

UNITED NATIONS EDUCATIONAL, SCIENTIFIC AND CULTURAL ORGANIZATION

International Coordinating Council of the Man and the Biosphere (MAB) Programme

Twenty-eighth session
18-19 March 2016, Lima, Peru

Item 5 of the Provisional Agenda: REPORT BY THE SECRETARY OF THE MAB PROGRAMME

This report provides the MAB-ICC with an update on the MAB development since its last session in June 2015, by the following chapters:

- I. Overall situation of the MAB Programme
- II. Follow up of the main decisions of MAB-ICC
- III. Highlights of MAB activities, partnership, communications and outreach
- IV. The way forward

Overall situation of the MAB Programme

1. The most important new context is the **2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development**¹ adopted at the UN Sustainable Development Summit 2015 in September 2015 in New York, which sets up the Sustainable Development Goals (**SDGs**) and associated targets. The MAB Programme and its World Network of Biosphere Reserves (WNBR) have a clear niche in the 2030 Agenda and a strategic contribution to make, in particular toward the SDG 15: life on land, but also to varying extent toward SDG 13 on climate action, SDG 6 on freshwater, SDG 11 for sustainable cities, SDG 14 for life below water, SDG 1 on poverty, SDG 2 on food, and SDG 10 for reduced inequalities,. These identified roles and contributions are important components of the overall UNESCO contribution toward the 2030 Agenda.
2. The Paris Agreement² reached at the COP 21 in December 2015 under the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change opens new opportunities for MAB and WNBR, especially related to the use of biosphere reserves as climate change observatories, for climate-biodiversity related education, community-based mitigation and adaptation actions, as well as for clarifying and exploring the global roles of biosphere reserves in the new frameworks of cooperation related to the regulation of carbon emissions.
3. The 38th session of UNESCO General Conference, held in Paris in November 2015, approved the MAB Strategy 2015-2025³. It is heartening to note that the examination and approval of the MAB Strategy 2015-2025 was accompanied by a strong Resolution (ref. 38 C/COM SC/DR.1)⁴ initiated by France, Germany and Peru and submitted

¹ <https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/post2015/transformingourworld>

² <http://unfccc.int/resource/docs/2015/cop21/eng/l09.pdf>

³ <http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0023/002346/234624e.pdf>

⁴ <http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0023/002353/235382e.pdf>

together with Algeria, Belize, Colombia, El Salvador, Finland, Gabon, Guinea, Honduras, Italy, Kenya, Lebanon, Madagascar, Mexico, Monaco, Morocco, Norway, Portugal, Saint Lucia, Saudi Arabia, Slovenia, South Africa, Spain, Sweden. Some 41 Member States took the floor at the Natural Sciences Commission during the debate on the MAB Strategy and provided support, guidance and suggestions. The Secretary is in the firm belief that, with this strong political support, the MAB Strategy 2015-2025 will successfully guide the development of MAB and World Network of Biosphere Reserves (WNBR) in the next ten years. The MAB Council and its designated MAB Strategy Group (MSG), the MAB Roster of Experts as well as the Secretariat team should be congratulated for having completed this important task assigned by the 36th session of General Conference.

