

**THE FEASIBILITY STUDY TO ESTABLISH A “GLOBAL RESEARCH  
AND TRAINING CENTRE FOR INTERNATIONALLY  
DESIGNATED AREAS (GCIDA)” AS A CENTRE UNDER THE  
AUSPICES OF UNESCO (CATEGORY 2) IN JEJU ISLAND,  
THE REPUBLIC OF KOREA**



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Conducted on behalf of UNESCO

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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

1. The Government of the Republic of Korea, submitted on 27 March 2019 a formal request to the Director-General of UNESCO to initiate all necessary steps for the establishment of the “Global Research and Training Centre for Internationally Designated Areas (GCIDA)” as a Centre under the auspices of UNESCO (Category 2).

2. The work of three of the four internationally designated areas (IDAs), namely World Heritage sites, Biosphere Reserves and UNESCO Global Geoparks are coordinated by UNESCO. Sites designated under the Ramsar Convention on Wetlands of International Importance (1971) are coordinated by the Convention Secretariat in Gland, Switzerland. However, Member States wishing to ratify/accept the Ramsar Convention deposit their legal instruments at UNESCO and many Ramsar sites share World Heritage and/or Biosphere Reserve status as well.

3. The entire Jeju Island is a UNESCO Biosphere Reserve as well as a UNESCO Global Geopark. Mount Halla and the Lava Tubes in Jeju has been included as a natural World Heritage property on the World Heritage List. Five wetlands in Jeju have been recognized as Ramsar sites. Jeju thus is associated with all four IDA designations and is a multi-internationally designated area (MIDA).

4. The role of IDAs has become increasingly important as international standard setters, demonstration sites and agents of change to realize the objectives of international strategies and multilateral conventions for conservation and sustainable development. With rapidly growing number of IDAs, problems concerning the effective functioning of these areas are being acknowledged globally, calling for new efforts in capacity building for IDAs as well as MIDAs.

5. The Director-General of UNESCO authorized the Assistant Director-General for Natural Sciences (ADG/SC), to undertake a feasibility study of the proposed GCIDA to be established in Jeju, the Republic of Korea. The study was based on a review of all documents provided by the Republic of Korea, and a technical mission to Seoul and Jeju from 12 to 15 June 2019. It was conducted in accordance with the Integrated Comprehensive Strategy documents approved by the General Conference at its 37th session (37 C/Resolution 93).

6. The proposal to establish GCIDA brings together two programme delivery mechanisms of UNESCO: research and training functions of Centres under the auspices of UNESCO (Category 2) and the four types of IDAs. This combination is rather unique and the proposed Centre has clear potential to contribute to initiatives addressing the Agenda 2030 for Sustainable Development and the Paris Agreement on Climate Change.

7. The Provincial Government of Jeju, with the support of the Government of the Republic of Korea and in partnership with the Government of Spain continues to support a global network on climate change in island and coastal ecosystems; the Government of the Republic of Korea has provided funding for research and training activities of the East Asian Biosphere Reserve Network (EABRN) for nearly 25 years; and the Korea International Cooperation Agency (KOICA) has collaborated with the Secretariat of the UNESCO Man and the Biosphere (MAB) Programme to run pilot projects on “Green Economies in Biosphere Reserves” in Ghana,

Nigeria and Tanzania. The Jeju World Heritage Centre, Jeju Stone Park Centre and the Dongbaekdongsan Wetland Centre have been continuously carrying out education, training and research activities. The proposed Centre thus presents an opportunity to further develop research and training initiatives that could meet targets of several Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), particularly 15, 14, 13, 11, 8 and 6.

8. Jeju Island is also home to the legendary diving women, the Haenyeo, included in the UNESCO List of Intangible Heritage. These divers have practised their craft without the aid of modern equipment for centuries. They are now mentors and trainers of younger women in Jeju who wish to ensure continuity and transmission of the tradition. The proposed GCIDA is well-placed to promote research and training initiatives on gender, heritage protection and sustainable development.

9. The proposed GCIDA, to be established under the Natural Sciences, has clear strategic and programmatic linkages with UNESCO's programmes in science, education and culture as well as great potential for inter-sectoral partnerships.

10. The GCIDA will be established by the Ministry of Environment. Following the anticipated approval by the UNESCO Executive Board, the Government of the Republic of Korea and UNESCO will sign an agreement for the work of GCIDA for a six-year period. GCIDA will be then established and operated initially as a Foundation but subsequently transformed into a special corporation via an amendment of the Natural Environment Conservation Act to enjoy within its territory the functional autonomy necessary for the execution of its activities and the legal capacity.

