

## ACTIVITIES OF MAB PROGRAMME IN PAKISTAN

The efforts of conservation of biodiversity, ecosystems and genes have got appreciable momentum in Pakistan for the last several years. “The Biodiversity Action plan” outlining strategic goals, objectives and plan of actions has now entered in implementation. However, the efforts have fallen short of desired outcomes, as habitats continue to shrink and species diversity and numbers remain under pressure. This can be attributed partly to failure of management systems and partly due to a failure to acknowledge the rights of communities, as well as their potential role in biodiversity conservation.

Although the UNESCO MAB Programme in Pakistan was initiated in 1977 with designation the Lalsuhanra National Park as its first Biosphere Reserve, yet no sincere effort were made in this regard. Honorable Secretary of Ministry of Science & Technology and Chairman, Pakistan Science Foundation, being the Chairman and Co-Chairman of the National MAB Committee respectively, have initiated the following steps in collaboration with UNESCO:

### **1- Reactivation of National MAB Committee-Pakistan**

The National MAB Committee-Pakistan comprising of the following has been reconstituted and notified:

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| 1. Secretary, Ministry of Science and Technology                             | Chairman         |
| 2. Chairman, Pakistan Science Foundation                                     | Co-Chairman      |
| 3. Secretary, Forests and Wildlife (AJK)                                     | Member           |
| 4. Secretary, Forests and Wildlife Balochistan                               | Member           |
| 5. Secretary, Forests and Wildlife GB  | Member           |
| 6. Secretary, Forests and Wildlife KPK                                       | Member           |
| 7. Secretary, Forests and Wildlife Punjab                                    | Member           |
| 8. Secretary, Forests and Wildlife Sindh                                     | Member           |
| 9. Director General, Environment and Climate Change                          | Member           |
| 10. Country Representative/Director UNESCO-Pakistan                          | Member           |
| 11. Director General, WWF, Pakistan  | Member           |
| 12. Director General, Pakistan Museum of Natural History                     | Member           |
| 13. Joint Scientific Advisor (IL), Ministry of Science and Technology        | Member           |
| 14. Country Representative/Manager IUCN                                      | Member           |
| 15. Director, Zool. Survey Deptt. Ministry of Climate Change                 | Member           |
| 16. MAB Country Focal Person ( Dr. Muhammad Rafique,<br>Director, ZSD, PMNH) | Member/Secretary |

## **2- Establishment of Focal Point for MAB Programme in Pakistan**

On behalf of MoST, Pakistan Museum of Natural History (PSF) has been designated as focal point for undertaking the activities of MAB Programme in Pakistan in consultations with the National MAB Committee and the other stake holders.

## **3- Submittal/ Preparation of Dossier to UNESCO for Nomination of Pakistans' Second Biosphere Reserve "Ziarat Juniper Biosphere Reserve"**

A comprehensive dossier for nomination of Pakistans' Second Biosphere Reserve "Ziarat Juniper Biosphere Reserve" has been prepared on the format of UNESCO Proforma. The dossier has been prepared by combined efforts of MoST, PSF, PMNH, UNESCO and IUCN in consultation with the Secretary, Balochistan Forests and Wildlife Department, Chief Conservator of Forests, Balochistan Forests and Wildlife Department, President Valley Conservation Committee, ChautairNishpa-BatayThair (Representative of Local Community), President Valley Conservation Committee, Ziarat (Representative of Local Community), President Valley Conservation Committee, Koshki-Zigri (Representative of Local Community). The dossier has been reviewed by the Chairman and Co-Chairman of the National MAB Committee and after necessary changes, approved and submitted to UNESCO Headquarters for designation process.

## **4- Ziarat Juniper Forest Declared Biosphere Reserve by UNESCO**

With the efforts of MoST, UNESCO, IUCN and Department of Forests and Wildlife, Balochistan and other stakeholders, the International Coordinating Council (ICC) of the Man and Biosphere (MAB) Programme has declared Juniper Forest of Ziarat, Balochistan, as second Biosphere Reserve in Pakistan. The decision was made during the 25th session of MAB ICC from 27 - 30 May 2013 at UNESCO Headquarters in Paris, making Juniper Forest of Ziarat, the second declared Biosphere Reserve (BR) in Pakistan. Believed to be the second largest Juniper forest of its kind in the world, this Biosphere Reserve of Ziarat is habitat to the largest patch of Juniper forests in Pakistan and measures about 110,000 hectares. Juniper tree species of Ziarat have a global significance because of their old age and slow growth rate. The species finds its place in the list of the oldest living trees on earth. Though no dendrochronological study has yet been

conducted, the age of a mature tree, according to an estimate, exceeds 4000 to 5000 years. Precisely because of this, they are locally termed as “Living Fossils”.

**5- Preparation of Management Plan for Ziarat Juniper Biosphere Reserve Area**

A comprehensive Management Plan has been prepared jointly by MoST, PSF, PMNH, UNESCO, IUCN and Department of Forests and Wildlife, Balochistan. The objective of the Management Plan is to conserve the second largest Juniper Forest in the world along with its associated wildlife, local culture and traditions. It also ensures the economic development of the area by promoting the potential resources and improving the livelihood of the local people.

