional workshop on Biosphere Reserves, in Kruger to Canyon Biosphere Reserve, Mpumalanga province, South Africa from 17 to 18 March 2015, organized by South Africa MAB National Committee in cooperation with UNESCO.
- 5<sup>th</sup> Meeting of the World Network of Island and Coastal Biosphere Reserves, Attard, Malta, from 24 to 26 March 2015.
- MAB workshop 'Biosphere reserves, an opportunity to promote differentiated products and services' in Lima from 11 to 13 March 2015, by the Peruvian National Service of Protected Natural Areas (SERNANP) and GIZ and with the support of the Spain (OAPN).
- International Seminar Biosphere Reserves, Biodiversity Conservation and Sustainable Development, Foz de Iguaçu, Brazil, from 22 to 25 April 2015
- Environment Experts and Biosphere Managers Consultation Meeting on Challenges of Biosphere Reserves in the Arab Region, Agadir, Morocco from 25 to 27 April 2015 by UNESCO Cairo Office.
- EuroMAB 2015 'Biosphere Reserves: from heritage to sustainable innovation', Haapsalu, Estonia, from 19 to 23 May 2015.
- 6<sup>th</sup> EABRN International Training Workshop on "Sustainable Management of Biosphere Reserves", Wudalianchi Biosphere Reserve, Heilongjiang Province, China, from 20 to 30 May 2015.
- International Meeting on Transboundary Biosphere Reserves in Europe in Château de Liebfrauenberg, France, from 3 to 5 June 2015.

13. In addition to these meetings and events, some MAB National Committees and the Secretariat have participated in major MAB-related international conferences including - for example - the 3<sup>rd</sup> meeting of the Intergovernmental Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services (IPBES-3), 12-17 January 2015 in Bonn, Germany; 3<sup>rd</sup> UN Conference on Small Islands Developing States in September 2014 in Apia, Samoa; COP-12 of CBD from 6 - 17 October 2014 in Pyeongchang, Republic of Korea; and IUCN Worlds Parks Congress during 12-19 November 2014 in Sydney, Australia.

14. Many more national meetings and workshops are not covered by MAB's information service or by MAB-ICC reporting. It is necessary to further improve MAB's information service in order to ensure that all MAB meetings at national and local level - and the experience, knowledge and ideas they generate - can be shared with the MAB Programme and WNBR. This issue was raised during the last MAB Council and will be further addressed under the items relating to the MAB Strategy 2015-2025.

### ***Highlights of MAB actions and project activities***

15. The UNESCO-Sultan Qaboos Prize for Environmental Preservation. Managed by the MAB Secretariat, the call for nominations for the 2015 UNESCO-Sultan Qaboos Prize for Environmental Preservation was issued earlier this year with a deadline set for 15 June 2015. The laureate of this prestigious Prize will be announced at a prize ceremony held during the World Science Forum, Budapest, Hungary on 4 November 2015, with a UNESCO Prize diploma and a check for USD 70,000.

16. The “Botanists of the twenty-first century: Roles, challenges and opportunities” conference held at UNESCO from 22 to 25 September 2014 provided a platform for 300 international participants to identify the issues and challenges facing botany today and to envisage future perspectives. The declaration of the meeting was shared as an information document during the 12<sup>th</sup> Conference of the Parties to the Convention for Biological Diversity in Pyeongchang, R. Korea in November 2014, in consideration of its relevance to the implementation of the Strategic Plan for Biodiversity (2011-2020) and its Aichi Targets.

17. Participation in EXPO 2015. As a member of the UN system under the banner “*The Zero Hunger Challenge. United for a Sustainable World*”, UNESCO, through its Office in Venice, prepared a set of activities and events in and around Venice and other Italian UNESCO sites. In particular, the “**Behind Food Sustainability**” exhibition - which was inaugurated in Venice on the 5<sup>th</sup> of May 2015 and which will be replicated in at least five other locations (Biosphere Reserves) in Italy - brings together experiences from UNESCO networks (World Heritage sites, Biosphere Reserves and elements of the Intangible Cultural Heritage) viewed as examples of food sustainability that can yield valuable lessons for the future. The exhibition includes five main thematic areas, each focusing on a particular sustainability challenge: Managing Water; Looking after the Land; Balancing the Food Economy; Protecting diversity; and Fostering participation.

18. **ERAIFT** (Regional Post-Graduate Training School on Integrated Management of Tropical Forest and Lands), a higher and university education establishment of the Democratic Republic of the Congo and a flagship regional project of MAB over last 16 years in capacity building in Africa, has initiated the process of becoming a category II center under the auspices of UNESCO. The proposal and the results of the related feasibility study assisted by MAB Secretariat, will be presented to the 197<sup>th</sup> session of the Executive Board.