4. Using the same approach, a broad-based and transparent consultation and drafting process for the preparation of the Draft Lima Action Plan for UNESCO's Man and the Biosphere (MAB) Programme and its World Network of Biosphere Reserves (2016-2025) – or the 'Lima Action Plan' in short, has been advanced by the MAB Strategy Group and the Secretariat, with the draft presented and examined by the 4th Congress of the World Network of Biosphere Reserves, held just before the current session of MAB Council.
5. The 38th Session of UNESCO General Conference approved budget for MAB Programme within 38C/5 (2016-2017) as one of the six Main Lines of Actions (MLAs) under the Natural Sciences, namely '*Strengthening the roles of ecological sciences and biosphere reserves*' with the specific Expected Result No. 9 entitled '*Use of biosphere reserves as learning places for equitable and sustainable development and for climate change mitigation and adaptation strengthened, and the ecological and biodiversity sciences reinforced*'. "MAB maintained middle high priority in the new expenditure plan of UNESCO with total regular budget similar to 37C/5 (2014-2015)" Although this certainly maintains the prevailing budgetary stress a financial basis has been secured for the continuation of the MAB Programme during the new biennium.
6. The WNBR continues to grow. During 2014-2015, 33 new biosphere reserves, including 3 transboundary sites, were included in the World Network of Biosphere Reserves (WNBR) by decisions of 26th and 27th MAB Council sessions. In this development, Albania, the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia and Myanmar joined the WNBR for the first time. The WNBR now comprises 651 sites - including 15 transboundary reserves - in 120 countries, covering over 10, 2 million km² of terrestrial, coastal and marine areas and representing all major ecosystem types of the planet under diverse development contexts, home to approximately 172 million people, ranging from rural local communities and indigenous peoples to urban dwellers. This council session will again examine and make decision on new biosphere reserve nomination proposals and the proposals for extension.
7. The implementation of the MAB **Exit Strategy** aiming to improve the quality and credibility of the WNBR has generated a record high number of Periodic Review reports from Member States. Further evidence of improvement is evidenced by the submission of many biosphere reserve re-zonation schemes and extension proposals with the aim to strengthen the contributions of biosphere reserves for sustainable development. Four sites that no longer meet the criteria were voluntarily withdrawn by Member States.

21 countries that have never responded the Periodic Review reminders in the past responded to the Exit Strategy requests. As a whole, 573 periodic reports have been received and processed in WNBR, a clear indication on the functioning of reporting in WNBR and the worldwide commitment to the network.

8. The International Advisory Committee for Biosphere Reserves (IACBR) has carried out extraordinarily heavy duty in each of its sessions to examine the high number of dossiers and provide quality assessments and recommendations. The Secretary expresses his sincere gratitude to all IACBR members for their great contributions for MAB and WNBR.
9. MAB made a significant contribution to Priority Africa. A MAB flagship project for more than a decade with financial support from EU to develop professional capacities in Africa, ERAIFT (Ecole Régionale postuniversitaire d'Aménagement et Gestion intégrés des Forêts et Territoires tropicaux) in DR Congo, has now become the second UNESCO category 2 centre under the MAB Programme. This achievement was made possible thanks to a collective effort by the MAB Secretariat, the UNESCO Kinshasa Office and ERAIFT management and through strong partnerships with many African countries.
10. MAB and WNBR face many challenges and opportunities, some of which are new. Section IV of this report provides more information regarding these, and proposes actions to address them.

Follow-up of the main decisions of MAB-ICC (27th session)

11. The Secretariat has been following up the decisions and recommendations of MAB-ICC made at its last session. A brief summary is contained in the list below:
 - (a) The MAB Strategy 2015-2025 endorsed by MAB-ICC was presented to and approved by 38th GC.
 - (b) The preparation of the Draft Lima Action Plan progressed on schedule through three rounds of consultations. The final draft will be presented to the Lima Congress by MSG that will take place just prior to the 28 session of MAB-ICC. A document SC-15/CONF.228/11 provides further information on the Draft Lima Action Plan text and the drafting process.
 - (c) The preparation and organization of 4th World Congress of Biosphere Reserves have been now completed. The Lima Congress finalized and launched the Lima Action Plan of MAB, issued the Lima Declaration, facilitated 21 workshops and 13 side events with expectation of participation of total over 1000 representatives from approximate 100 countries.
 - (d) All new biosphere reserves designated in 2015 received UNESCO certificates and Member States with the new biosphere reserves organized national inauguration ceremonies.

- (e) All the MAB-ICC decisions and recommendations concerning individual biosphere reserves based on Periodic Reports received and the follow up of the previous MAB-ICC recommendations were communicated to Member States in a timely manner.
- (f) Implementation of the Exit Strategy continued during the last 12 months. The progress will be reported under item 8 of the draft Agenda (ref. SC-15/CONF.227/7).
- (g) Progress has also been made in terms of biosphere reserve documentation management, with all nomination documents and periodic review reports to 2014 stored in UNESCO archive system. Digital archiving has also been started with UNESCO's Central Services.
- (h) A proposed general structure for the Operational Guidelines for WNBR (OP-WNBR) was presented and discussed at the 22nd session of the International Advisory Committee for Biosphere Reserves (IACBR)⁵. This will also allow the MAB Secretariat to move forward on the implementation of the open access policy adopted by the ICC at its 27th session.
- (i) A 3-hour meeting was held by the International Support Group to MAB (ISG-MAB) on 13 January 2016, at which Member States received an update from the MAB Secretariat on the progress of MAB and the Lima Congress preparation.
- (j) The prize ceremony for the UNESCO-Sultan Qaboos Prize for Environmental Preservation was held during the World Science Forum, Budapest, Hungary in November 2015.
- (k) The issue of MAB governance was discussed at the last session of MAB-ICC. Following the report of the External Auditors on governance⁶ presented at the 38th session of the General Conference, the MAB Council will continue its discussion in future sessions of the MAB-ICC. Considering the time required for effective discussion on this issue, and taking into account the time constraints in Lima, the Secretary suggests that this matter be discussed by the next MAB-ICC meeting in Paris, if this may be considered appropriate by MAB-ICC.

