

UNITED NATIONS EDUCATIONAL, SCIENTIFIC AND CULTURAL ORGANIZATION

Man and the Biosphere (MAB) Programme

First Meeting of the International Support Group (ISG) for the MAB Programme and the World Network of Biosphere Reserves

UNESCO Headquarters (Paris), Room XVI (Bonvin Building)
29 July 2009, 15:00 - 17:30

http://portal.unesco.org/science/en/ev.php-URL_ID=7084&URL_DO=DO_TOPIC&URL_SECTION=201.html

REPORT

1. Mr N. Ishwaran, Secretary of the MAB Programme, opened the meeting expressing his pleasure that Mr Henri Djombo, Minister of Forest Economy of Congo and Chair of the International Coordinating Council (ICC), was able to attend and preside over the meeting. Mr Djombo, in his capacity as Chair of the MAB-ICC then welcomed the Delegates and briefly explained the role of the ISG. He said that what was established as an Informal Support Group (ISG) by the Bureau of the MAB-ICC in April 2008 has now been set up as an International Support Group (ISG) which maintained the same acronym but is now a formal ad-hoc Committee of the MAB-ICC in accordance with the provisions of article V of the statutes and article V of the rules of procedure of the MAB-ICC.

2. The Chair stressed that the ISG is open to representatives of ICC Members as well as Observer Delegations and serves to facilitate the Secretariat in implementing the decisions of the Council. He emphasized the need for: a) more action for the implementation of the Madrid Action Plan (MAP) demonstrating the role of biosphere reserves as learning sites for sustainable development; b) more support for covering the financial needs of biosphere reserves, particularly in certain countries; and c) mobilizing the MAB National Committees.

2. The Chair recalled that the 21st session of the ICC which he himself could not attend due to his commitments in his own country was successfully convened in Jeju Island, Republic of Korea, from 25 to 29 May 2009 and thanked the authorities of the Republic of Korea and that of the Special Self-Governing Province of Jeju for their hospitality and efficiency. In particular he thanked Prof. Chong Il Choi who presided over the 21st session of the ICC in his absence. He noted that the Jeju Council session was the first ever session to have been convened in a biosphere reserve.

3. At the invitation of the Chair, Mr Ishwaran presented the report of the 21st session of the MAB-ICC (available in English and French on the MAB website at http://www.unesco.org/mab/doc/icc/2009/e_finalRep.pdf) section by section and highlighted the specific aspects of decisions and recommendations of the Council in each Section.

4. In Section VI of the ICC report, Mr Ishwaran highlighted that the new deadline for responding to the questionnaire on the assessment of the achievements of the Seville Strategy, was set at 30 September 2009. With regard to paragraph 18 on the establishment of the ISG he

underlined that the ISG does not take any decisions on behalf of the ICC but is mandated only to implement the decisions of the ICC in co-operation with the Secretariat and the Member States.

5. He drew attention to Section VI concerning the regional reports presented during the ICC session and invited the Delegates to contact the Secretariat with regard to questions and clarifications needed.

6. Sections VIII and IX related to new biosphere reserves and periodic reviews. Twenty-two new biosphere reserves were included in the World Network of Biosphere Reserves (WNBR) raising their total in the network to 553 in 107 countries. Only one site was not approved, namely the Pushchino area proposed by the Russian Federation which is entirely an urban area. The Council had recommended that the area be integrated into a nearby biosphere reserve that is already part of WNBR. The nomination of stand-alone urban areas as biosphere reserves is not recommended by the ICC. Four biosphere reserves were approved for extension, including one in Chile extended to 14 times its original size. Concerning the periodic review of biosphere reserves, many of the reserves do not meet the criteria of the Madrid Action Plan (MAP), and the ICC has requested the Secretariat to prepare a list of pre-Seville biosphere reserves that do not meet the Seville Strategy, Statutory Framework and MAP requirements and an assessment of which of the sites in that list have would have the potential to be redesigned to meet Seville and MAP requirements.

7. Sections X and XI referred to biosphere reserves as learning platforms and the presentations by the two winners of the 2009, Michel Batisse Award of their work on BR management. The interest of selected ICC Members to explore the possibility of submitting a draft resolution on biosphere reserves as learning places for sustainable development for consideration by the 35th session of the UNESCO General Conference scheduled to be convened at Headquarters (Paris) in October 2009 was noted.

8. Section XII provided the progress report on the review of the statutory documents of the MAB Programme. Delegates were informed that work on the reviews of the various statutory documents will continue in consultation with all Member States for possible adoption by the 36th session of the General Conference in 2011.

9. Sections XIII, XIV and XV concerned the future direction of MAB in the final text (Annex 4 of the report) entitled "MAB Programme for Sustainable Development", the mid-term evaluation of the MAP in 2010, and the Programming and Budget of MAB and WNBR activities, respectively for 2010-2011. The council requested the Secretariat to compare the 2004 and 2009 Regular Budget allocations for MAB and WNBR with increases in the total number and surface area of biosphere reserves included in the WNBR during that time interval and make that information available to all Council Members and Observer Delegations that attended the 21st session of the ICC in Jeju Island, Republic of Korea.

10. In Section XVI, relating to capacity-building, Mr Ishwaran noted that the Regional Post-graduate Training School on Integrated Management of Tropical Forests and Lands (ERAIFT) had obtained European Union funds for 2009-2013 and signed a Memorandum of Cooperation with University of Pará (Brazil) and The Indonesian Institute of Sciences (LIPI) for developing a network linking the Amazon, the Congo Basin and the Asian tropics. The Council also adopted revised criteria for the MAB Young Scientists Award scheme (Annex 5 of the Report); in this regard Mr Ishwaran informed the Delegates present that soon after the conclusion of the 21st session of the MAB-ICC in Jeju Island, Republic of Korea, the Austrian MAB National Committee had offered to support four (4) additional MAB Young Scientists Awards during 2010-2011 within the context of the International Year of Biodiversity in 2010.