19. Synthesis of Best Practices in Asia and the Pacific. With support from the Japanese Funds-in-Trust, the UNESCO Office in Jakarta through its BREEES programme, have been carrying out three studies since 2014, including, a) a collaborative study with MAB Vietnam and Cat Ba Biosphere Reserves on the use of social capital as an underlying operating system with the four pillars of Biosphere Reserve: public participation, sustainable public procurement, social investment and social/community enterprise; b) a study on Best Practices and Management Experiences in Ecotourism: Generating Alternative Livelihoods within the Palawan Biosphere Reserve, Philippines; and c) a series of interactive case studies on Experiences of Biosphere Reserves as Learning Centres for Environmental and Human Adaptability to Climate Change, which will be presented as audio-visual documentaries for online dissemination. The documentaries will include narratives that draw on the experiences of the local community, advice from BR managers and outcomes from series of local projects in Noosa, Great Sandy and the Mornington Peninsula and Western Port Biosphere Reserves of Australia.

20. *The Assises du Vivant 2015 - Biodiversity and Climate Change in Interaction: Creating new life possibilities* is the title of the 3<sup>rd</sup> edition of the “Assises” conferences, held at UNESCO Headquarters on 9 and 10 February. The event was held in preparation for the Paris Climate Conference (COP21) and is organized at the initiative of UNESCO and two French nongovernmental organizations, Association Humanité et biodiversité and the Institut Inspire. The debates, based on scientific observation and field work, focused on three themes: Rethinking conservation: towards “no regrets” strategies; Developing ecological solidarity and environmental justice: teaming up with the rest of the living world; and Doing business differently: articulating performance and resilience

21. Supporting EuroMAB communication and branding efforts to address issues linked to visibility, branding and communication of the MAB programme and the WNBR through the expertise of a company name “WITHIN people”. Four pilot biosphere reserves in the EuroMAB region have participated in this initiative. The results of workshops held in the four pilot sites and at the EuroMAB meeting in Estonia, 18-22 May 2015, will be presented at this Council (ref. SC-15/CONF.227/6). This item is directly linked to the on-going discussion in the Executive Board on

“Possible ways to protect and strengthen brand recognition of biosphere reserves, World Heritage properties, and proposed UNESCO Global Geoparks » and the MAB future Strategy and Action Plan.

22. The No plastic - a small gesture in our hands initiative was reported at the last Council session as an awareness and mobilization campaign project supported by the MAB programme, the Spanish Ministry for Agriculture, Food and the Environment, and the Island of Principe (Sao Tomé and Principe), with the objective of reducing plastic waste and promote access to drinking water. After a year-long campaign, a total of 200,000 plastic bottles were removed, thirteen safe water fountains were established, and 6,000 ‘Principe Biosphere Bottles’ were distributed among the local population.

23. Major MAB activities initiated in 2013-2014, such as transboundary cooperation in Africa including Lake Chad, the Green Economy in Africa Biosphere Reserves (GEBR) and the RENFORUS Initiative - Renewable Energy Futures for UNESCO Sites - continued their implementation.

### ***Highlight on MAB communication, publications and outreach***

24. The main items are listed below:

- The 2014-2015 map of the World Network of Biosphere Reserves shows the worldwide distribution of 631 biosphere reserves located in 119 countries, including 14 transboundary/transcontinental sites. Available in English, French, Spanish, and German, the world map was prepared by MAB with the generous support of the German National Commission for UNESCO.
- A MAB programme Leaflet was published in the English, French and Spanish, explaining the Programme’s key concepts, WNBR, main MAB activities, different networks and partnerships, as well capacity building efforts.
- The MAB Facebook page is fed with postings two or three times daily with new information, pictures and videos about activities related to biosphere reserves and the MAB programme, and is becoming a popular social media outlet for MAB.
- The exhibition 'Climate change impacts on mountain regions of the world'. Funded by the Flemish Government of Belgium and using satellite images from JAXA, ESA, USGS, MAB and IHP, the exhibition was shown in Lima, Peru, at the UNFCCC COP20 in December 2015.
- Publication of the first interim report on the project on the Impact of Climate Change on Island and Coastal Area Biosphere Reserves by UNESCO and the Island of Jeju Biosphere Reserve in September 2014. The report was presented in November 2014 at the IUCN Worlds Parks Congress in Sydney, Australia.
- Publication of the policy brief 'Drylands - Sustaining Livelihoods and Conserving Ecosystem Services' based on the results of the second phase of its Sustainable Management of Marginal Drylands (SUMAMAD) project. The brief highlights the link between investing in drylands and improving incomes, noting that successful solutions to drylands management are those that are not only technical, but also inclusive of social, political, economic and cultural aspects.

### ***Highlights on MAB partnership***

25. Partnerships are vital for the MAB Programme and its WNBR. In a rapid changing world and dynamic international environment, MAB needs to consolidate its traditional partnership with scientific institutions and organizations on one hand, and on the other hand to explore vigorously

new partnerships with civil society organizations, local governments, development agencies and the private sector. Although MAB already has good cooperation with several other UNESCO programmes and entities, it should be possible to further strengthen and if necessary refocus our in-house collaboration in view of new and emerging frameworks, such as, for example, the SDGs, and the Global Action Programme on ESD. This is the reason why we will have a special Intersectoral/interprogramme Panel at this ICC session in order to identify and discuss cooperation opportunities within the Post 2015 Agenda.

