

**UNITED NATIONS EDUCATIONAL, SCIENTIFIC AND CULTURAL ORGANIZATION**  
**International Coordinating Council of the Man and the Biosphere (MAB) Programme**  
Twenty-eighth session

**Lima, Peru**  
18 – 19 March 2016

**Item 12 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. Four 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. After the 30<sup>th</sup> September 2015 deadline, a total of 11 countries did not send the requested periodic review reports for 24 sites: 4 countries from the African Region, 1 country from the Arab Region, 3 countries from the Europe and North America region as well as 3 countries from Latin America. In addition, the Secretariat did not receive replies as regards follow-up information from previous recommendations made by the MAB Council by 3 countries (2 in the Africa region and one in Asia). Finally as regards updated reports and timeline requested for sites which do not meet the criteria as per previous recommendations from the MAB Council, the Secretariat did not receive replies from 7 countries from the Africa region, 3 countries from the Arab region, 6 countries from the Asia Pacific Region, 5 countries from Europe and 6 countries from Latin America for a total of 60 sites.
4. At its 27<sup>th</sup> session in Paris, last June 2015 the MAB Council agreed that there will be no change in the deadline for countries to submit their reports (i.e. 30 September 2015) and that the final decisions would be taken by the Council with regard to the exit strategy at its 29<sup>th</sup> session in 2017 in UNESCO Headquarters.
5. The Advisory Committee examined the reports and additional follow-up information at its 22<sup>nd</sup> meeting (SC-16/CONF 228/9). The Advisory Committee issued recommendations for each site, indicating if the site meets or do not meet the criteria. For the sites that the Advisory Committee considered that they do not meet the criteria, the deadline for countries to respond to these final recommendations will be 30 September 2016 at the latest. The MAB Secretariat will send these recommendations to the countries concerned once endorsed by the MAB Council.

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 Council is invited to comment on the progress made as regards the implementation of the exit strategy.