12. The Secretary expresses his great appreciation to all Member States for their support in the implementation of all the above-mentioned decisions and recommendations and his sincere thanks to the MAB Secretariat team for their excellent performance.

Highlights of MAB activities, partnerships, communication and outreach

⁵ ref. SC-16/CONF.622/INF.5

⁶ <http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0023/002342/234265e.pdf>

13. A comprehensive report on MAB activities during 2014-2015 has been made available to the Council⁷. This report highlights some of MAB activities that the MAB Secretariat and UNESCO Field Offices have engaged in directly, in order to show the dynamics and dimensions of regional and thematic networks and partnership. As the report demonstrates, MAB and the WNBR are active in biosphere reserve quality improvement, consolidation as model regions for sustainable development, exploring green development solutions, communicating WNBR values through local engagement, and working on climate change issues.

Africa:

14. AfriMAB 4th General Assembly 2015 “**Aligning the MAB Strategy (2015 – 2025) to the Sustainable Development Goals, SDGs (2015 -2030)**” with financial support for Ghana MAB national committee was held in Accra, Ghana in November 2015. The meeting resulted, inter alia, in the establishment of thematic working groups to support the contribution of AfriMAB to the implementation of Lima Action Plan.

15. AfriMAB International Meeting on “**Green economy and biosphere reserves**”, with the support of Principe Trust Fund and Fonds Français pour l’ Environment Mondial, in Principe Island, Republic of Sao Tome & Principe, was held in December 2015. An AfriMAB working group on green economy was established to coordinate such activities for the region.

16. MAB’s first-ever international workshop in Mozambique entitled “**Biosphere reserve as means to conserve biodiversity and to foster sustainable development agenda in Mozambique**” was held in Maputo in mid-August 2015 resulting in the identification of potential sites to be nominated for biosphere reserves and the establishment of an interim MAB national committee in the country.

Asia-Pacific:

17. Three important network meetings took place after last MAB ICC. These include the 14th meeting of the East Asian Biosphere Reserve Network (EABRN) in October 2015 at the Shiga Highland BR in Japan, under the theme ‘**Activities in the transition area and the role of local communities in managing biosphere reserves**’ including joint sessions with the Japanese Biosphere Reserves Network (JBRN); The 9th SeaBRnet meeting in October 2015 in Malang, Indonesia, on visibility, branding and communication strategies of the WNBR and sites in Southeast Asia; and the 7th SACAM Meeting in Dhaka, Bangladesh in December 2015 on sharing the experiences of biosphere reserves and Natural World Heritage sites from across the South and Central Asian sub-region, the preparation of SACAM input in the Lima Congress and activation of MAB in Bangladesh.

⁷ <http://www.unesco.org/new/en/natural-sciences/environment/ecological-sciences/related-info/publications/> The printed copy is also available at the MAB Council meeting.

18. In February 2015 a series of **Immersive Masterclasses** of '**UNESCO Biosphere Reserves as Learning Laboratories for Sustainability**' were organized in Australian biosphere reserves accompanied by lectures streamed live online. The classes showcased the local and global values of biosphere reserves and highlighted a series of projects and innovative ideas uniting the conservation of biological and cultural diversity. The initial modules focused on issues regarding community engagement, partnerships and project development, while other modules focused on common issues across the Asia-Pacific and introduction of opportunities for knowledge sharing, virtual collaboration and future possibilities of creative technology in responding to climate change.

