

The 22nd Session of the International Co-ordination Council of the Man and the Biosphere (MAB) Programme
(31 May ~ 4 June 2010, UNESCO)

NATIONAL REPORT

Republic of Korea

The Republic of Korea (hereinafter ROK) has served as vice-chair of MAB-ICC for the last two years, and last year hosted the 21st Session of MAB-ICC in the Jeju Island Biosphere Reserve. The ROK would like to contribute to promoting the MAB programme at the national, regional, and global level.

The ROK has actively implemented the Madrid Action Plan (hereinafter MAP) since the 21st Session of MAB-ICC, by means of the following:

1. MAP 5 related: Enhanced cooperation between experts and practitioners in relevant key issues

The ROK has contributed to strengthening existing regional networks through participating in EABRN (East Asian Biosphere Reserves Network) and proposing a new thematic network. The Korean Ministry of Environment has continuously provided financial support for EABRN through Funds-in-Trust to UNESCO since 2004. Additionally, ROK took part in the 11th meeting of EABRN, which was held in the Wuyishan Biosphere Reserve (China) from 10 to 15 November 2009. The delegates from ROK, DPR Korea, China, Japan, Mongolia, Russia, UNESCO, and observers totaled approximately 100 people. In the meeting, participants discussed how to implement MAP and shared the MAB activities of each country. During the 21st Session of MAB-ICC, ROK and Spain, proposed the creation of a new thematic network, the Global Network of Island and Coastal Biosphere Reserves. It aims to contribute to action on climate change and sustainable development, especially in island and coastal areas. ROK and Spain will lead this world network in close cooperation with the MAB secretariat at UNESCO Headquarters.

2. MAP 6 related: Communication strategies for each biosphere reserve, integrated at the national and higher level

MAB National Committee of the Republic of Korea (hereinafter MAB-ROK) implemented a communication strategy based on the importance and benefits of biosphere reserves. MAB-ROK organized a workshop for managers of biosphere reserves to promote the activities of biosphere reserves in Korea in close cooperation with the Korean National Commission for UNESCO. The workshop was held in Seoul on 22 February 2010, with about 30 governmental officials, experts, and managers from biosphere reserves (Sorak, Jeju Island, Shinan Dadohae, and the proposed Gwangneung Forest reserve) in attendance. Managers of biosphere reserves shared their 2010 action plans and discussed how to improve the management of biosphere reserves.

3. MAP 7 related: Functional MAB National Committees in each country, managed in a manner assuring adequate representation of biosphere reserve coordinators and other key stakeholders

The regulations and structure of MAB-ROK were changed in 2009 to enhance MAB activities at the national level. Firstly, the number of chairman of MAB-ROK was increased from one to two, drawing one each from the central government and from MAB experts. This has helped to strengthen the commitment of the central government, especially the Ministry of Environment. Second, the number of MAB-ROK members was also increased from 15 to 20 members to encourage the participation of experts in the MAB programme. Third, the secretariat of MAB-ROK was moved from the Korean National Commission for UNESCO to the Korea National Park Service, which is affiliated with the Ministry of Environment and, as a national park management authority, has the expertise to conserve national park resources and to promote their sustainable use in Korea. With these changes, MAB activities in Korea have been and will be more successfully promoted in the cooperation between governmental officials, experts, managers of biosphere reserves, and other stakeholders in the future. The Korean National Commission for UNESCO will continuously support and develop regional and international cooperation.

4. MAP 10 related: Open and participatory procedures and processes in the designation, planning and implementation of biosphere reserves

The Shinan Dadohae Biosphere Reserves held a Management Council meeting at the Jeollanamdo Provincial Government Office on 3 July 2009. Twenty-six participants, including governmental officials, experts, environmental organizations, and the Korean National Commission for UNESCO, discussed the management plan of the Shinan Dadohae Biosphere Reserve. A workshop was also held in Shinan from 23 to 24 October 2009. Managers of biosphere reserves and representatives of the local community discussed the idea of “biosphere reserves and sustainable development” for the Shinan Dadohae Biosphere Reserve.

5. MAP 11 related: Enhanced legal recognition of biosphere reserves where appropriate

With the recognition that the national legislation is necessary to support biosphere reserves, ROK has been making efforts to include biosphere reserves in national legislation. The Ministry of Environment and MAB-ROK is now examining several examples, such as World Heritage sites and the Ramsar Wetlands, which were already reflected in national law. It is expected that the financial support for biosphere reserves will be included in national legislation in the near future.

6. MAP 17 related: Trained biosphere reserve managers and other relevant stakeholders

For the capacity-building of biosphere reserve managers, we actively participated in the 3rd UNESCO-EABRN Training Workshop on using remote sensing and GIS to adapt to climate change. The workshop was held at the Center for Earth Observation and Digital Earth at the Chinese Academy of Sciences, China, on 30 March – 10 April 2009. Fifteen people, including two from ROK, participated and learned how to apply RS and GIS for the biosphere reserve management.

7. MAP 30 related: Transboundary biosphere reserves

The Republic of Korea has supported the development of new transboundary biosphere reserves. A potential transboundary biosphere reserve in Korea will be DMZ, Demilitarized Zone between ROK and DPRK (Democratic People's of Korea). To designate DMZ and its adjacent areas as a biosphere reserve has been in progress as a national project. In this regard, a task force team for consultation and administration has been formed. With the results of the environmental survey of the southern part of DMZ in 2010, the Ministry of Environment plans to designate this area as a national protected area by early 2011, and submit its proposal to UNESCO in 2011.

The Republic of Korea will continue to implement Madrid Action Plan.