**6- Periodic Review of Lal Suhanra Biosphere Reserve**

Every ten years, regions designated as Biosphere Reserves undergo through a mandatory periodic review to provide an overview of their contributions. The Seville Strategy (1997) established the need for such reviews to ensure that Biosphere Reserves are meeting criteria outlined in the Statutory Framework of the World Network of Biosphere Reserves. The review report has to be submitted to ICC. If the ICC finds that the Biosphere Reserve no longer satisfy the laid down criteria of a biosphere reserve, it will recommend the concerned state to take appropriate measures to ensure its conformity with the criteria. If somehow, ICC finds that the Biosphere Reserve does not satisfy the criterion within a reasonable period, the area will no longer be part of international network of biosphere reserves and such decision is thereafter notified by UNESCO.

As the periodic review of the Lal Suhanra was due since a long time, UNESCO has directed National MAB Committee-Pakistan to review the status of the Biosphere Reserve and submit the report by 30 September 2013 at the latest. The National MAB Committee Pakistan has started the work on this project and will submit the report to UNESCO by due date.

**7- Work on Declaration of 3rd Biosphere Reserve in Pakistan**

The MAB Secretariat is working on preparation of Nomination Dossier and Management Plan for the third Biosphere Reserve in Pakistan. The site is the Karakoram Biosphere Reserve consisting of Central Karakoram National Park, Khunjerab National Park, Kilk-Mantika Game Reserve, Chapursan Valley and Passu Glacier. Permission of Chief

Secretary, GB has been obtained and ecological studies completed. The Job will be completed by November this year and submitted to UNESCO Headquarters for declaration.

**8- Holding of 5<sup>th</sup> South and Central Asia MAB Network (SACAM) Meeting in Islamabad**

Fifth South and Central Asia MAB Network (SACAM) Meeting is scheduled to be held in Islamabad from October 29-31, 2013. The delegations from Pakistan, Nepal, Bhutan, Bangladesh, India, Maldives, Sri Lanka, Afghanistan, Tajikistan, Uzbekistan, Turkmenistan, Azerbaijan and Kazakhstan are expected to participate.

**9- Input for Future MAB Strategy**

In response to UNESCO circular letter No. CL/MAB/2014/1, dated 6 March, the MAB Secretariat Pakistan gave its input for structuring “*Future Strategy for MAB and World Network of Biosphere Reserves 2014-2021*”.

**10- Holding of 6<sup>th</sup> South and Central Asia MAB Network (SACAM) Meeting in Islamabad**

Global issues and problems like climate change, loss of habitats and biodiversity, and urbanization have emerged and intensified in the last decades and have made it an imperative for the MAB Programme to adapt and change so as to effectively respond to the emerging challenges which significantly further aggravate poverty and inequality. In lines with the objectives of MADRID ACTION PLAN (Guidelines of MAB Programme), the 6<sup>th</sup> SACAM meeting was held in Islamabad last year in December with the theme “**Impact of Climate Change on Natural Ecosystems**”. About fifty research papers on the subject were presented in the 3-day meeting. The forum came up with strong recommendations jointly prepared by the participants.

**11- Dossier for Palas Valley Biosphere Reserve**

Nomination Dossier for a new biosphere reserve known as “Palas Valley Biosphere Reserve” has been prepared and is presently going through endorsement process from the provincial Govt. and the local communities.

## **12- Training to Officials of Afghanistan's National Environmental Protection Agency on Establishment of Biosphere Reserves**

MAB-Pakistan has extended its services to Afghanistan for establishing Band-e Amir Biosphere Reserve which will be first ever Biosphere Reserve in Afghanistan. Country Focal Person for MAB-Pakistan visited Afghanistan during June this year and held rigorous sessions with experts from Forest, Wildlife and Environment departments of Afghanistan for developing dossier for the said Biosphere Reserve. Nomination for Band-e Amir Biosphere Reserve will hopefully be submitted this year. This is the best example of South-South cooperation at the UNESCO forum and at the level of World Network of Biosphere Reserves.

## **13- Participation in MAB Stakeholders Consultation Meeting in Iran from October 4-6, 2015**

Chairman Pakistan Science Foundation, in the capacity of Co-Chairman National MAB Committee-Pakistan and Dr. Muhammad Rafique, Country Focal Person for MAB-Pakistan participated in 3-day meeting entitled “Stakeholders Consultation Meeting on the current state and upcoming Challenges in Biosphere Management”

## **14- Holding of 3<sup>rd</sup> National MAB Committee Meeting**

3<sup>rd</sup> Meeting of National MAB Committee-Pakistan was held on December 10, 2015 at Committee Room, Pakistan Science Foundation, Islamabad. The meeting was a joint effort of UNESCO Office-Islamabad and MAB Secretariat-Pakistan, Pakistan Museum of Natural History (PMNH), Pakistan Science Foundation (PSF) and Ministry of Science and Technology (MoST). The meeting was attended by all the members of national MAB Committee-Pakistan. A 12 item agenda, related to MAB activities and future plans of MAB programme in Pakistan, was discussed in a day-long session. The committee came up with concrete suggestions and plans for promoting the MAB activities in Pakistan.