Arab region:

19. **Training for Arab countries on effective implementation of the MAB Programme and nomination of biosphere reserves** organized by UNESCO-Doha office in cooperation with the Oman National Commission for Education, Culture, and Science in Muscat, Oman in December 2015. The training workshop explained the designation process of biosphere reserves, how to complete the biosphere reserve application forms and the zonation of biosphere reserves.

20. **Strengthening of the Argan Biosphere Reserve in Morocco** by supporting local groups, including women cooperatives producing 'Argan oil cooperatives' of this Biosphere Reserve. The importance of the protection and sustainable use of Argan tree (*Argania spinosa*), a species endemic to the reserve has increased the last years as the value of Argan oil in world market of medicines and cosmetics have multiplied. The aim of the cooperation is to enable

21. rural families to increase economic income and investment in conservation and sustainable use of the Argan forest, through a win-win constellation. This cooperation is supported by a number of development agencies, including the National Agency for the Development of Oasis Areas and the Argan Forest (l'Agence nationale pour le développement des zones oasiennes et de l'arganier - ANDZOA), the MAB National Committee of Morocco, the Arganeraie Biosphere Reserve, and Procter & Gamble and UNESCO, with new effort also in the field of renewable energy.

Europe-North America:

22. EuroMAB 2015 had over 140 experts meeting in Haapsalu, Estonia in May 2015, on the theme "**From heritage to sustainable innovation**" with panels and workshops on the exit strategy, WNBR communication and branding and the participation of four pilot biosphere reserves in Europe. Several countries in the Europe region that do not have yet a biosphere reserve are considering submitting proposals in the coming years and have requested technical advice from the MAB secretariat. EuroMAB 2017 will be held in Bassin de la Dordogne BR, France and the EuroMAB 2019 meeting will be in Dublin, Ireland.

23. **The Communication and Branding Biosphere project** has been tested by more volunteer pilot biosphere reserves representing different languages, challenges, ecosystems and target audiences. Each site hosted a specific workshop with local

stakeholders, WITHIN and the MAB Secretariat. Bassin de la Dordogne BR (France), Urdaibai BR (Spain), Dublin Bay BR (Ireland), Niagara Escarpment BR (Canada), Noorhoordland proposed BR (Norway), Danube Delta Transboundary BR (Ukraine/Romania) as well as a new proposed BR in the Republic of Moldova and the Ramot Menashe BR (Israel) all held their respective meetings during September 2015 to January 2016. The Asia-Pacific region also started testing this toolkit in SeaBRnet workshop in October 2015 in Malang, Indonesia. Next steps are to use the communication tools to engage and connect the world network as a movement for sustainable development and for sharing and telling sustainable development stories. A working paper has been produced on this issue and a dedicated workshop was organized at the Congress here in Lima for testing the tool kit in different regions and for telling sustainable development stories to a broader audience.

24. A European regional meeting on ***“The role of biosphere reserves in large river basins and sustainable development within a local, regional and international context: the case of the Volga river basin and the opportunities for the Po river basin”*** was held in September 2015 in Venice and in the newly established the Po Delta Biosphere Reserve, Italy, with more than 30 participants from Italy, Romania, Russia and Spain, hosting exchanges on BRs in the large river basins of Volga and Po, and on conservation and development in the deltaic areas of the Volga, Po, Ebro and Danube rivers.
25. Lastly, MAB-ICC received brief information on the ***international meeting on transboundary biosphere reserve*** held in Vosges du nord BR in France in early June 2015, which brought together experts from 20 countries. Building on the basis of Pamplona recommendations, the meeting reviewed TBR development, lessons learnt and methodologies and procedures used, and started preparations toward a specific side event in Lima on transboundary biosphere reserves, led by EuroMAB countries.

