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## EXECUTION OF THE PROGRAMME ADOPTED BY THE GENERAL CONFERENCE

### DEVELOPMENT OF THE NEW MAN AND THE BIOSPHERE (MAB) PROGRAMME STRATEGY FOR THE PERIOD 2015-2025

#### SUMMARY

Following General Conference Resolution 36 C/Resolution 33 (para. 8) that “*Further invites the Director-General, in consultation with the International Coordinating Council, to prepare a strategy document for the MAB Programme for the period beyond 2013, covered by the forthcoming Medium-Term Strategy of UNESCO, based on the Madrid Action Plan and evaluations of its implementation*”, a new MAB Strategy is currently being prepared. This document provides information on the development of the new MAB Strategy (2015-2025).

The document is presented to the Executive Board for information.

## INFORMATION ON THE DEVELOPMENT OF A NEW MAB STRATEGY (2015-2025)

1. The General Conference at its 36th session adopted Resolution 33 entitled “Fortieth anniversary of UNESCO’s Man and the Biosphere (MAB) Programme, mid-term evaluation of the Madrid Action Plan, and endorsement of the Dresden Declaration”. Paragraph 8 of 36 C/Resolution 33 “*Further invites* the Director-General, in consultation with the International Coordinating Council, to prepare a strategy document for the MAB Programme for the period beyond 2013, covered by the forthcoming Medium-Term Strategy of UNESCO, based on the Madrid Action Plan and evaluations of its implementation”.

2. At its 25th session, the MAB ICC discussed the development of a new Strategy for MAB and the World Network of Biosphere Reserves (WNBR) that would follow on the implementation of the Madrid Action Plan – MAP (2008-2013). The Council subsequently decided that a draft of the new Strategy should be presented to the MAB ICC at its 26th session (Jönköping, Sweden 10-13 June 2014) and that the text should be developed in harmony with the UNESCO Mid-Term Strategy (2014-2021) and be supportive of relevant sustainable development goals (SDG’s) that are to be integrated into the United Nations post-2015 development agenda. It was also agreed that the MAB Secretariat would support the strategy development processes, which is to be overseen by the Bureau of the MAB ICC and its “Electronic Reference Group” (formerly referred to as the “Electronic Working Group” and that the draft should reflect the outcomes of the evaluation of the Madrid Action Plan (MAP).<sup>1</sup>

3. On 6 March 2014, the MAB Secretary issued a MAB Circular Letter inviting all MAB National Committees and Focal Points to contribute to the strategy development process by providing key elements for the new strategy. A good number of inputs were subsequently received from MAB National Committees, Focal Points and a regional network (available in their original format in a compiled reference document<sup>2</sup>). Based on the inputs received, the MAB Bureau/Electronic Reference Group together with the MAB Secretariat prepared a preliminary “zero” draft of the new MAB Strategy for the 26th MAB ICC (contained in Section II in document SC-14/CONF.226/7/REV.<sup>3</sup>

4. At its 26th session, the MAB ICC subsequently examined and discussed the preliminary ‘zero’ draft of the new MAB Strategy allowing Member States and observers the opportunity to comment and to propose changes to the content and structure of the text (see paragraphs 43-67 in document SC-14/CONF.226/15). Following the discussion, the MAB ICC decided that the MAB Bureau together with six experts would form a new MAB “Strategy Group” (MSG). The 26th MAB ICC instructed the MAB Secretariat to draft terms of reference for the MSG and for the selection of the six experts and to produce a more condensed draft of the new MAB Strategy bringing together common statements made by the ICC and taking into account the findings of the evaluation of the MAP and to distribute the condensed draft to the MSG. The ICC also decided that a two-day MSG working meeting would be organized by the MAB Secretariat in October-November 2014 in order to prepare the first draft of the new strategy that should be widely circulated for consultation and comment and that the almost-final version of the strategy should be ready in time for final review and adoption at the 27th session of the MAB ICC.

5. Following the 26th MAB ICC, the MAB Secretariat drafted TORs for the MSG and for the selection of the six experts that later were adopted by the MAB Bureau.<sup>4</sup> The MAB Secretariat thereafter issued a MAB Circular Letter dated 27 August 2014 inviting all Member States through their MAB National Committees or MAB Focal Points to consider nominating one expert each from

<sup>1</sup> Report of the 25th MAB ICC: [http://www.unesco.org/new/fileadmin/MULTIMEDIA/HQ/SC/pdf/SC-13-CONF-225-11\\_Final\\_Report\\_en.pdf](http://www.unesco.org/new/fileadmin/MULTIMEDIA/HQ/SC/pdf/SC-13-CONF-225-11_Final_Report_en.pdf)

<sup>2</sup> The Final evaluation of the MAP: <http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0022/002280/228056E.pdf>

