

**Main Conclusions and Recommendations of the Twenty-Third Session  
of the International Coordinating Council (ICC)  
of the Man and the Biosphere (MAB) Programme,  
Dresden (Germany)  
28 June – 1 July 2011**

This document contains a summary list of the main conclusions and recommendations contained in the final report of the 23<sup>rd</sup> Session of the MAB ICC. Kindly note that conclusions and recommendations specific to newly designated biosphere reserves and extensions to existing biosphere reserves are being communicated directly to concerned MAB National Committees.

1. The MAB Council welcomed and endorsed the Secretary's suggestion to earmark 3 November 2011 as the "MAB and Biosphere Reserve Day" to be observed at the occasion of the 36<sup>th</sup> session of the UNESCO General Conference which would feature exhibitions, films, presentations and food/beverages from biosphere reserves (paragraph 24).

2. A number of delegates stressed the importance of using biosphere reserves in the context of sustainable development. In this context (and with regard to Decision 35C/31 adopted at the 35<sup>th</sup> session of the General Conference in 2009, requesting the Director General of UNESCO to promote the visibility and recognition of MAB and WNBR as platforms for sustainable development within UNESCO and the broader UN system, and to report on the implementation of the Madrid Action Plan (MAP) for Biosphere Reserves (2008-2013) to be submitted to the 36<sup>th</sup> session of the UNESCO General Conference), the MAB Council decided to invite the UNESCO Executive Board and the General Conference to call upon Member States to consider investing appropriately in strengthening UNESCO National Commissions, MAB National Committees and Focal Points, and biosphere reserve authorities in order to improve implementation of MAP during 2011-2013 and linking those investments to the work of appropriate national and local sustainable development agencies (paragraph 25).

3. In order to underline the importance of national and local level initiatives in the implementation of MAB and WNBR initiatives, Mr Ishwaran referred to Annex 1 to the working document SC-11/CONF.202/8, which is intended to replace the earlier document on "Guidelines for the Establishment of MAB National Committees". The International Support Group (ISG) established by the 21<sup>st</sup> session of the MAB ICC in 2009 had recommended that the ICC does not consider Annex 1 of SC-11/CONF.202/8 as a statutory text. Instead, the ISG had suggested that the Member States be invited to review this document and to provide suggestions for its revision and finalization so as to enable the Member States to use the document as a guide to implement MAB and WNBR activities at the national level. The MAB Council adopted the recommendations of the ISG (paragraph 27).

4. [With regard to the mid-term evaluation of the Madrid Action Plan] ... many delegates felt that the MAP was an important tool to reconsider the zonation for biosphere reserves and to spell out the benefits of conserving biodiversity for a multitude of benefits, including economic and social ones. Some countries felt that the research function of biosphere reserves was not fully addressed by the replies provided on reaching specific targets and actions of the MAP in this regard. They suggested a stronger involvement of other UNESCO intergovernmental and international programmes, including the Programme on Management of Social Transformations (MOST), in biosphere reserve related studies and appealed to MAB National Committees and UNESCO National Commissions to ensure strong collaboration among the various scientific programmes in biosphere reserves (paragraph 42).

5. As MAB National Committees and UNESCO National Commissions have "responsibility for action" for the large majority of actions to be accomplished in the MAP, it is primarily at the national level that the success of the implementation of the MAP can be ensured. In this context MAB National Committees and UNESCO National Commissions were encouraged to play a stronger role as

resource bodies in reaching the objectives of the MAP, possibly also through the support of UNESCO and other UN partners, such as UNDP (paragraph 43).

6. The large majority of the MAB ICC members decided that an external evaluation on the accomplishments of the Madrid Action Plan be carried out towards the end of 2013/beginning of 2014, so that the results of the MAP can be submitted to the consideration of the MAB ICC at its session in 2014. Egypt suggested that the costs for the final evaluation of the MAP be covered through extra-budgetary resources and further suggested that also working groups within UNESCO (including with the help of UNESCO's Internal Oversight Service) carry out the final evaluation of MAP. The observer from the United Kingdom suggested that the MAB Secretariat allocate funding from its budget to cover the external evaluation costs (paragraph 44).

7. In line with the recommendations of the expert meeting [with regard to *support/study sites* for the MAB Programme], the Council reiterated that every attempt should be made so that all existing biosphere reserves meet the criteria of the Seville Strategy and the Statutory Framework in line with Madrid Action Plan by the end of 2013. Only for those sites that cannot meet the criteria further reflection should be given whether they can be moved into a separate category (such as, for example, practiced under the Ramsar Convention) and preferably within the MAB Programme and the World Network of Biosphere Reserves. With this in mind, the MAB ICC decided that the Advisory Committee for Biosphere Reserves in collaboration with the MAB Secretariat give in-depth thought to this issue and prepare draft selection criteria at its next meeting in early 2012, and submit the draft selection criteria to the MAB Council for its consideration at its 24<sup>th</sup> session in 2012 (paragraph 181).