Latin America and Ibero-America:

26. Two meetings of IberoMAB took place during October-November 2015, namely the 16th IberoMAB meeting in Barcelona **on the new MAB Strategy and the future of IberoMAB**, as well as contributions toward the Lima Congress and the Lima Action Plan 2016-2025, and the **International Seminar on Sustainable Development for Biosphere Reserves Managers in Ibero-America and the Caribbean**, at Santa Cruz de la Sierra, Bolivia, bringing together some 40 biosphere reserves technicians and managers from Latin America, the Caribbean countries, Portugal and Spain, as well as representatives of Spanish governmental agencies, the MAB Secretariat, FAO and IUCN for discussions on **the management of biosphere reserves**.
27. The UNESCO Office Montevideo organized a workshop on the ***“Caribbean Biosphere Reserve in the Climate Change context”*** in Havana, Cuba, in November 2015. Colombia, Costa Rica, Cuba, Dominican Republic, Haiti Honduras and Mexico attended and exchanged experiences and knowledge on the management of transboundary biosphere reserves, how to build resilience in coastal ecosystems, afforestation and carbon storage, among other issues. The meeting also provided an opportunity for the countries to build a regional position to present at the Lima Congress.

28. ***Biosphere Reserves as a Tool for Coastal and Island Management in the South-East Pacific Region (BRESEP)***, extra-budgetary project supported by the Flemish Government of the Kingdom of Belgium, held its 2nd meeting in Lima, Peru from in early July 2015, with five participating countries: Chile, Colombia, Ecuador, Panama and Peru. The 3rd technical meeting followed in November 2015 in Puerto Ayora, Galapagos Islands in Ecuador. Chile is currently working on the extension of the Juan Fernandez Biosphere Reserve to include marine area, and will assess the possibility of creating a new biosphere reserve on the Island of Chiloé. In parallel, Peru requested the extension of the Noreste Biosphere Reserve to include the mangroves of Tumbes, while Ecuador sought the extension of the Archipelago de Colon (Galapagos) Biosphere Reserve to include marine areas. Ecuador also began the development of a new biosphere reserve in the Gulf of Guayaquil. Panama is working already on the extension of the Darien Biosphere Reserve to cover a marine and coastal area.

Global - COP21:

29. On 5 December the UNESCO Pavilion at the **COP21** venue in Le Bourget hosted an event dedicated to theme '**UNESCO Sites - A Climate Change Observatory**'. The purpose of this "UNESCO Sites Day" was to explore how the UNESCO World Heritage sites, biosphere reserves and Global Geoparks serve as a global field observatory, where climate knowledge can be gathered and solutions found on the impacts of climate change on human societies and cultural diversity, biodiversity and ecosystem services and the world's natural and cultural heritage. The event was brought together practitioners from UNESCO sites, researchers, experts and policy makers who shared their experiences through interviews and roundtable discussions.
30. ***MAB survey on biosphere reserves and climate change*** In October 2015, the MAB Programme asked its BR managers to complete a short survey on biosphere reserves and climate change. A large majority of participants (77%) confirmed that changes had been observed in their BR that could be attributed to climate change. Most of the BRs mentioned seasonal changes such as shorter winters and longer periods of drought. The Bassin de la Dordogne BR in France presented the most striking change: over the last 40 years, the temperature of the Dordogne River has risen by 2°C. 60% of the participating BRs confirmed that they are undertaking efforts to monitor climate change, but only 38% of reserves are undertaking or plan to undertake climate change adaptation efforts. 49% stated that they are making efforts to reduce greenhouse gas emissions in their BR.
31. The exhibition '**Mountains: early warning systems for climate change**' was inaugurated by Director-General Irina Bokova, on 4 November 2015, organized jointly by MAB and IHP and shown on the UNESCO gates during the 38th Session of the General Conference as well as at the Cité universitaire de Paris in December 2015 during COP-21. The exhibition was made possible through generous contributions from many partners, notably the Government of Flanders, Belgium, the Permanent Delegation of France to UNESCO, the Japan Aerospace Exploration Agency (JAXA), the United States Geological Survey (USGS), the World Glacier Monitoring Service (WGMS), the Government of Austria, UNEP, GRID-Arendal and Wild Touch.

Global – MAB input at EXPO 2015:

32. Under the UN banner “*The Zero Hunger Challenge. United for a Sustainable World*”, the UNESCO Office in Venice implemented several activities and events in Milan, Venice as well as other Italian UNESCO sites and cities. The “**Behind Food Sustainability**” exhibition⁸ focused on what communities and territories around the world can teach about human relationships with food and nature under five themes: Managing Water, Looking after the Land; Balancing the Food Economy; Protecting Diversity and Fostering Participation. The exhibit included cases of 18 World Heritage sites and 13 biosphere reserves from 18 different countries. Exhibitions and workshops involving both Italian biosphere reserves and World Heritage sites in Turin and other locations attracted thousands of visitors and students involved in the agenda of EXPO 2015.