12. The comprehensive experience and knowledge generated in Jeju since 2001 in the application of all four categories of IDAs, and Jeju being a pioneering case of MIDAs, lays a sound foundation for the proposed GCIDA to perform and grow. The technical capacities and facilities in Jeju for education, research and training are well planned and funded and accessible for both targeted foreign and domestic recipients. The expertise of scientific research and management of IDAs as well as entrepreneurship in green development required are both available from the Republic Korea and through Jeju's long-term partnership with international organizations concerned. The long-term effort of the Government of the Republic of Korea and the Government of Jeju Province to use IDAs for conservation and sustainable development and their commitment to this proposal provide an overall guarantee for institutional development of the proposed GCIDA and its sustainability in future.

**FINAL REPORT OF THE FEASIBILITY STUDY TO ESTABLISH A “GLOBAL RESEARCH AND TRAINING CENTRE FOR INTERNATIONALLY DESIGNATED AREAS (GCIDA)” AS A CENTRE UNDER THE AUSPICES OF UNESCO (CATEGORY 2) IN JEJU ISLAND, THE REPUBLIC OF KOREA**

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### **III. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

ANNEX 1: List of information documents used in the preparation of this report and which are available in the MAB Secretariat, SC/EES

ANNEX 2: Photos taken during the visit of UNESCO experts to Jeju and Seoul, the Republic of Korea, 12-15 June 2019

## I. BACKGROUND

The UNESCO National Commission of the Republic of Korea, by letter of 27 March 2019 submitted a proposal to establish in Jeju Island, a “Global Research and Training Centre for Internationally Designated Areas (GCIDA)” as a Centre under the auspices of UNESCO (item 1 of Annex 1). After an internal assessment, the Director-General of UNESCO called for a feasibility study of the proposal to be undertaken by the Division of Ecological and Earth Sciences (SC/EES) which hosts Secretariats for two of the four internationally designated areas referred to in the proposal, namely UNESCO Biosphere Reserves (BR) and UNESCO Global Geoparks (GG), respectively.

The Secretariat of the Man the Biosphere (MAB) Programme of SC/EES established Terms of Reference (TOR) (item 2 of Annex 1) for the feasibility study and, in accordance with UNESCO rules and procedures, selected two consultants to assist the MAB Secretariat in gathering data and information and in the preparation of the report of the feasibility for establishing GCIDA. The report should propose recommendations for decision making by the 207<sup>th</sup> session of the Executive Board of UNESCO scheduled to convene in Paris, France in October 2019.

As defined by the TOR for the feasibility study and following a desk study of all documentation provided by the authorities of the Republic of Korea, a UNESCO mission comprising by Ms. Marie Prchalova, Programme Specialist and Team Leader, Biosphere Reserves and Capacity Building Section of UNESCO SC/EES, and two consultants, i.e. Mr. Han Qunli (China) and Mr. Natarajan Ishwaran (Sri Lanka), visited the Republic of Korea, including Jeju Island from 12 to 15 June 2019.

The mission team had several meetings with a number of authorities of the Government of the Republic of Korea and the Provincial Government of the Autonomous Province of Jeju; visited several institutions and sites that will constitute key components of the proposed UNESCO Category 2 Centre; had discussions with staff of the institutions and sites who will contribute to the work of the proposed GCIDA (item 3, 4 of Annex 1); and reviewed a number of additional documents that were provided to the mission to supplement information already included in the original proposal (item 4, 5, 6, 7 and 8 of Annex 1). All documents listed in Annex 1 are available at the Secretariat of the MAB Programme, SC/EES in UNESCO.

In this report, following this introductory section on the background to the proposal to establish GCIDA and the methodology adopted in undertaking the feasibility study, the findings of the study are reported separately for each of the eight items defined under Section A of the TOR for the feasibility study. A final section on conclusion and recommendations provides specific suggestions for key elements of the feasibility study report that could serve in the compilation of the “Executive Board document including possible operational paragraphs for a possible agreement between UNESCO and the proposed Centre”.

## II. FINDINGS OF THE FEASIBILITY STUDY

- (i) Contribution to UNESCO's Strategic Objectives and sectoral/intersectoral programmes priorities and themes as defined in the Organization's Medium-Term Strategy (37 C/4) and in particular, in its Strategic Objective 5 “Promoting

international scientific cooperation on critical challenges to sustainable development.