26. The first MAB Category II Center on ‘Mediterranean Biosphere Reserves, Two Coastlines United by their Culture and Nature’ with Albertis Foundation of Spain continues its focus on scientific cooperation between the two shores and the biosphere reserves of the Mediterranean. An international meeting organized in cooperation with the Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Environment of Spain and its Autonomous Organism for National Parks (OAPN) will take place in June 2015 after the Council, and in October 2015. The next meeting of the IberoMAB Network will be hosted by this Centre.

27. GRASP continues its role as a strong partnership programme. Currently GRASP is engaged in a campaign to declare 9th September as UN Day for Great Apes, an initiative led by Sierra Leone. In December 2014, the apeAPP mobile phone application - which showcases GRASP partners and projects - has been named “Best Environmental Mobile Application” by the [2014 MobileWebAwards](#). The MobileWebAwards were created 18 years ago by the Web Marketing Association (WMA) to recognize the best web sites and mobile applications in 96 industries. GRASP is also involved in an advocacy activity with certain palm oil industries.

28. Funded by Procter & Gamble, the MAB Secretariat is undertaking a project in the Arganeraie BR in Morocco in close cooperation with the UNESCO Rabat Office, MAB Morocco and several national partners aiming at enhancing the protection and sustainable use of the endemic Argan trees that play an extraordinary important environmental, socio-economic and cultural role - as well as producing an oil of high nutritional, gastronomic and cosmetic value. A seminar on the development of an Action Plan on promoting the sustainable use of renewable energy in the Arganeraie BR as a means to reduce the pressure on the forest for fuelwood consumption - and to promote sustainable development and climate change mitigation - was successfully held in Marrakech, Morocco, in March this year.

29. Funded by the Chic Group, China, the MAB Secretariat together with the UNESCO Beijing Office is implementing the ‘Biosphere Integrated Rural Urbanization Programme (BIRUP)’ that promotes green economies based on sustainable agriculture in urbanized rural villages in-line with the UNESCO MAB Biosphere Reserve concept. UNESCO participated in the CEIBS-UNESCO-CHIC 4th International China Agri-Business Forum in May 2015 in Beijing and will organize a MAB-BIRUP Workshop on Promoting Green Economies in Biosphere Reserves through Certification, Labelling and Branding Schemes, to be held in Shanghai, China, in early September 2015. As part of the project, a MAB-BIRUP Award Scheme for young MAB Scientists is being considered for launch in 2016, along with the organization of Education for Sustainable Development youth exchange camps in selected BRs.

30. A Funds-in-Trust partnership with the Elion Foundation of China will be formally launched in mid- 2015 with a focus on desertification education for rural communities in arid zones. Another initiative is under development in partnership with Nestlé in support of biodiversity and local green economy in Xishuanhbanna and Pu’er, Yunnan, China.

31. The existing partnership with World Heritage Convention, the Ramsar Convention and IUCN has become more active, triggered by a comparative study on international designated conservation areas encompassing on biosphere reserves, World Heritage sites, Ramsar sites and Global Geoparks. A special document on the IUCN project “Improving the integrated management system of protected areas with multiple international designation” will be presented to this Council.



#### **IV. Facing the challenges and moving forward**

32. MAB is relevant, active and vibrant. While MAB and its WNBR continue growing, delivering and performing, the challenges are also mounting. The last session of the Council addressed some of the challenges, but the improvement remains unsatisfactory.

33. The lack of resources for the MAB Programme remains. Much greater efforts must be made by all MAB members to raise resources - financial, technical and human. To sustain and further develop this intergovernmental scientific programme - with its vast scale and scope of work and its extensive world network of learning laboratories for biodiversity and sustainable development - and considering the SDG targets, not only will UNESCO's regular budget situation need to be revisited, but new funding sources must be found.

34. In view of MAB Strategy 2015-2025, a new, inspiring and forward-looking MAB research agenda must be established for the Post-2015 era. Such an agenda must lead MAB to address the most critical frontiers relating to biosphere sustainability, and must contribute to the mainstream development agenda of participating countries.

35. MAB must communicate much better in this era of information and interconnectivity. MAB needs to publish more and better, and explore new forms of communication, especially social media. Only with the support of the general public will the ideas, concepts and scientific advice arising from MAB make real impacts.

36. It has become clear that it is time to develop Application Guidelines for MAB and for the WNBR, by compiling, refining and creating new tools and instruments for the application of the Seville Strategy, Statutory Framework of WNBR, MAB Strategy 2015-2025 and new WNBR Action Plan.

37. In conclusion, the MAB Secretary is confident that - with the continued support and guidance from all Member States, in particular the MAB ICC, and with the successful elaboration of the new MAB strategy and the new WNBR Action Plan to be launched in Lima in 2016 - MAB will continue to be one of the most inspiring, energetic and productive UNESCO programmes, providing highly useful services to all Member States in support of their effort in sustainable development.

38. On behalf of the MAB Secretariat and all colleagues working both in Paris and the network of Field Offices. I express my sincere thanks to the MAB Council for its attention.