MAB Partnerships:

33. With the MAB Strategy and the Lima Action Plan fully committed to 2030 Agenda, partnership development is more than ever required for the MAB Programme and its WNBR. Such partnership concerns both inside UN - with other sectors and programmes of UNESCO and with other UN agencies – as well as with non-UN scientific institutions and organizations, development agencies, as well as civil society organizations, local governments and the private sector.

34. At the 38th session of the General Conference, UNESCO’s intergovernmental and international scientific programmes of IBSP, IGGP, IHP, IOC and MOST issued a joint Chairs’ statement for 2030 Agenda. Technical cooperation with the World Heritage Convention Secretariat (WHC) on biological diversity has been further strengthened through the sharing of expertise on global issues related to CBD, the Aichi Targets and climate action. ESD and its Global Action Plan have been clearly reflected in both the MAB Strategy 2015-2025 and in the Lima Action Plan 2016-2025. MAB’s contribution toward the SIDS Action Plan and the Samoa Pathway has been made clear. MAB’s partnerships within UNESCO have been well maintained.

35. The main examples of partnerships that directly involve the MAB Secretariat are outlined in the non-exhaustive list below:

Name of partner	Cooperation with MAB/WNBR
CBD (Convention on Biological Diversity)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Contribution toward achieving Aichi Targets. • Provision of a global network of sites to connect CBD goals with local development contexts. • Exchange and sharing through CBD related coordination meetings and conferences.

⁸ The video “Behind Food Sustainability is at <http://www.unesco.org/new/en/venice/special-themes/unesco-to-expo-2015/behind-food-sustainability/video/>

	<p><u>Further comment:</u> WNBR is best placed to connect CBD targets with development context under Agenda 2030, especially SDG15.</p>
<p>IPBES (International Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The MAB Secretariat has participated in IPBES meetings including the 4th plenary meeting in Malaysia in February 2016. • Contributions were made to a paper on participative scenarios, using MAB experience in stakeholder engagement in biosphere reserves. <p><u>Further comment:</u> MAB/WNBR's contribution to and benefits from IPBES in knowledge sharing and policy interface on biodiversity and ecosystem services should be further explored and specified.</p>
<p>PECS (Programme on Ecosystem change and Society, hosted by the Stockholm Resilience Center).</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The MAB Secretariat is member of the PECS Scientific Committee. The PECS approach to site-based studies, interdisciplinary research on socio-ecological systems, cross scales comparison and social transformations is clearly linked to the MAB mission and objectives. MAB can benefit from the research findings and initiate observation and monitoring of transformations towards sustainability in key sites and ecosystems in WNBR within the framework of the implementation of the Lima Action Plan. <p><u>Further comment:</u> PECS should be invited to MAB network meetings, provide updates on research at future MAB ICC meetings and develop joint publications with MAB.</p>
<p>GIAHS (Globally Important Agricultural Heritage Systems)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • UNESCO Venice represented the MAB Secretariat in the Steering and Scientific Committee meeting of GIAHS programme of FAO in December 2015. GIAHS China contributed to MAB-BIRUP workshop in December 2015 Shanghai on branding, certification and labeling of products and services from WNBR. <p><u>Further comment:</u> This is an important instrument of FAO, which is connected to MAB/WNBR in SDG15 and SDG2. Cooperation should be further explored especially in relation to the resource uses in buffer zones and transition zones of WNBR and promotion of</p>

