

UNITED NATIONS EDUCATIONAL, SCIENTIFIC AND CULTURAL ORGANISATION

Man and the Biosphere (MAB) Programme

Meeting of the Bureau of the MAB International Co-ordinating Council

UNESCO HQ (Room XVI, Bonvin Building)
27-29 October 1997

GUIDELINES FOR ESTABLISHING MAB NATIONAL COMMITTEES

1. During the third ArabMAB meeting held in Amman (Jordan) from 22 to 25 June 1997, participants expressed the wish to receive indications for setting up MAB National Committees, as well as their composition and mandate. The Secretariat was requested to prepare up-to-date guidelines, in order that each country would be represented by an effective MAB National Committee.
2. This matter has been taken up several times during the development of the MAB Programme, with recommendations and regular updating (see for example the report of the first session of the MAB ICC in 1971, the "Practical Guide to MAB" dated 1987, the results of the survey made by G. Long in 1990 and document SC-95/CONF.208/7 presented to the MAB ICC in 1995). The text submitted to the MAB Bureau builds upon and summarises these various elements in a simple, operational form.
3. The Bureau is invited to examine and amend these guidelines which then would be widely distributed.

Establishment of MAB National Committees

The decision to create a MAB National Committee and the means for its establishment depend on the internal organization of each State. Hence the composition of MAB National Committees varies from one country to another. The MAB International Co-ordinating Council nevertheless has drawn up some general guidelines as to their role, their composition and their functioning. In the absence of a MAB National Committee, a MAB Focal Point can be designated to carry out some of the functions that are described below.

Role of MAB National Committees

- A MAB National Committee is responsible for the activities making up the national contribution of a country to the international Programme on Man and the Biosphere (MAB), and in particular in promoting the biosphere reserve concept.
- In liaison with the UNESCO National Commissions, it serves as a relay between the different institutions and ministries concerned by the MAB Programme and UNESCO (MAB Secretariat, Division of Ecological Sciences).

- It ensures the national participation, whenever appropriate, in the sessions of the MAB International Co-ordinating Council, composed of 34 Member States.

The MAB National Committee should also:

- be associated with decisions concerning research on and conservation of natural resources at the national level;
- be consulted on the participation of the State as appropriate in other international programmes in the field of ecology (in particular the programmes carried out in collaboration with MAB) and the main Conventions (Ramsar Wetlands Convention, World Heritage Convention and Conventions on Biological Diversity and Desertification) as well as the national contribution to implementing Agenda 21.

Composition of MAB National Committees

In order to take account of the interests of the scientific community and the administrative authorities, the MAB National Committee should:

- be composed of representatives of the main scientific research centres, and of the universities and ministries concerned;
- be interdisciplinary.

The authority in charge of each biosphere reserve should also be represented on the MAB National Committee.

Functioning

The MAB National Committee should:

- whenever possible, have a budget to provide seed money to national MAB activities and funds for its functioning (meetings of its members, participation in regional and international meetings, publication of research results and diffusion of information);
- organise periodic meetings and prepare a report on national activities to be addressed to the MAB Secretariat at least every two years;
- ensure information exchange and the development of data bases;
- ensure participation in regional networks and in the World Network of Biosphere Reserves.