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National Report of Japan

There are nine Biosphere Reserves (BR) in Japan: Mount Hakusan BR (1980); Shiga Highland BR (1980); Mount Odaigahara, Mount Omine & Osugidani BR (1980); Yakushima & Kuchinoerabu Island BR (1980); Aya BR (2012), Tadami BR (2014); Minami Alps BR (2014); Minakami BR (2017) and Sobo, Katamuki and Okue BR (2017).

This National Report of Japan reports on the representative activities of the Japanese MAB National Committee and Commission, the BRs, and relevant stakeholders, and efforts for the implementation of the Lima Action Plan (LAP).

A. Initiatives taken by the Japanese National Commission and Japanese National Committee for MAB

1. Japanese National committee for MAB has conducted and analyzed its survey of measures for implementing the Lima Action Plan (hereinafter, LAP). The survey analyzes the achievements made in the initial stages of the MAB strategy and LAP target periods, with the aim of making the results a foundation for studying policies and measures for further promoting Japan's BRs.

The results of the survey indicate, as an overall trend of Japan's BRs, the BRs' strengths in collaborating with regional universities and educational institutions and their taking the initiative ahead of other countries in establishing domestic networks of BRs, called JBRN. For instance, the Committee recognizes not only research projects but also seminars and workshops contributing to capacity building are under way in collaboration with academic institutions. On the other hand, it reveals that strengthening international collaboration and mechanisms to implement monitoring and self-evaluation remain as issues.

In order to further grow these strengths and overcome the issues, the National Committee is pursuing discussions on suitable support measures for addressing the local needs of BRs and matters that the BRs should be dealing with.

The following points are some findings by this survey highlighted on the implementation of LAP in Japan's nine Biosphere Reserves.

Actions related to the Strategic Action Area A:

- SDG-linked efforts are under way at nearly all biosphere reserves. UNESCO Associated School registrations are moving forward in many biosphere reserve communities. Education for sustainable development (ESD) linked to biosphere reserve ideals is taking place at schools and public awareness sites. Nature learning for children and projects to support free research are also under way.
- Biosphere reserve-related relay lectures and seminars have been held at all biosphere reserves; an example of one open and participatory effort. In one case inspired by a community resident, a *BR Café* was opened in a joint effort by residents and university personnel to plan biosphere reserve projects on their own using a workshop format. There was also a system for general residents to designate supports to be in charge of collecting information on a grouse habitat.
- We also see cases of local governments with jurisdiction over biosphere reserve communities passing ordinances to protect wild fauna and flora. They have designated plants and animals to be protected in the area and have established a ban on mass capture and a system of guards.
- Research for BRs and partnerships with universities are also moving forward. We see examples of projects implemented after the signing of partnership agreements and systems of grants for biosphere reserve-related academic research.

Actions related to the Strategic Action Area B:

- An exchange project related to university youth and biosphere reserves has begun among the Mount Hakusan Biosphere Reserve and reserves in Russia and Belarus undertaken by an initiative of Kanazawa University.

Actions related to the Strategic Action Area C:

- There is a case in which some profits made off products in profit-making ventures in cooperation with the private-sector are used for elimination of alien plants.
- We see environmental education and cooperation on PR magazines and projects begun by corporations on the occasion of registration of a biosphere reserve.

2. The National Committee had the UNESCO publications “The Declaration of the MAB Youth Forum 2017” and the “MAB global Communication Strategy and Action Plan” translated into Japanese and has disseminated this internationally recognized declaration and strategy throughout Japan.

B. Japan's Contributions to International activities and the ASPAC Region

1. Representatives from the Japanese MAB Committee, BR managers, and others participated in SeaBRnet meeting held in Albay BR, Philippine, in March 2019, where they made presentations on their activities. A presentation from Japan highlighted some experiences of initiatives targeting youth in collaborate with the University in Japan and Russia.
2. Japan is supporting the activities conducted by the UNESCO Jakarta Office through its Japanese Funds in Trust (JFIT). UNESCO Jakarta Office conducted the following three projects under the JFIT.
 - (1) Expert group to define a ***sustainability science-based framework for biosphere reserve management***
Standard Framework for BR management informed by Sustainability Science is under development by this expert group.
 - (2) ***Eco-labelling guidelines for biosphere reserves*** in Asia and the Pacific
Good Practices for Applying Eco-labelling in Biosphere Reserves in Asia and the Pacific will be compiled by the UNESCO Jakarta.
 - (3) ***Comparative law study on BR zonation*** in Asia and the Pacific
A report on the Comparative Law Study on the Implementation of Biosphere Reserve Zonation in the Asia Pacific Region with Identification of Key Legal Aspects will be published.

