

**UNITED NATIONS EDUCATIONAL, SCIENTIFIC AND CULTURAL ORGANIZATION**

Man and the Biosphere (MAB) Programme and the World Network of Biosphere Reserves (WNBR)

**Second Consultation between the Informal Support Group (ISG) for the implementation of the Madrid Action Plan (MAP) and the Secretariat of the MAB Programme**

UNESCO Headquarters, Paris, Room XIII (Bonvin Building)  
19 March 2009, 15:00 - 17:30

[http://portal.unesco.org/science/en/ev.php-URL\\_ID=7084&URL\\_DO=DO\\_TOPIC&URL\\_SECTION=201.html](http://portal.unesco.org/science/en/ev.php-URL_ID=7084&URL_DO=DO_TOPIC&URL_SECTION=201.html)

**REPORT**

1. The meeting was opened by Mr N. Ishwaran, Secretary of the MAB International Coordinating Council (ICC). The objective of the meeting was to discuss with delegates the outcomes of the session of the Bureau of the MAB-ICC held at UNESCO Headquarters from 12 to 13 February 2009.
2. After the meeting's agenda was approved, Mr Ishwaran introduced the Report of the MAB Bureau (available in English and French on the MAB website at [http://www.unesco.org/mab/doc/bureau/2009/e\\_FinalReport.pdf](http://www.unesco.org/mab/doc/bureau/2009/e_FinalReport.pdf)) section by section.
3. Regarding Section 1 related to the "Opening of the Meeting", Mr Ishwaran highlighted activities of the Chairperson of the MAB-ICC, H.E. Mr Henri Djombo, Minister of Forestry Economy of Congo, in promoting MAB-related activities such as facilitating the creation of the "Congo Basin Forest Fund" which could be beneficial to the ten Congo River Basin countries in the context of the MAB Programme. Mr Ishwaran was also pleased to underline the continuing supportive role of the Government of Spain for MAB, which provided voluntary contributions to the MAB Special Account.
4. Section 4 of the Bureau Report provided a summary of MAB Programme related activities which had taken place since the last session of the MAB Bureau in April 2008, and which testified to the wide-ranging portfolio of international collaborative activities within the Programme. In the ensuing discussion, one delegate suggested that the various MAB related grants and prizes receive wider visibility which should be considered in a comprehensive communication strategy for the MAB Programme. In reply to another delegate's request concerning the 21<sup>st</sup> session of the MAB-ICC in the Republic of Korea in May 2009, Mr Ishwaran said that the technical modalities for the organization of this meeting between UNESCO and the Republic of Korea were currently being worked out. Referring to the Bonn conference (March/April 2009) on Education for Sustainable Development as was raised by a delegate, Mr Ishwaran stated that biosphere reserves could be used as case studies and demonstration sites which implemented the notion of sustainable development. One delegate wished to receive further information on the forthcoming meeting (UNESCO Headquarters, April 2009) on "access and benefit sharing" organized by the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD), to which Mr Ishwaran replied that the MAB Secretariat and the Division of Ecological and Earth Sciences (SC/EES) worked closely with the CBD and that one biosphere reserve (Kruger to Canyons, South

Africa) was engaged in testing access and benefit sharing related to the CBD. The results of the CBD meeting in April 2009 at UNESCO Headquarters will feed into the 10<sup>th</sup> meeting of the Conference of the Parties of the CBD to be held in Nagoya (Japan) in 2010.

5. Section 4 of the MAB Bureau Report referred to implementation of the Madrid Action Plan and the revision of statutory and other documents of importance to the MAB Programme and the WNBR. One delegate considered that the Statutes of the MAB-ICC should include references to collaboration with other UNESCO Programmes, but that the Statutes should not be decided upon and changed by the 21<sup>st</sup> MAB-ICC in the Republic of Korea, since several observer delegations would not be in a position to travel to the Republic of Korea to attend the 21<sup>st</sup> session of the MAB-ICC. Another delegate felt that the timeline may be too tight to submit revised draft Statutes of the MAB-ICC for the consideration by the 35<sup>th</sup> session of the General Conference in October 2009. Mr Ishwaran responded that there was no rush in updating the statutes and that it seemed likely that this would only be done at the 36<sup>th</sup> session of the General Conference in 2011.

6. Section 5 of the Bureau report provided a draft agenda for the 21<sup>st</sup> session of the MAB-ICC. A delegate proposed that under agenda item 10, linkages between biosphere reserves and world heritage sites be discussed. Moreover, the delegate suggested that the criteria for the selection of “MAB prizes” be refined at the forthcoming MAB-ICC to avoid very tight outcomes in the selection process.

7. Section 6 informed on biosphere reserve nominations and periodic review of biosphere reserves. In this context, Mr Ishwaran said that there was a possibility for proposed biosphere reserves which had been recommended for deferral by the International Advisory Committee for Biosphere Reserves (IACBR), to still provide additional information to the MAB Secretariat by the end of April 2009. In this manner, the 21<sup>st</sup> session of the MAB-ICC could then consider the proposed sites and, if the provided information is deemed sufficient, the MAB Council could take the final decision on the proposed sites. Mr Ishwaran also hoped that in future it would be up to the MAB-ICC (and not only to its Bureau) to nominate new sites to the WNBR.

8. Sections 7, 8 and 9 referred to the MAB Young Scientists Awards, the Sultan Qaboos Prize for Environmental Preservation, and the Michel Batisse Award for Biosphere Reserve Management respectively. Regarding the Sultan Qaboos Prize, the statutes – in line with all UNESCO prizes – were currently being reviewed, and therefore may only be awarded later in the year.

9. In turning to section 10 on communication strategy and clearing house mechanism for biosphere reserves, Mr Ishwaran regretted that this part of the MAB Programme was severely under-resourced. However, he was pleased to note that BBC had recently produced a TV documentary on the twinning of two biosphere reserves, one in the United Kingdom and the other in Kenya. Thanks to endeavours by Canada and France, a radio programme on various West African biosphere reserves to be diffused by Radio France International was currently in preparation.

10. Under the agenda item on “any other matters”, and following a request by a delegate, Mr Ishwaran provided further information on the ERAIFT School in Kinshasa (Democratic Republic of the Congo) which has at this time awarded some 80 Master’s and 3 Ph.D. degrees. He also hoped that ERAIFT will be able to forge South-South cooperation with the Amazon and South East Asian regions. The delegate of the Republic of Korea thanked the MAB Secretariat for its efforts in organizing the 21<sup>st</sup> session of the MAB-ICC in his country, and he hoped that many ICC delegates including observer delegations would be able to visit this beautiful island which was both a biosphere reserve and a world heritage site.

11. In closing the meeting, Mr Ishwaran announced that he would hope to have another meeting of the Informal Support Group either before or after the 21<sup>st</sup> session of the MAB-ICC.