The biosphere reserve in Jeju Island, first recognized in 2002, was extended by the International Coordinating Council (ICC) of the MAB Programme at its 31<sup>st</sup> session held in UNESCO Headquarters in Paris during 17 to 21 June 2019 to cover the entire island. The whole of Jeju also enjoys UNESCO Global Geopark status. Mt. Halla and the lava tubes in the Jeju Island were declared a UNESCO World Natural Heritage in 2007. Five wetland sites within Jeju have been recognized as internationally significant areas for the conservation and sustainable use of critical ecosystems important for migratory birds under the Ramsar Convention (1971). Although the Ramsar Convention Secretariat is officed in IUCN, Gland, Switzerland, UNESCO is the organ where Member States wishing to be part of that Convention deposit their instrument of ratification or acceptance.

The proposal to establish GCIDA therefore will be a significant contribution to attaining Strategic Objective 5 by strengthening the “role and potential of UNESCO-designated biosphere reserves and other UNESCO-affiliated sites, along with their associated networks, as pilot sites for research on mitigation and adaptation to climate change, green economies, and as sites for collaboration with other international innovative environmental initiatives” (paragraph 55, page 22 of 37C/4 of UNESCO for the period 2014-2021).

Research and training activities of GCIDA in Jeju Island, a multiple internationally designated area (MIDA) can also support the attainment of some of the strategic priorities of Education and Culture sectors of UNESCO. In the Education Sector, research in Jeju Island and the information, data, case studies and similar learning materials generated via workshops, seminars and other regional and international events could inform the development of curricula and products that can promote education for sustainable development (ESD) (paragraph 34 under strategic objective 2 of UNESCO 37C/4: “Empowering learners to be creative and responsible global citizens). Jeju is, apart from being a World Natural Heritage site is also home to the legendary diving women, the Haenyeo, whose tradition and practice has been included in the UNESCO List of Intangible Heritage. Haenyeo-women have been diving without the aid of any of the modern equipment since historical times. As they begin to age, training and mentoring centres have been established in Jeju to pass their knowledge and skills integral to the tradition to younger generations. Hence the proposed GCIDA could well serve the Strategic Objective 7 of the 37C/4 (2014 – 2021) – protecting, promoting and transmitting heritage.

Based on the intersectoral links mentioned above the proposed GCIDA could facilitate the design, development and implementation of research and training activities that are intersectoral and enable UNESCO Member States to better address the challenges of sustainable development.

- (ii) Programmatic linkages between the Centre's activities and UNESCO's Programmes mainly in the fields of natural sciences, culture and education, including the two global priorities of UNESCO (gender equality and Africa).

The proposed GCIDA is well placed to enable Member States to “develop UNESCO designated sites as learning sites for inclusive and comprehensive approaches to environmental, economic and social aspects of sustainable development” (Expected Result (ER) 6 of Main Line of Action (MLA) 2 of the plan and budget of the Natural Sciences Sector for 2018-2019). Also, ER1 of MLA1 of the culture sector, namely the strengthening of tangible heritage through the promotion of activities of the 1972 (World Heritage) Convention will significantly benefit from research and training activities that GCIDA hopes to sponsor. Jeju Island, where GCIDA will be located is an island where authorities responsible for the entire island are experimenting and learning approaches to balancing economic growth, societal development and human wellbeing; similar efforts to advance harmonization among the three often conflicting goals is a fundamental feature of many of the BRs, WHs, GGs and Ramsar sites throughout the world. Research collaboration that GCIDA will promote can generate valuable data, information and knowledge on how Governments, NGOs and the private sector are partnering at local, national and global levels to guide growth, development and wellbeing along sustainable pathways. As such these learning sites can feed into UNESCO Education sector’s coordinating and lead role in efforts to attain SDG 4 on quality education. GCIDA sponsored training and research activities could generate case studies and lessons that can be fed into formal and non-formal educational systems as well as for life-long learning initiatives aimed to promote sustainable development.

The programme priorities for 2018-2019 discussed above are expected to continue in 2020-2021. Based on the decision of the UNESCO General Conference scheduled to be convened in Paris in November 2019 that will discuss programme priorities and budgets for 2020-2021, other opportunities for GCIDA to build closer programmatic linkages between science, education and culture may arise.

GCIDA activities can enhance recognition and promotion of UNESCO-wide strategic priorities, namely Africa and gender, in several ways. Research on gender-specific, climate change vulnerabilities in mountains, arid lands and small islands are attracting increasing attention in social sciences research; GCIDA could stimulate such research studies on a comparative basis across geographical regions thereby generating much needed data, knowledge and insights to integrate gender issues into climate change adaptation planning and policy making. Africa based UNESCO Category 2 Centres, for example the African World Heritage Fund headquartered in South Africa and the post graduate training institution on tropical forest land management (ERAIFT in Kinshasa, DRC) could establish partnerships with GCIDA and explore joint research and training initiatives that can help build capacities in African Member States, especially for young professionals, to attain SDGs. GCIDA proposal has made an explicit commitment to target developing countries in Africa and the Asia Pacific as its initial priority (the first 3 years) gradually expanding geographical scope over time.

