

UNESCO

MaB Programme – Man and Biosphere

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NATIONAL REPORT

ITALY

Item 7.1

Reports on activities since the 21st MAB-ICC with special references to the Madrid Action Plan: Member States of UNESCO

Since the adoption of the Madrid Action Plan (MAP) for Biosphere Reserves (2008-2013) during the 20th session of the ICC in February 2008 Italy has implemented relevant activities aimed at achieving several targets within the MAP.

During the last two years the Italian authorities (Ministry of Agriculture Food and Forestry Policies; Ministry for Environment Land and Sea; Ministry of Education University and Research; National Commission for UNESCO etc.) began to implement the MAP through the following activities:

1. Effective implementation of the Seville Strategy.

Italian authorities are contacting the 8 Italian BRs in order to collect appropriate information and will forward this information to the Secretariat of the MAB.

2. Enhanced co-operation in relevant key issues.

A strong support to research activities and to the protection against the loss of biodiversity is provided by the “National Center for the Study and Conservation of Forest Biodiversity” established in Verona-Bosco Fontana. At national level, this laboratory focuses its activities on monitoring invertebrates and participating to several projects and closely cooperates with an international network of more than 100 taxonomists. The inventory of plant and animal species for scientific purposes, which is one of the objectives of the International Convention on Biological Diversity, is also foreseen in the EU framework in relation to the monitoring of species and habitats. Of course it is also a relevant tool for useful cooperation for BRs in a key sector such as the protection of biodiversity.

3. Communication strategies for each biosphere reserve, integrated at national and international levels.

On the occasion of the international workshop "Island and Coastal Biosphere Reserves in the Mediterranean: Models for Sustainable Development" – organized in Syracuse from 10 to 12 November 2009 by the UNESCO Venice Office in collaboration with the MAB Secretariat and with the support of the Italian Ministry for Environment Land and Sea and of the Consortium Plemmirio, the first “National Day” for the Italian Biosphere Reserves was held on November 13, 2009 under the title "Biosphere Reserves in Italy: Challenges and

Perspectives”. During the working session the issue of eco-tourism was addressed, as well as all the steps related to the recognition of a UNESCO BR, due to the fact that BR not only aim at preserving natural areas but also at fostering economic development and preserving cultural differences.

4. Biosphere reserves’ periodic review and related actions to update zonation, management and other changes to meet Seville & MAP requirements and recommendations.

Italy has taken the necessary steps in order to support the preparation of the periodic review by the Italian BRs. The review for Miramare Reserve, under the management of the Ministry of Environment, has been completed and at least two other reviews (for the Biosphere Reserves under the management of the Ministry of Agriculture Food and Forestry Policies, Collemeluccio-Montedimezzo and Circeo BR) will be ready at the end of 2010.

5. Enhanced legal recognition of biosphere reserves.

Biosphere Reserves are not yet a specific category of protected areas but Italy is working in order to give a legal interpretation of the concept following the pattern already proposed and illustrated during the twenty-first session of MAB-ICC (see doc. SC-09/CONF.207/INF.4).

6. Co-operative conservation and development strategies for biosphere reserves.

In order to reduce the loss of biodiversity the Ministry for Environment Land and Sea has launched the National Strategy for Biodiversity which was officially illustrated during the National Conference on Biodiversity held in Rome on 22nd May 2010 on the occasion of the International Day for Biological Diversity. The Strategy confirms Italy’s commitment to stop the loss of biodiversity and is an important tool for integrating the key issue of biodiversity in national policies. The Ministry of Agriculture Food and Forestry Policies has elaborated the National Plan on Agricultural Biodiversity (PNBA) whose main objective is to supply guidelines for the conservation and valorization of genetic and biological resources in agriculture according to national and international commitments. To this end a Permanent Committee for Genetic Resources has been established and is coordinated by the Ministry of Agriculture Food and Forestry Policies. A joint conservation plan for the protection of biodiversity is also contained in the National Strategic Plan (PSN) and in several Rural Development Programs (PSR). Furthermore the Office for Biodiversity of the State Forestry Department (Corpo Forestale dello Stato) acts to promote new methodologies for a durable use of natural resources, especially in natural reserves and in the BRs. Within this Office, a National Network of Germplasm and Renaturalization has been created with the objective of safeguarding native plant species.

7. Biosphere reserves to analyze ecosystem services. BR’s management through stakeholder participation.

Pursuing the general objectives of the National Plan on Agricultural Biodiversity the Ministry of Agriculture Food and Forestry Policies has set up research and funding projects that address both specific issues and ordinary activities of the Agricultural Research Council (CRA) for the conservation of germplasm and the establishment of new varieties. This activity aims at enhancing and preserving genetic resources and improving the knowledge of plant, animal and microbial biodiversity on a regional and local level also in order to analyse ecosystem services and their development. Recently the Project LIFE “Protection of sites managed by the State Forestry Department” has pursued the goal of improving the Natural State Reserves Network with programs and actions held in 34 sites throughout 9 Regions. Furthermore it has fostered local stakeholders’ involvement.

8. Decade of Education for Sustainable Development (DESD) programs.

Several activities of education on sustainable development have been carried out together with research institutions, such as the Institute for Environmental Protection and Research (ISPRA), the Agricultural Research Council (CRA) and several Italian universities. In recent years many research programs have been implemented for monitoring the environment with the objective of achieving a sustainable development in protected areas. They also paved the way to the institution of specific research centers and to the publication of scientific articles in biodiversity and sustainable development reviews.

9. A mechanism for biosphere reserves to address urban issues in a regional context.

The State Forestry Corps activities and interventions are primarily required to restore degraded habitats. In some other cases interventions are needed in order to avoid and stop the extinction process of rare habitats. In fact, habitat loss as a result of human intervention is widely considered to be *the* most important cause of animal and plant extinction. Species are being threatened by habitat loss and degradation and some of them are forced outside their natural habitat where surviving can be difficult and extinction easy.

Italy is working on the preparation of the *interim evaluation* of the MAP implementation that is due at end of 2010 for review by the 23rd session of the ICC in 2011. Please find in attached the Miramare reserve review.