

UNITED NATIONS EDUCATIONAL, SCIENTIFIC AND CULTURAL ORGANIZATION

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

UNESCO Headquarters, Paris, Room XII (Fontenoy Building)
8 – 12 June 2015

Item 8 of the Provisional Agenda: UPDATE ON STATUS OF IMPLEMENTATION OF THE EXIT STRATEGY

1. In May 2013, the MAB international co-ordinating Council adopted the exit strategy. The purpose of the exit strategy is to improve the credibility and the quality of the World Network of Biosphere Reserves and to help Member States to set the required standards for their biosphere reserve to become fully functional and to conform to the criteria according to the Statutory Framework for Biosphere Reserves. The exit strategy concerned 262 sites in 74 countries (excluding sites designated in 2003), including 4 transboundary sites. Three withdrawals of sites by two countries (UK and Austria) took place since the adoption of the exit strategy.

2. The Secretariat implemented all the three steps of the exit strategy by sending the first letters in October 2013 for the sites which never submitted a periodic review nor replied to the recommendation received by the MAB ICC (Category A) as well as to the sites who needed to send a report by 30 September 2015 to demonstrate that the site meets the criteria (Category B). Several reminders were sent, including the 7 final reminders letters sent by the Chair of the MAB International Co-ordinating Council in November 2014 as described in Step 3.

3. According to the indications provided by the countries to the MAB Secretariat, if all countries concerned are sending their reports by the ultimate deadline of 30 September 2015 (Category A and B), the MAB Secretariat is expecting to receive a total amount of 185 periodic review reports, to be examined by the Advisory Committee at its next session for recommendations to the 28th session of the MAB International co-ordinating Council. As regards follow-up recommendations, the figures for the 28th session can be estimated as similar to the number received over the last two sessions of the Advisory Committee (i.e. 30 to 50 follow-up recommendations).

4. Since the implementation of the periodic review process a total of 502 reports were examined by the Advisory Committee (461 periodic review reports examined by the MAB Council). Since the twenty first session of the Advisory committee held last February 2015, the Secretariat has already received an additional 25 periodic review reports (and one follow-up report) as a direct reply to the exit strategy The MAB Secretariat also expects in addition 41 periodic review reports from sites designated in 2003, 2004 and 2005. As to date, 18 countries have never submitted a periodic review report for any of their 37 sites and 8 countries have never submitted a periodic review for any of their site. **A total of 226 periodic review reports is thus expected to be examined by the Advisory Committee at its next session.**

5. Since the adoption of the exit strategy, the Advisory Committee made specific efforts that each recommendation state clearly if the site is or is not meeting the criteria of the Statutory Framework.

6. Several Member states have requested support from the MAB Secretariat, UNESCO Offices and regional Networks to assist them in the periodic review process and assistance has been provided through technical visits, meetings with Permanent Delegations and sending of model periodic review reports.

7. The MAB ICC is invited to comment on how to ensure adequate support to the requesting countries for which the decision indicates that the site is still not meeting the criteria before the end of the exit strategy (30th months after the start of the process, i.e. April 2016).

8. The MAB Council is invited to comment on the progress made as regards the implementation of the exit strategy, as well as to provide guidance on how the Advisory Committee could handle best the unprecedented number of periodic review reports and follow-up recommendations to be received by the MAB Secretariat by 30 September 2015.

9. The MAB Council is also invited to confirm procedures and timeline for countries and sites listed in the pending list (sites for which the recommendations indicates that it still do not meet the criteria) and for the sites which did not provide a report within the time frame of the exit strategy, despite the sending of the final reminder.