- (iii) Consistency with strategic goals and statutory frameworks related to UNESCO designated sites (Biosphere Reserves, UNESCO Global Geoparks and Natural World Heritages Sites) and their relevant Scientific Programmes (Man and the Biosphere Programme, the International Geoscience and Geoparks Programme), Convention (Convention Concerning the Protection of the World’s Cultural and Natural



Heritage) and to Ramsar sites designated under the Ramsar Convention on Wetlands of International Importance.

All UNESCO biosphere reserves are expected to serve conservation, development and logistic functions. Research, training and monitoring constitute the essence of the logistic function and hence the proposed GCIDA's dedicated focus on training and research is welcome and appropriate. The Lima Action Plan for UNESCO's Man and the Biosphere (MAB) Programme and its World Network of Biosphere Reserves (WNBR) (2016-2025), foresees, under strategic action area A.4, "Research, practical learning and training opportunities that support the management of BRs and sustainable development in BRs." The proposed GCIDA could make a significant contribution towards developing activities defined in A.4.1 – A.4.5, namely establishing partnerships with research institutions, universities, UNESCO Chairs established under the UNESCO/UNITWIN programme and selected UNESCO Networks such as the Associated Schools Programme (ASP).

Training and capacity building are priorities of the World Heritage Convention with the World Heritage Fund supporting a selected number of training activities in Member States, including in World Heritage sites, every year. The GCIDA proposal will benefit natural and mixed World Heritage sites more than cultural sites. Nevertheless, a growing number of World Cultural Heritage Landscapes are drawing from principles of landscape ecology, design and planning to harmonize between heritage protection and economic development. GCIDA research and training activities that engage landscape level planners and administrators could contribute towards sustainable development of such heritage landscapes and their surrounding regions.

UNESCO Global Geoparks as well as Ramsar Convention sites too place significant emphasis on education, research and training<sup>1</sup>. Education and training of local guides in GGs emphasize raising awareness and knowledge of resident communities and visitors on geological history and scientific values of the area, including how it has been affected by climate and other environmental change. Ramsar wetlands are important educational centres, particularly for ecotourism operators and developers. Ornithological significance of Ramsar sites and enthusiasm of bird watchers to contribute to conservation can be combined to launch citizen science initiatives where the public and visitors contribute data and information that can support science-based conservation and management interventions.

(iv) Inputs to the implementation of the Agenda 2030 and achievements of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) – particularly Goals 6, 11, 13, and 15.

Contribution to UN Agenda 2030 to attain SDGs is an obligation of all UN organizations and Member States. UNESCO has a recognized lead role in global coordination of activities dedicated in enhancing quality education (SDG4).

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<sup>1</sup> Item (i) of the Criteria for UNESCO Global Geoparks defines the roles of education and research. Ramsar Convention guides its education and research through the Convention's Programme on Communication, Capacity Building, Education, Participation and Awareness (CEPA).

UNESCO is the only UN organization that confers BR, WH and/or GG status to selected places in all regions and to a mix of natural as well as human influenced ecosystems. Their combined total now exceeds 1700, covers billions of hectares of land, water and oceans and are home to millions of resident communities and additional millions of visitors. Each BR, WH site and/or GG can be a learning site through research and training for the implementation of actions aimed to deliver specific mix of priority SDGs that are collaboratively agreed upon by resident communities, scientists and policy personnel. This significant potential of IDAs as learning sites for research, training and knowledge sharing for attaining SDGs during Agenda 2030 is not given adequate recognition by other UN organizations, in particular UNEP and UNDP. The proposed GCIDA and its planned research and training agenda can be a mechanism to send a wake-up call to the international community to make the best use of IDAs to share experience, knowledge and lessons learned for delivering on SDGs during Agenda 2030.

SDG 15 (life on land) is the SDG that probably relates to the largest number of the estimated 4118 IDAs (BRs, WH sites, GGs and Ramsar sites) worldwide although a significant number would also be relevant to SDG 14 (life below water in coastal and marine ecosystems). IDAs are experimental grounds and already there are many initiatives that promote research and learning for climate change adaptation and mitigation (SDG13). The Republic of Korea and Spain are supporting a network of UNESCO Biosphere Reserves on climate change research and training in coastal, marine and small island ecosystems. The Republic of Korea has also been the lead sponsor of the East Asian Biosphere Reserve Network since the 1990s, and has supported research and training collaboration that provide insights into many SDGs, including 6, 7, 8, 13, 14 and 15. These and other on-going initiatives which the Government of the Republic of Korea and the Government of the Autonomous Province of Jeju are supporting will provide important links and opportunities for GCIDA to develop innovative research and training initiatives that contribute to Agenda 2030.