8. [...] The ICC decided that the document entitled "Implementing the MAB Programme and Promoting Actions of the World Network of Biosphere Reserves (WNBR) at the National Level" is not of a statutory nature. It is intended to guide national level thinking and action to improve the implementation of the MAB Programme and the activities of the WNBR. The ICC adopted the document with a view to receiving country reports on its relevance and applicability at the 24<sup>th</sup> session of the Council in 2012 (paragraph 182).

9. The Council as per the recommendations of the ISG [International Support Group], decided to defer considerations on any amendments to the Statutory Framework of the World Network of Biosphere Reserves until the implementation of the Madrid Action Plan is completed in 2013 and an evaluation of its implementation is undertaken in 2014 (paragraph 183).

10. The Statutes of the International Advisory Committee for Biosphere Reserves and the proposed amendments that were derived from discussions of the ISG as presented in Annexes 2 and 3, respectively. All amendments, except for the question of the desirability of allowing observers from Member States to attend the meetings of the Advisory Committee (Article 3, paragraphs 4 and 5) were agreed upon by consensus by ICC Members. Concerning the other paragraphs, the majority of the ICC voted to keep paragraph 6 as it stands and to delete paragraph 7. In consequence the new Article 3 reads:

### **Article 3**

1. The Committee shall be composed of twelve members, serving in a personal capacity. The members shall be appointed by the Director-General, after consultation with the Member States and or the National Committees/focal points for the MAB Programme of the countries concerned.

2. The terms of office of members shall be four years. Terms of office of members may be renewed for one additional period of four years by the Director General. In event of death or resignation of a member of the Committee, the Director-General shall appoint a replacement for the remainder of the term.

3. The members of the Committee shall be selected for their scientific qualifications and for their experience in promoting and implementing the biosphere reserve concept. Special attention shall be given to gender balance. Membership of the Committee shall be in accordance with the principle of equitable geographical representation and take account of the bio-geographical diversity of the UNESCO Member States.

4. The Director-General may invite to sessions of the Committee, as consultant-observers, persons who by reason of their functions or knowledge can assist the work of the Committee. The Director-General may extend invitations to send observers to meetings of the Advisory Committee to:

- a) Organizations of the United Nations system with which UNESCO has not concluded mutual representation agreements;
- b) Intergovernmental organizations; and
- c) International non-governmental organizations, in accordance with Directives concerning UNESCO's relations with international non-governmental organizations.

The United Nations and other organizations of the United Nations system with which UNESCO has concluded mutual representation agreements may send representatives to meetings of the Committee (paragraph 184).

11. The Statutes of the MAB Programme and proposed amendments that were derived from discussions of the ISG are shown in Annexes 4 and 5 of document SC-11/CONF.202/8, respectively. All amendments except for the issue of the eligibility of Member States for re-election into the Council more than once (see Article 2, paragraph 4) were agreed upon by consensus of ICC Members (paragraph 185).

12. In Article II, paragraph 1, one change was included and the revised paragraph now reads as follows:

#### **Article II**

1. The Council shall be composed of thirty-four Member States of UNESCO, elected by the General Conference at its ordinary sessions, taking due account of equitable geographical distribution, of the need to ensure appropriate rotation, of the representativeness of these States from the viewpoint of ecology, biological diversity and cultural diversity in the regional groups of UNESCO, and contributions to sustainable development within the Programme on Man and the Biosphere (hereinafter the "MAB Programme") (paragraph 186).

13. Concerning Article II, paragraph 4, the majority of ICC Members decided to keep it in its original version. It read as follows:

4. Members of the Council are immediately eligible for re-election (paragraph 187).

14. The Council endorsed the ten winners for the 2011 MAB Young Scientists Award as selected by the MAB Bureau. The winners and the topics of their research studies are:

<b>Home country (research country)</b>	<b>Winner</b>	<b>Project title</b>
Russian Federation	Ms Maria PUKINSKAYA	The long-term dynamic of spruce forests after storm damage in the Central Forest State Nature Biosphere Reserve

Indonesia	Mr Aah Ahmad ALMULQU	Carbon stock estimation in dryland forest (case study in the Komodo National Park, East Nusa Tenggara)
Thailand	Ms Jariya SAKAYAROJ	Butt rot disease in mangrove forests in Thailand
Madagascar	Ms Herisoa RAZAKANIRINA	Ecomorphology and viability of mangroves in north-western Madagascar in the context of climate change
Bulgaria	Mr Iordan HRISTOV	Enhanced balanced relationship between humans and biosphere reserves in the Central Balkan National Park in Bulgaria
Argentina	Mr Raimundo Elias GOMEZ	Practices and local representations regarding the sustainability and conservation of protected areas in populations living in buffer zones of the Yaboti Biosphere Reserve
Belgium - RDC	Ms Elizabeth KEARSLEY	Study of leaf biomass in the MAB reserve of Yangambi in RDC
Mexico	Mr David PAZ-GARCIA	Status of the morphological and genetic diversity of coral reefs and their symbiots in three biosphere reserves from the Mexican Pacific
Colombia	Mr Juan Carlos SILVA TAMAYO	Holocene paleoclimatic reconstruction of the NW of South America : a multi proxy and multi archive approach
Costa Rica	Ms Laura RIBA- HERNANDEZ	Diversity and altitudinal variation of owls in secondary tropical forest of the South Pacific slope of Costa Rica, their relation with vegetation structure

(paragraph 189).