C. Activities and initiatives across the nation taken by the Japanese BR Communities

1. The Japan BR Network (JBRN) concluded a collaboration agreement with the AEON Environmental Foundation (AEF), which was established by AEON Co., Ltd, the biggest retailer in Asia, and is working with AEF to promote environmental education utilizing BRs and raise awareness about the value and knowledge of BRs. This year, BR Fairs were held in the AEON Malls in the Minakami BR, the Shiga Highland BR, and the Minami-Alps BR, with the aims of providing information about the BRs and communicating their attractiveness to the many Fair visitors, raising awareness about BRs, and asking for people's cooperation for environmental conservation activities.

2. Under a project named the “Joint Development of University Education Program for UNESCO Biosphere Reserves in Eurasia,” Kanazawa University is engaged in the following five activities:
 - 1) Publishing and distribution of a book of educational cases,
 - 2) Organizing an international forum and training course,
 - 3) Field visits to BRs in Russia and Belarus,
 - 4) Online questionnaire survey on educational activities in Japanese BRs,
 - 5) Field visits to Aya BR and Miyazaki University.

With this project as an opportunity, Kanazawa University and Belarusian State University signed a collaboration agreement, and Kanazawa University also established the Kanazawa University Organization for Global Affairs SDGs Biosphere Reserves, Geoparks Research Center in the Mount Hakusan BR.

The Project was supported by Governmental Subsidy Project for UNESCO-related Activities through Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology (MEXT).

D. Others

1. Deliberations are underway on whether the new BR candidate “Kobushi” can be registered as a UNESCO BR by the MAB-ICC. Explanation meetings and events have been held several times in the local region to raise awareness of the BR candidate, and events and project plans are been formulated to promote lively activities if Kobushi is registered.
2. Japanese BRs are energetically promoting their activities. Main activities undertaken from July 2018 until the present are listed below.
 - 1) July 20, 2018 – Japan BR Network (JBRN)
A JBRN Operating Working Group meeting was held. Around 30 BR representatives attended the meeting, at which the participants discussed collaboration with the AEON Environmental Foundation and exchanged views and information on the activities of each BR.
 - 2) July 21-22, 2018 – Mount Hakusan BR
An international forum titled “University Education with multi-stakeholders in UNESCO Biosphere Reserves - Implementation of

Sustainable Development Goals in Eurasia -” was held at Kanazawa University. Presentations were made on educational cases in BRs in Belarus, Russia, and Japan.

- 3) November 11-12, 2018 – Japan BR Network
Japanese BR representatives showed exhibits, etc. at non-BR events like the 10th Japan National Conference on ASPnet in order to provide information on projects for promoting collaboration between BRs and school education.
- 4) February 9, 2019 – Minami-Alps BR
A presentation session was held, at which presentations were given on the results of a long-running vegetation survey conducted by local high school students, environmental conservation activities by local companies, the activities of local governments, and so on. The presentations and discussions deepened understanding of various activities being carried out in the area.
- 5) March 23 – May 19, 2019 – Minakami BR
The Minakami BR held a special exhibition in cooperation with a local museum to publicize the attractive features of the BR. The special exhibition featured a photography exhibition, which showcased the core area and the conservation activities in the area, and an exhibition of toys made from wood collected locally, and so on.
- 6) April 10, 2019 – Sobo, Katamuki, and Okue BR
The BR held a symposium titled “Thinking about Biospheres and Sustainable Regional Development.” Attended by many local citizens, the participants discussed sustainable regional development utilizing eco-agriculture and ecotourism.