The UNESCO MAB Secretariat and the Korean International Cooperation Agency (KOICA) have already implemented a project on “Green Economies in Biosphere Reserves” benefiting Ghana, Nigeria and Tanzania. GCIDA could learn from lessons generated by this project for contributing towards SDGs 8, 11, 13 and 15 and launch new research and training initiatives that strengthen contributions of IDAs to green growth and development during Agenda 2030.

The Dongbaekdongsane Wetland in Jeju is an important Ramsar site and is part of the Jocheon-eup Ramsar City. The active engagement of communities in the conservation, management and monitoring of the health of the Wetland, especially the leadership roles that a group of local women has taken, and the benefits community residents derive from tourism and other activities could contribute to efforts to attain SDG 11 – sustainable cities and communities.

- (v) The type, scope and nature of the Centre's activities (knowledge production, capacity development, technical support, research and publication capability, flexibility with the evolving nature of the subject matter, information sharing, etc.).

Korean and Jeju authorities currently foresee, over the short-to-medium term (about 5-6 years) the following research priorities: research on common threats to IDAs and for the improvement of IDA management; case studies on local development through IDA conservation and management; construction of a comprehensive database for MIDAs and implementing studies to facilitate good MIDAs management practices. Training during the first 3 years will aim to convene 3 short-term (1 week) training courses per year benefiting a total of 60 persons from 15-20 countries. Selected participants in the training programme will be supported to develop themselves as trainers in their home-countries. A web-based platform for sharing e-learning modules in several languages will be set up to enhance accessibility to the training programmes conducted and their outcomes.

The expected outcomes of the work of the proposed GCIDA are: improve capacity of IDA managers and site-management systems; contribute to upgrading IDAs be the pivot in realizing SDGs; active support in the development and implementation of initiatives and strategies designed for the quality improvement of IDA management; and complementing and generating synergy with other concerned UNESCO Category 2 centres and other UN institutions.

The above-mentioned broad outlines for the types, scope and nature of the proposed GCIDA's activities are in concordance with UNESCO Strategic and Programme priorities as well as the plans of the different UNESCO Programmes concerned with IDAs. The existing education and training facilities in Jeju provide already a sound base for these research and training activities. However, further fine-tuning and refinement of planned activities will be needed once the proposal has been considered by the UNESCO Executive Board and decision and recommendations for its establishment granted and the Governing structures and arrangements of the proposed Centre (see section vii below) have been finalized.

- (vi) The global regional, sub-regional or interregional relevance and impact (actual or potential) of the proposed Centre, in particular the complementarities and interactions between it and other existing Institutes or Centres with similar focus or similar institutions created and operated by other United Nations system organizations.

GCIDA, which is aiming to be a UNESCO category 2 Centre with a global reach is quite unique. There is no other UNESCO Category 2 Centre that target research and training needs of all the four categories of IDAs. Other UNESCO category 2 Centres in the Asia Pacific region target World Natural Heritage (Dehra Dun, India), training of World Heritage managers and authorities in Asia and the Pacific (Shanghai, China) and Space Technologies for Natural and Cultural Heritage (Beijing, China). In other parts of the world, the African World Heritage Fund (South Africa) and International Centre on Mediterranean Biosphere Reserves (Barcelona, Spain) are worthy of mention. Once established, GCIDA may develop partnership with these as well as other selected UNESCO category 2 centres for mutual enhancement and sharing of experience and specific expertise required.

In addressing training and research needs of IDAs, GCIDA would also bring some much-needed focus on the specific management challenges facing MIDAs; of the

4118 IDAs in the world, 474 are MIDAs; namely places that, like the island of Jeju itself, carry more than one international designation. To many, including key policy and decision-making personnel in UNESCO Member States, it is often confusing to see different parts of the same area being designated as World Heritage, biosphere reserve, Global Geopark and/or Ramsar sites. Coordination of the management regimes that cater to the specific conservation, management and monitoring of the different IDAs could help in harmonized reporting and collaborative initiatives to address global challenges such as climate change and sustainable development under specific local development contexts.

In Jeju, the United Nations Institute for Training and Research (UNITAR) has its local hub in UNITAR-CIFAL (Centre International de Formation des Autorites et Leaders) and runs regular training activities on selected themes such as environmental sustainability, sustainable tourism, youth engagement, SDGs awareness raising and human security. GCIDA may have opportunities to partner with UNITAR-CIFAL to organize research and training activities on selected aspects of Agenda 2030 to facilitate UN Member States efforts to attain SDGs.