<sup>3</sup> [http://www.unesco.org/science/doc/mab/MAB\\_Compilation\\_%20of\\_submissions\\_newStrategy\\_May2014.pdf](http://www.unesco.org/science/doc/mab/MAB_Compilation_%20of_submissions_newStrategy_May2014.pdf)  
[http://www.unesco.org/new/fileadmin/MULTIMEDIA/HQ/SC/pdf/SC-14-CONF-226-7REV-New\\_MAB\\_Strategy-eng.pdf](http://www.unesco.org/new/fileadmin/MULTIMEDIA/HQ/SC/pdf/SC-14-CONF-226-7REV-New_MAB_Strategy-eng.pdf)

<sup>4</sup> [http://www.unesco.org/new/fileadmin/MULTIMEDIA/HQ/SC/pdf/MAB\\_Strategy\\_Group\\_TORs.pdf](http://www.unesco.org/new/fileadmin/MULTIMEDIA/HQ/SC/pdf/MAB_Strategy_Group_TORs.pdf)

its own region before 20 September 2014. Based on the names nominated, the MAB Bureau thereafter made a selection of six experts to join it to form the MSG.<sup>5</sup> The MSG also decided to establish a Roster of Experts based on the remaining names of nominated experts in order that they could be consulted and contribute to the strategy development process.<sup>6</sup>

6. In line with the Council's decision, the MSG held its first meeting on 13 and 14 November 2014, UNESCO, Paris. At its meeting, the MSG had before it a condensed version of the zero draft of the new MAB Strategy entitled "MAB Strategy 2015-2025. Condensed Zero Draft (6 November 2014 rev)" prepared by the MAB Secretariat in conformity with the decision of the MAB ICC.<sup>7</sup> The MSG had an in-depth discussion on the document and several amendments were made to the text during the meeting and in the weeks that followed. The resulting text entitled Preliminary Draft MAB Strategy (2015-2025) was ready for circulation on 2 February 2015.

7. Subsequently and in accordance with the decision of the MSG, the MAB Secretariat issued a MAB Circular Letter on 2 February 2015 together with the Preliminary Draft MAB Strategy (2015-2025) and an Announcement of the MSG inviting Member States of the MAB ICC, MAB National Committees and Focal Points, Biosphere Reserve Managers and Focal Points, Regional and Thematic MAB and WNBR Representatives for comments and inputs, noting that the document also was posted on the UNESCO MAB website and open for comments from all stakeholders and the public with 9 March 2015 as the deadline for submission of comments and inputs to the MAB Secretariat. The MSG stated that all inputs received will be made available on the UNESCO MAB website.

8. Following inputs to the "Zero draft strategy" presented to the 26th MAB ICC, and as noted in the Preliminary Draft MAB Strategy, the MSG has initiated a discussion on the terms "Man" and "Reserve". The discussion on the term "Reserve" is summarized in separate document entitled "A proposal for discussion: a World Network of Biosphere Regions".<sup>8</sup> In its Announcement, the MSG welcomed comments on this document as well.

9. The MSG also announced that the Final Draft MAB Strategy will be posted on the UNESCO MAB website (English and French) with a target number of maximum 10-15 pages by 8 May 2015 recalling that the MAB ICC would discuss and adopt the new MAB Strategy at its 27th session at UNESCO, Paris, from 8 to 12 June 2015.

10. For ease of reference, the UNESCO MAB website includes a special section dedicated to the development of the new MAB Strategy where all relevant documents can be found.<sup>9</sup> This site will also include information on the process aiming at developing a new MAB Action Plan for the implementation of the Strategy. It is anticipated that the new MAB Action Plan would be ready for adoption by the MAB ICC at its 28th session in 2016.

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<sup>5</sup> For the composition of the MAB Strategy Group: <http://www.unesco.org/new/en/natural-sciences/environment/ecological-sciences/man-and-biosphere-programme/strategies-and-action-plans/new-mab-strategy-and-action-plan/mab-strategy-group/>

<sup>6</sup> Roster of Experts: <http://www.unesco.org/new/en/natural-sciences/environment/ecological-sciences/man-and-biosphere-programme/strategies-and-action-plans/new-mab-strategy-and-action-plan/roster-of-experts/>  
<sup>7</sup> [http://www.unesco.org/new/fileadmin/MULTIMEDIA/HQ/SC/pdf/Final\\_Condensed\\_Zero\\_Draft\\_Strategy\\_ver\\_6\\_Nov\\_2014\\_rev.pdf](http://www.unesco.org/new/fileadmin/MULTIMEDIA/HQ/SC/pdf/Final_Condensed_Zero_Draft_Strategy_ver_6_Nov_2014_rev.pdf)

<sup>8</sup> [http://www.unesco.org/new/fileadmin/MULTIMEDIA/HQ/SC/pdf/Biosphere\\_Regions-a\\_proposal\\_for\\_discussion.pdf](http://www.unesco.org/new/fileadmin/MULTIMEDIA/HQ/SC/pdf/Biosphere_Regions-a_proposal_for_discussion.pdf)

<sup>9</sup> <http://www.unesco.org/new/en/natural-sciences/environment/ecological-sciences/man-and-biosphere-programme/strategies-and-action-plans/new-mab-strategy-and-action-plan/>