11. In Section XVII on the UNESCO Strategy for Action on Climate Change, the establishment, under the auspices of the Republic of Korea and Spain, of a global network of island and coastal

biosphere reserves contributing to action on climate change and sustainable development was highlighted.

12. In Section XVIII on the 'Date and Venue' of the next Council session it was underlined that the council will meet every year and new biosphere reserves will be approved by the full Membership of the ICC and not merely in the presence of the members of the Bureau as it had been in the recent past. The 22nd session of the ICC will be held at UNESCO Headquarters in Paris. The year 2011 will mark the 40th anniversary of the MAB Programme and can be commemorated in conjunction with the 23rd session of the ICC.

13. The Delegate from Egypt recalled electronic communications between the Head of his country Delegation at the Council, Prof. Samir Ghabbour, and the Secretariat with regard to the wording of the phrases in paragraph 92 that read: "critical biogeographical regions, such as the Great Rift Valley in Africa" and enquired whether other ICC Members had responded to the request of the Secretariat for their views to be submitted before 31 July 2009. Mr Ishwaran informed the Delegate that only two countries had so far responded, one in favour of the proposal by Prof. Ghabbour and other wishing to retain the wording as it had been adopted by the 21st session of the Council. Mr Ishwaran informed the Delegates that while the Secretariat would inform ICC Members and Observer Delegations of the views of other Delegations as and when received it would be advisable to retain the current text until the next session of the Council in 2010 when this matter could be discussed in greater detail. The Delegate of Egypt noted the views of the Secretariat and requested that exchange of views on this matter be minuted as part of this report of the first ISG meeting following the conclusion of the 21st session of the MAB-ICC in Jeju Island, Republic of Korea on 29 May 2009.

14. Mr Henri Djombo, before closing the meeting, emphasized the role that the Members of MAB should play in helping the Secretariat to achieve the MAP, and highlighted the need to find financial resources. He also underlined the work that needs to be done to find new partners and establishing partnerships, such as the existing agreement in the Mayombe region between the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Angola to create a transboundary biosphere reserve (TBR) that could also include Congo. Some donors could be interested in making a joint effort to fund these initiatives, for example the United Kingdom and Norway, or France, Spain, and Japan. One of the roles of the ISG will be to become a lobbying group for the MAB Programme. It is necessary to reinforce capacities, create a calendar of activities, and engage in fundraising. The successful implementation of the MAP concerns the Secretariat and also the ISG. Spain supports very actively Latin America and the Caribbean region (to a sum of several million Euros), and it will be most welcome if other countries can be leaders in other regions of the world, for example in Anglophone or Francophone African countries. Mr Djombo reiterated the importance of identifying new partners and ensuring that projects add value for local communities and have guaranteed sustainability.

15. The Delegate from Gabon commented that in 1972 Gabon organized a task force of research experts. This and other experience of Gabon under MAB could enable Gabon to become a part of the transborder project for the Mayombe region that the President of the MAB-ICC referred to.

16. Mr Henri Djombo thanked Gabon for its suggestion. He recommended that it will be useful to explore the feasibility to find agreements with private companies for financing projects following the example of Total-Elf-financed production of the promotional environmental material in Gabon. In conclusion, he referred to the important role of the forest and oceans in climate change, and noted that MAB could eventually support reforestation in biosphere reserves using carbon credits while at the same time contributing to the recovery of water catchments and other critical ecosystems. He then declared the first meeting of the International Support Group of the MAB-ICC closed.

**First Meeting of the International Support Group (ISG) for the MAB Programme
and the World Network of Biosphere Reserves of UNESCO**

UNESCO Headquarters (Paris), Room XVI (Bonvin Building)
29 July 2009, 3.00 - 5.30 p.m.

LIST OF PARTICIPANTS

Name	Country or Section
Jose Luis Fernandez Valoni	Argentina
Franz Wirtenberger	Austria
Inna Yasilevskaya	Belarus
Françoise Medegan	Benin
Marguerite Yallou	Benin
Alexandre Brasil	Brazil
Andrey Christov	Bulgaria
Natasha Cayer	Canada
Alberto Bula	Colombia
François Maurice Essanzo	Congo
Germain Kombo	Congo
Henri Djombo	Congo
Mamina	Congo
Victorien Ubouangongo	Congo
Montserrat Vargas S.	Costa Rica
Angela Marquez	Dominican Republic
Alaa Moussa	Egypt
Henna-Kaya Syrjala	Finland
Joseph-Aime Meminghe	Gabon
Stefanie Wiesneth	Germany

Name	Country or Section
Vieira	Guinea-Bissau
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John Paul Oluach	Kenya
Milia Jabbour	Lebanon
Etienne Rajoel	Madagascar
Mohamed Zaini Abdul-Rahman	Malaysia
Barend Ter Haar	Netherlands
Katarzyna Banaszekiewicz	Poland
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Leonard Khoza	South Africa
Martin E. Hofmann	South Africa
Flavian Komba	Tanzania
Sanchai Wadwiang	Thailand
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Oleksander Maznychenko	Ukraine
Izon Hilary	United Kingdom
Agustina Camilli	Uruguay
Dawson Munjeri	Zimbabwe