- (vii) Independence and sustainability (legal status, governance, timeline for the creation of the Centre, financial sustainability, human resources, location and premises).

GCIDA's location being in Jeju Island, an Autonomous Province within the Republic of Korea would confer a significant amount of independence in day-to-day running of the Centre. Jeju airport offers visa-free entry to 187 countries and is served by a total of 268 flights from 12 cities in the region and 270 daily domestic flights from other Korean cities. Hence the location of GCIDA will be easily accessible from all parts of the world.

GCIDA will be established and supervised by the Ministry of Environment which has responsibility for the protection and management all the IDAs of Korea. During the first half of 2020 a support group for the establishment of GCIDA will be created and the budget for its operations secured. The budget requested for the year 2020 is about US\$ 432,000. This request has already been submitted to the Ministry of Environment and is awaiting approval pending the decision of UNESCO Executive Board in October 2019 to establish GCIDA. Once UNESCO approval of GCIDA has been confirmed, further requests for budgets for extended periods of time will be submitted for approval. Following the expected approval by UNESCO Executive Board in October 2019, GCIDA will be established and operated as a Foundation. Its legal status will be subsequently switched to that of a special corporation through an amendment of the Natural Environment Conservation Act during the first half of 2020. Staff for the Centre will be recruited. Staff strength will be 10 persons, comprising 3 teams (planning and administration, research and development and training and exchange, respectively), for the first 3 years and will rise to 15 by year 6.

A 14-Member Governing Board for GCIDA will be established in the first half of 2020. The Board will comprise:

- Three representatives of the Government of the Republic of Korea, namely from Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MOFA), Ministry of Environment (MOE) and Cultural Heritage Administration (CHA);
- One representative from the Government of the Autonomous Province of Jeju Island;
- Five representatives from relevant international organizations and academia;
- Up to three representatives of UNESCO Member States recommended by UNESCO;
- One representative of the Director-General of UNESCO; and,
- The Director of the Centre or his/her Delegate (with no right to vote)

This proposed structure of the Governing Board is satisfactory but inclusion of representatives of other important Korean agencies working closely with UNESCO, in particular the UNESCO National Commission of the Republic of Korea, must be given due consideration after the approval for the establishment of GCIDA has been granted by UNESCO Executive Board in October 2019.

During the first half of 2020, an agreement between UNESCO and the Ministry of Environment, the Republic of Korea, will be finalized for the operation of the Centre for an initial period of 6 years, subject to renewal for an additional 6 years based on the outcome of a formal UNESCO evaluation of GCIDA's first six-year performance. The UNESCO National Commission for the Republic of Korea has presented to the feasibility study team a draft agreement for consideration that could be, with necessary amendments, concluded between UNESCO and the Republic of Korea following the hoped-for approval of the establishment of GCIDA by UNESCO Executive Board in October 2019.

GCIDA will be established in a cluster of existing buildings in the northern part of the Jeju Island. The GCIDA infrastructure will comprise the following:

- Jeju Stone Park building: Director's and administrative offices, meeting rooms and the performance hall of Obaek Janggun Gallery, which can host workshops as well as special events;
- Jeju World Natural Heritage Centre: this contains exhibition hall, 4D display facilities and room, education room and additional office rooms;
- Dongbaekdongsan Wetland Centre: multi-purpose seminar room, visitor information centre, souvenir shop and space for experiencing local activities linked production of arts and craft materials, souvenirs etc.; and
- Dongbaekdongsan Eco-village: there are lodging facilities (19 rooms in 9 units), restaurant, facility management unit and staff and a parking lot.

Subject to approval by the UNESCO Executive Board, GCIDA is expected to be fully operational by the second half of 2020.

- (viii) Cooperation and Partnerships (including the Ramsar Convention Secretariat, and IUCN), and cooperation with other UNESCO entities, the role and contribution to be provided by UNESCO.

Apart from the Korean Government representatives in the Governing Board of GCIDA several other Korean organizations will be associated with the work of GCIDA. The most important ones being: Korean Environment Corporation, National Institute of Ecology, National Institute of Environmental Research, Korean Environment Institute, Korean National Park Service, River Basin Environmental Offices at Yeongsangang and National Institute of Biological Resources. Some of these partner organizations have well established education and training networks which could link with activities of GCIDA. For example, the Korean National Park Friendship Programme (KNPFP) shares best practices in managing national parks with Asian countries such Malaysia, Maldives, Mongolia and Pakistan.