	<p>local and traditional agricultural products.</p>
<p>GRASP (Great Apes Survival Partnership of UNESCO and UNEP)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> GRASP continues its role as a strong partnership programme connecting UNESCO MAB and WH sites with UNEP. The apeAPP mobile phone application, showcasing GRASP partners and projects is a strong mobile tool for advocacy in conservation effort of great apes habitats. <p><u>Further comment:</u> Despite the high visibility of GRASP, the resource mobilization for site projects is not very strong, a situation that must be improved.</p>
<p>IUCN</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The current partnership with IUCN remains active. Examples of recent cooperation include IUCN's observer position to MAB-ICC and the IACBR, as well as a study on sites with multiple international designations including biosphere reserves, World Heritage sites, Ramsar sites and UNESCO Global Geoparks. The MAB Secretariat is also engaged in contributing towards IUCN Congresses. <p><u>Further comment:</u> Further mutual benefits could be explored by IUCN and MAB, including in particular the monitoring of the climate change impacts, capacity building at the site level, and the development of new economic activities in and around biosphere reserves.</p>
<p>RTI (Responsible Tourism Institute - Spain)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> UNESCO provided patronage to the World Summit on Sustainable Tourism held 26-27 November 2015 in Vitoria, Spain, in line with its long term partnership with the RTI. The MAB Secretariat contributed directly to the formulation of the World Charter for Sustainable Tourism⁹ and the Biosphere Destinations Initiative, which was further elaborated at the Lima Congress. <p><u>Further comment:</u> There is great potential for tourism in biosphere reserves. MAB and WNBR must cooperate with leading institutes and organizations such as RTI and the World Tourism Organization to ensure that tourism forms an integrated component of green economies.</p>

⁹ <http://sustainabletourismcharter2015.com/the-world-charter-for-sustainable-tourism/>

<p>Flemish Government of Belgium</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Long-term cooperation has been ongoing with the Flemish Government on several MAB projects in the fields of desertification, monitoring of climate change in mountain ecosystems and in coastal ecosystem management - one of the major extra-budgetary project of MAB in Latin America and the Caribbean. <p><u>Further comment:</u> The Secretariat must ensure the quality and effective delivery of the Fund-In-Trust projects supported by the Flemish donors and make sure this cooperation be further strengthened.</p>
<p>Federal Government of Belgium</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A five-year agreement has been signed between MAB and the Belgium Science Policy Office (BELSPO) in support to the MAB programme and biosphere reserves in Africa. This will cover all range of activities, in particular scientific studies. <p><u>Further comment:</u> The Secretariat will make sure that the project will contribute to the improvement of MAB implementation in African countries and deliver tangible results.</p>
<p>The Korean International Agency (KOICA)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> KOICA has supported pilot green economy development projects in biosphere reserves in Ghana, Nigeria and Tanzania, an important initiative for MAB cooperation across regions. <p><u>Further comment:</u> The MAB Secretariat - together with the UNESCO Offices in the three countries - will ensure that the pilot project results in fruitful and tangible outputs and lessons for formulating, implementing such green development projects in other BRs in Africa.</p>
<p>Procter & Gamble (private sector)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Procter & Gamble, the MAB Secretariat, UNESCO Rabat Office and MAB Morocco have been engaged through an extra-budgetary project based at the Arganeraie Biosphere Reserve in Morocco with the objective of enhancing the protection and sustainable use of the endemic Argan trees that play extraordinary important environmental, socio-economic and cultural roles. <p><u>Further comment:</u> This is an important multi-sectoral</p>

	<p>partnership that brings industry, local women entrepreneurs and MAB teams together. This successful experience should be diffused to other BRs.</p>
<p>The Island of Jeju (R. Korea) and Menorca (Spain)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The governments of Jeju and Menorca have been supporting and financing cooperation under the World Network of Islands and Coastal Biosphere Reserves. <p><u>Further comment:</u> This is an extremely important partnership, not only in terms of resources made available for MAB, but also in demonstrating the potential of local governments in contributing to MAB and WNBR cooperation. The inputs from Jeju and Menorca have ensured that research and field work in island and coastal zones is active and strong, including studies on climate change impacts on island ecosystems.</p>
<p>The German Federal Ministry for the Environment</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Ministry has provided support to MAB especially in Africa, demonstrated by the recent successful example of the Management Manual for African biosphere reserves. <p><u>Further comments:</u> There is need to discuss how to further improve this cooperation and increase the visibility and impact at national and site levels.</p>
<p>Lake Chad Basin Commission (LCBC) and AfDB</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The MAB Secretariat has been engaged with LCBC and AfDB in the development of the large inter-sectoral project “Applying the model of Transboundary Biosphere Reserves and World Heritage sites to promote peace in the Lake Chad Basin through the sustainable management of natural resources”. <p><u>Further comment:</u> The challenge of Lake Chad is multifold. To reverse the degradation requires new approaches for change, where MAB/TBR and other UNESCO programmes have clear added values. This partnership is long-term, and of strategic importance for future MAB work in all the seven countries of Lake</p>