15. The Council also endorsed the selection by the MAB Bureau of the two winners for the Special MAB Young Scientists Awards supported by the Austrian MAB National Committee. The two winners are:

- Mr. Horacio SIROLI and Mr. Luciano IRIBARREN from Argentina for the study on “Strategy of sustainable production and environmental education for the conservation of native forests of the Delta del Parana Biosphere Reserve”, and
- Choe YONG MIN from the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea for the study on “Assessment of the eco-environmental changes in forest ecosystem by climate change in Mount Paektu biosphere reserve”.

(paragraph 190).

16. The MAB Secretariat recalled that the amount given to each winner of the MAB Young Scientists Award was up to a maximum of US\$ 5,000. Delegates pointed out that the relative value of this amount had diminished over time and should be increased to US\$ 10,000. In the light of the expected financial austerity for the next biennium in UNESCO’s budget, the Secretariat suggested that increasing individual awards would decrease the total number of awards to five per year. Hence, the Council decided to allocate ten awards per year with a maximum amount of US\$ 5,000 per award. The Secretariat also suggested that Member States may wish to follow the example of MAB-Austria which had provided funding for two additional MAB Young Scientists Awards in 2010 and 2011, respectively. A trust fund could be established at UNESCO into which contributions for this successful scheme

could be made. Delegates reacted very favorably to this suggestion and encouraged the Secretary to send letters to Member States inviting them to provide funding for this purpose. One delegate was of the opinion that the selection of a specific theme (e.g. regarding forestry in 2011 for the awards funded by MAB-Austria) should be avoided as it complicated the selection process of the award winners. Finally, delegates decided that the results of the MAB Young Scientists laureates should be published and their experiences widely shared, such as on the UNESCO MAB website and through the UNESCO regional offices (paragraph 191).

17. The Secretariat briefly introduced document SC-11/CONF.202/10 [Michel Batisse Award for Biosphere Reserve Management] and indicated that it had received 10 files from 10 countries. Eight files met the criteria for consideration. The Members of the International Advisory Committee for Biosphere Reserves recommended Mr Nizar Hani (Lebanon) for the 2011 Michel Batisse Award for his case study on the Shouf Biosphere Reserve. This recommendation was transmitted electronically to all Members of the Bureau of the MAB-ICC Bureau in April 2011 who have unanimously endorsed it. Mr Nizar Hani presented his case study to the 23<sup>rd</sup> session of the MAB ICC which was enthusiastically received by the delegates present at the meeting. The Council requested that the results of Mr Hani's work be widely publicised and marketed, and shared with other biosphere reserves, especially at the next AfriMAB meeting. The Chair awarded the certificate for the Michel Batisse Award to Mr. Hani from Lebanon (paragraph 192).

18. The Council [...] decided that the 24<sup>th</sup> session of the MAB ICC preferably should be held at UNESCO Headquarters, Paris (as had been decided before) shortly after the Rio+20 conference (such as in early July 2012) on dates that do not overlap with those of other relevant events and entrusted the MAB Secretariat to suggest, before end of August 2011, a set of appropriate dates for the 24<sup>th</sup> session of the MAB ICC in 2012 (paragraph 194).

19. The Delegate of India recalled the importance of the International Support Group (ISG) in terms of providing opportunities for Member States and the MAB Secretariat to discuss MAB matters more in-depth in-between the formal Council sessions. India, supported by Spain, said it would welcome Egypt as the Chair for the ISG to continue the work of the ISG in the future addressing in particular matters such as MAB contributions to Rio + 20 and others as appropriate (paragraph 195).

20. The Council decided to entrust the ISG [International Support Group] with discussing Rio+20 with the view of preparing recommendations on how MAB and the World Network of Biosphere Reserves could be best mobilized for the success of the conference and in its follow-up (paragraph 198).

21. The Council decided to include at its 24<sup>th</sup> session an agenda item on strengthening the roles of regional networks (paragraph 199).

22. Moreover, the Council decided that collaboration with other international relevant conventions, and related programmes in the field of biodiversity conservation be put on the agenda of the next MAB ICC (paragraph 200).

23. Seeking enhanced visibility for the MAB Programme and opportunities for partnership, exchanges of exposure and capacity-building, the delegate of India suggested that the Secretariat explore the possibilities and the modalities of twinning arrangements between biosphere reserves, and to encourage the establishment of such arrangements in consultation with countries willing to participate therein (paragraph 203).