Cooperation with the Ramsar Secretariat in Gland will be facilitated through collaboration with the work of the Ramsar Regional centre for East Asia (RRC-EA) co-financed by Ministry of Environment and Suncheon City; RRC-EA has a membership of 18 countries from East, Southeast and South Asia and has organized annual, regional training events since 2009, benefiting more than 500 wetland managers in member countries.

Collaboration with IUCN, an important advisory body in UNESCO World Natural Heritage affairs is facilitated by close links that already exist between Korean Ministry of Environment and Korean National Park Service with IUCN Headquarters. Implementing IUCN resolution on collaborative management and administration of MIDAs adopted in the World Conservation Congress (WCC) held in Hawaii in 2014 will be an important aspect of the work of GCIDA. Coordination with IUCN will be achieved through the Korean Ministry of Environment's Liaison Officers who work in IUCN Headquarters in Gland, Switzerland.

UNESCO regional and country Offices in Asia Pacific as well as from other regions could collaborate directly with GCIDA in identifying priority research and training activities. Regional/sub-regional UNESCO Programme networks, such as biosphere reserve networks of East, Southeast and South and Central Asia may also explore joint events and initiatives with the proposed GCIDA.

UNESCO does not have any financial obligations for the operations of UNESCO category 2 Centres. However, the Republic of Korea (Incheon City near the Incheon International Airport) is home to the Green (Global) Climate Fund (GCF) which is now the largest inter-governmental financial facility for linking climate change mitigation and adaptation measures to the delivery of the other 16 SDGs. IDAs, many of them being significant landscapes with untapped potentials for creating land use mixes covering biodiversity conservation, sustainable forestry and agriculture, sustainable tourism infrastructure and other sectors, could serve as sites for pilot research, capacity building and demonstration projects that could potentially be financed by GCF. Other Korea based international, intergovernmental organs, e.g. Global Green Growth Institute (GGGI) have special thematic programme initiatives on sustainable landscapes. GCIDA's possible future presence in Jeju could create opportunities for UNESCO for establishing closer links with GCF, GGGI and other international organizations headquartered in Korea; the private sector in Korea and other Asian nations are showing increasing interest to engage with UN for climate change and sustainable development actions. UNESCO may explore, in collaboration with the Korean authorities and other potential

partners the establishment of special trust funds and/or seconding UNESCO staff to spend time in GCIDA or its partner organizations in Korea to design, develop, finance and implement pilot and demonstration projects to highlight the importance of IDAs as sustainable landscapes that can significantly contribute to climate change mitigation and adaptation.

### **III. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

The proposal to establish GCIDA is rather unique. For the first time it brings together two programme delivery mechanisms available to UNESCO Member States: research and training functions of UNESCO category 2 Centres; and the full set of IDAs, World Heritage sites, biosphere reserves, UNESCO Global Geoparks and Ramsar sites that can serve as learning sites to address global environment and development challenges. This combination has strong potential to generate initiatives and activities that can significantly raise the profile of UNESCO and IDAs as key contributors to climate change mitigation and adaptation and to the SDGs set in Agenda 2030 for Sustainable Development.

The comprehensive experience and knowledge generated in Jeju since 2001 in the application of all four categories of IDAs, and Jeju being a pioneering case of MIDAs, lays a sound foundation for the proposed GCIDA to perform and grow. The technical capacities and facilities in Jeju for education, research and training are well planned and funded and accessible for both targeted foreign and domestic recipients. The expertise of scientific research and management of IDAs as well as entrepreneurship in green development required are both available from the Republic of Korea and through Jeju's long-term partnership with international organizations concerned. The long-term effort of the Government of the Republic of Korea and the Government of Jeju Province to use IDAs for conservation and sustainable development and their commitment to this proposal provide an overall guarantee for institutional development of the proposed GCIDA and its sustainability in future.

Hence, the proposal to establish GCIDA deserves approval and strong endorsement by the UNESCO Executive Board at its October 2019 session.

In approving the establishment of GCIDA the Executive Board may wish to recommend the following to the Korean authorities:

- That the GCIDA be established and made operational before the end of 2020;
- The Governing Board of GCIDA, once it is established, must be convened to review research and training priorities identified in the proposal and make any changes and amendments that may be considered necessary, particularly in light of the UNESCO programme and budget for 2020-2021 that will be adopted at the same session of the UNESCO General Conference in November 2019 soon after the Executive Board had convened in October 2019 and has made a decision concerning the establishment of GCIDA and transmitted its decision and recommendations to the General Conference;
- In choosing international members of the Governing Board, from international organizations, academia and UNESCO Member States, the Korean authorities must aim for a balance between theoretical experts and management practitioners with actual experience of having worked in one or more of the four IDA categories; and

- The budget allocated for the first 3-year period be adequate for GCIDA to fully explore and deliver the significant range of potential benefits to UNESCO Member States. Possibilities for regular augmentation of funding for later 3-year cycles must be given due consideration.