	Chad Basin.
Government of the Republic of Korea	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Through its National Commission for UNESCO and Ministry of Environment of the Republic of Korea has provided consistent support for MAB and biosphere reserves in the East Asian sub-region. An example hereof is the East Asian Biosphere Reserve Network (EABRN), which has remained one of the most active networks of its kind for over 20 years, thanks to this support. <p><u>Further comment:</u> At the 14th meeting of the EABRN held in October 2015, members identified priorities for the next ten years of the network. The EABRN Secretariat will continue its close cooperation with the Republic of Korea towards supporting new initiatives of the network over the next decade.</p>
Fonds Français pour l'Environnement Mondial (FFEM)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The MAB Secretariat has been supporting the establishment of a regional trust fund for African biosphere reserves; this initiative has been supported by FFEM. <p><u>Further comment:</u> there is a need for UNESCO to complement 70% of the budget of the project as par FFEM rules.</p>

36. There is clearly room for MAB/WNBR to further explore partnership development opportunities. To start with, a more critical review should be exercised in order to ensure that MAB and WNBR truly benefit from partnership development initiatives. For existing and potential partners, a careful check should always be performed regarding a) the strategic and institutional coherence of the partnership's mission, vision and key deliverables, b) complementary capacity in science and development issues, c) necessary policy instruments and policy/development interfaces as well as institutional capacities, d) availability of financial and technical resources, e) possible joint publications, products and services to Member States. Last but not the least, f) the visibility should be considered. Partnerships that do not have clear and strong evidence of these added values should be gradually phased out.

MAB communication and outreach:

37. A major communication effort on BR branding is made through EuroMAB, aiming to generate a global movement on pursuing sustainable development by local communities

in WNBR. A working paper for Lima Congress provides a comprehensive update on this initiative¹⁰.

38. The 2014-2015 MAB activity report has been completed, thanks to the support of the Austrian MAB National Committee and Abertis Foundation.
39. The proceedings of the Conference "Botanists of the twenty-first century: Roles, challenges and opportunities" held at UNESCO from 22 to 25 September 2014 has been released in open access format.
40. UNESCO's website on MAB and Division of Ecological and Earth Sciences is continuously updated with new publications, reports and links to new information resources.
41. UNESCO/Coca-Cola/HBC Euroasia produced MAB/IHP communication materials on the biosphere reserves of the Volga River basin - 13 in total - to promote scientific activities, environmental awareness, eco-tourism and other interventions for reaching the main goals of the Living Volga programme.
42. Social media use by MAB/WNBR in Facebook¹¹, Twitter¹², WeChat and WeiBo continues, with particular increase during the Lima Congress including a dedicated social media campaign *#ProudToShare*.
43. A new media initiative *My Biosphere, My Future*, has been launched before Lima Congress, calling for contributions.

The way forward

44. The way forward is clear: it is time to make every and full effort for the implementation of the MAB Strategy 2015-2025 and the Lima Action Plan 2016-2025. Immediate follow up is to develop the national, local and regional plans for such implementation in order that the MAB global strategy and action plan meeting the specific conditions and priorities at national, local and regional levels.
45. The challenges identified at the last session of MAB-ICC remain. The specific recommendations and suggestions and new ideas for cooperation, expected to be raised during the Lima Congress and regional, thematic and cross-cutting workshops, will help us to address the challenges and best use the new opportunities, especially related to the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the Paris Agreement.

¹⁰ <http://www.unesco.org/new/en/natural-sciences/environment/ecological-sciences/4th-world-congress/>

¹¹ [facebook.com/manandbiosphere](https://www.facebook.com/manandbiosphere)

¹² twitter.com/UNESCO_MAB

46. A special gratitude goes to the MSG Group who crafted these two guiding documents, to the Roster of MAB Experts and to all MAB ICC members, MAB National Committees and all individuals who have contributed to the development of these two documents.
47. Sincere thanks go to the MAB Council for its continued confidence and support toward the MAB Secretariat and for the policy guidance provided.
48. The Secretary expresses his personal and most sincere thanks to all colleagues in MAB Team, both from the UNESCO MAB Secretariat and from UNESCO Offices in different regions and countries. Without strong and unreserved teamwork, it is impossible to deliver the mission of MAB and WNBR.