As indicated in section (vii) above the Korean authorities have submitted to UNESCO, through the mission that undertook the feasibility study visit to Korea a draft agreement for conclusion between UNESCO and the Government of Korea after the UNESCO General Conference approves the establishment of GCIDA. The draft agreement is quite comprehensive but may require amendments after the adoption of the programme and budget for 2020-2021 for UNESCO by the General Conference in November 2019. The proposed draft agreement submitted by the Korean authorities could be used as a basis for developing the final agreement that satisfies both parties. The agreement should be signed no later than 30 June 2020 in order to render GCIDA fully operational before the end of 2020.

In addition to the Feasibility Study Mission Report, which comprises a significant component of this report, two other documents were submitted to the MAB Secretariat, SC/EES in order to facilitate its work in preparing the necessary documentation to the 207<sup>th</sup> session of the UNESCO Executive Board which will make the final decision on the establishment of GCIDA as a UNESCO Category 2 Centre:

- A 4-page summary of the Feasibility Study Mission Report that could serve as the basis for the drafting, by the SC/EES, of an official document for the consideration and decision making by the 207<sup>th</sup> session of the Executive Board of UNESCO in October 2019; and,
- A draft proposal for the agreement to be established between UNESCO and the Republic of Korea on the establishment of GCIDA subject to the approval of the 207<sup>th</sup> session of the Executive Board that will convene in UNESCO Headquarters in October 2019.

Copies of these two documents have already been submitted in addition to this report in accordance with the contractual arrangements between the two consultants, namely Messrs Han Qunli and Natarajan Ishwaran, and UNESCO.

In submitting this Final Report, the two consultants express their sincere gratitude and appreciation to the Government of the Republic of Korea and Jeju Provincial Government for their full cooperation to facilitate the feasibility study and the transparency and quality in the provision of all needed documentation and information for the proposed Category 2 centre GCIDA.

**<End of Report>**



**List of information documents used in the preparation of this report and which are available in the MAB Secretariat, SC/EES (attn: Ms. Marie Prchalova)**

1. Letter dated 27 March 2019 from the Republic of Korea to the Director General of UNESCO and the proposal to establish a Global Research and Training Centre for Internationally Designated Areas (GCIDA) as a UNESCO Category 2 Centre in Jeju Island, the Republic of Korea;
2. Terms of Reference (TOR) for the Feasibility Study for the establishment of GCIDA as defined by UNESCO;
3. UNESCO Category 2 Centre Feasibility Study Schedule;
4. List of key officials consulted with and institutions visited by the Feasibility Study Mission Team during 13-15 July 2019;
5. Global Research and Training Centre for Internationally Designated Areas proposed as a UNESCO Category 2 Centre: printed version of a power point presentation made by the Korean authorities to the Feasibility Study Mission Team on the morning of 13 July 2019; 28 pages;
6. Reference to the Feasibility Study for the Establishment and Operation of the Global Research and Training Centre for Internationally Designated Areas as a UNESCO Category 2 Centre. In English and Korean (total of 115 pages) made available to the Feasibility Study Mission Team on 13 July 2019;
7. National Parks of Korea, a publication of the Korean National Park Service; and
8. Jeju Stone Park, published by the Jeju Stone Park in the Jeju Special Self-Governing Province, Korea.

**Photos taken during the visit of UNESCO experts to Jeju and Seoul, the Republic of Korea**

**12-15 June 2019**



Photo 1: Experts meeting the government officials at the office of the Governor of Jeju Provincial Government on GCIDA



Photo 2: Stone Park of Jeju, a research and exhibition centre that will host the office of the proposed GCIDA Secretariat Office



Photo 3: Jeju World Heritage Centre possesses public information service and education-training facilities



Photo 4: explanation of the facilities and programmes operated by the Jeju World Heritage centre



Photo 5: Dongbaekdongsan Wetland Centre of Jeju



Photo 6: Dongbaekdongsan Wetland Centre presentation on the roles and activities of women group of local Dongbaekdongsan community in conservation and promotion of traditional knowledge.



Photo 7: Meeting rooms available at Jeju ecovillage for UNESCO activities



Photo 8: UNESCO experts at local ecovillage constructed for lodge of the participants of various meetings including future GCIDA researchers and trainees.



Photo 9: meeting in Seoul at the office of Vice Ministry of Environment on 14 June 2019



Photo 10: Summary of UNESCO expert mission at the Headquarters of the Korea National Commission for UNESCO 14 June 2019