

**Main Conclusions and Recommendations of the Twenty-fourth Session of the International
Coordinating Council (ICC) of the Man and the Biosphere (MAB) Programme**

UNESCO Headquarters, 9-13 July 2012

This document contains a summary list of the main conclusions and recommendations contained in the final report of the 24th Session of the MAB ICC. Please note that the bold and underlined texts are the main decisions, suggestions and observations. The paragraphs in the MAB-ICC report from which these texts have been synthesized are indicated. Conclusions and recommendations specific to newly designated biosphere reserves and extensions to existing biosphere reserves are being communicated directly to concerned MAB National Committees.

1. The MAB Council elected its Bureau as follows:

Chair: Arab Republic of Egypt (Dr. Boshra Salem)

Vice Chairs:

Austria

Belarus

Côte d'Ivoire

Mexico (Mr. Sergio Guevara Sada also acting as the Rapporteur)

Islamic Republic of Iran

Austria will act for a year until the 25th session of the ICC in 2013 at which the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland will take over (paragraph 22).

2. Mr Ishwaran informed the Council that at its 36th session, the UNESCO General Conference requested that the Secretariat provide to its 37th session in late 2013 a draft document that will outline future directions of MAB and WNBR beyond 2013. **Delegates agreed with the development of a MAB strategy and recommended the alignment of its timeframe with the UNESCO mid-term strategy (2014-2021).** With regard to UNESCO's contribution to the Rio+20 Summit (20-22 June 2012), the Council welcomed the link between MAB and the Rio+20 outcomes and key role of Biosphere Reserves in the follow-up to Rio+20 as dedicated platforms for sustainable development learning and networking including in the context of climate change, ecosystem services and urbanization – the three key challenges recognized in the Madrid Action Plan (paragraphs 26 to 33, and paragraph 37).

3. The Council strongly supported the functioning of regional and thematic networks, as they reflect better regional priorities and respond better to the needs of particular ecosystems. **Member States welcomed the new Interregional Network of Coastal and Island Biosphere Reserves.** However, the Council expressed its concern on the financing sustainability of these networks; **Spain and the Republic of Korea assured that they will continue to provide financial resources to this network.** Member States encouraged the establishment and strengthening of other ecosystem and thematic networks (i.e. arid lands ecosystem network) as well as nomination of biosphere reserves that included modified ecosystems, in particular agricultural landscapes (paragraphs 41 to 48).

4. On the evaluation of the Madrid Action Plan (MAP), the MAB Council welcomed the proposals made by MAB Secretariat and UNESCO's Internal Oversight Service (IOS) in the document SC-12/CONF.224/5. Some Delegates underlined the fact that the evaluation of the MAP is a process to help shape the future of the MAB Programme and its World Network of Biosphere Reserves beyond the termination of the MAP. Moreover, the evaluation should be considered as a strategic thinking tool to also evaluate the Seville Strategy and to place the World Network of Biosphere Reserves into the context of the follow up to Rio+20, green economy, biodiversity conservation, combating desertification and the challenges imposed by climate change. **Regarding the cost factor that an external evaluation will entail and the current difficult financial situation of UNESCO, the MAB Council recommended that an "internal", rather than an "external" evaluation (as had been earlier decided at the 23rd session of the MAB Council) should be implemented so as to keep costs as low as possible. A small working group (with a maximum of ten members) deriving from the MAB Community and with the involvement of the MAB Secretariat should be established to reflect on the key issues that the MAP evaluation should focus on, rather than covering all 67 actions of the MAP. This working group should report on its work to the 25th session of the MAB Council. The MAB Council decided that MAB National Committees (and where they don't exist, UNESCO National Commissions or other appropriate national bodies) should take the lead role with regard to soliciting inputs from individual biosphere reserves needed for the evaluation of the MAP, supplemented by the work of relevant regional and thematic MAB networks** (paragraphs 49 to 54).

5. The MAB Secretariat introduced document SC-12/CONF.224/8 regarding the proposed creation of a new category of Support/Study sites for the MAB Programme for those pre-Seville Biosphere Reserves which cannot meet the criteria of the Seville Strategy by 2013 but which demonstrate scientific and/or societal value for the MAB Programme and for which a Member State wishes to retain an international UNESCO designated status. These sites would not be part of the World Network of Biosphere Reserves. **After considering the reflections of the International Advisory Committee, the MAB Council concluded that biosphere reserves are already considered as sites of excellence which would be undervalued by the adoption of MAB Support/Study sites.** Moreover, a new category of MAB sites would undermine the working capacity and delivery of the MAB Secretariat. It was argued that a number of countries had already gone through the process of withdrawing biosphere reserves from the World Network which are not in a position to comply with the Seville Strategy criteria for biosphere reserves, while at the same time these countries had successfully managed to improve the functioning of existing biosphere reserves. **With this in mind, the MAB Council decided, through a majority vote, not to continue work on the elaboration of a new category of MAB Support/Study sites** (paragraphs 55 to 60).

6. In the context of the discussions on the proposed category of MAB Support/Study sites, several countries cautioned, however, that they needed more time to align their existing biosphere reserves to the criteria stipulated in the Seville Strategy, for example with regard to establishing a multiple zonation system. **The MAB Council decided that the MAB Secretary sends a letter to all MAB National Committees (or to the UNESCO National Commissions in the case of the absence of a MAB National Committee) by which MAB Member States are requested to inform on the process of upgrading existing biosphere reserves, and in particular "first generation" biosphere reserves, into biosphere reserves that meet the criteria of the Seville Strategy for Biosphere Reserves by the end of 2013. If States cannot comply by the end of 2013 with the upgrading of their sites, they are requested to provide information on the precise timelines that they would require to do so** (paragraph 61).

7. With regard to the future of MAB and WNBR in view of post Rio+20 opportunities and the strategy for 2014-2021, Mr Ishwaran introduced document SC-12/CONF.224/11. He called upon the ICC Delegates to suggest ways and means for a process that will lead to the submission of a draft

strategy to the next session of the General Conference (in late 2013) and which will adapt to lessons and opportunities that may become available during 2014 through the final evaluation of MAP, and also other outcomes of international processes related to the work of the MAB Programme. The Secretariat suggested 2014-2015 as a phase for finalizing the strategy and plan and the period during 2016-2021 as a phase for implementation. **Several Delegates expressed broad agreement with the suggestions made by the Secretariat and supported the establishment of a small working group (it could be the same group as that which would be established for the evaluation of the MAP) that on the basis of an in-depth study of the outcome document "The Future We Want" could propose how MAB and WNBR contributions should be channeled to strengthen the role of biosphere reserves as learning platforms for sustainable development both within UNESCO as well as within the broader UN system. Some Delegates called for a more open-ended consultation process involving Member States and recommended that the work of the ISG (International Support Group) be continued to ensure such consultations among UNESCO Member Delegations** (paragraph 62 and 63).

8. **Many members suggested various themes for the future focus of the MAB and WNBR strategic directions; examples include: transboundary co-operation; sustainability science; the importance of local governments and the need to harmonize local, national and global governance processes to demonstrate nested governance arrangements involving public and the private sector and the civil society critical for effective functioning of biosphere reserves; food security etc.** Collaboration with other UNESCO Intergovernmental Science Programmes, UNITWIN, ASP Network and ESD other Conventions (CBD, UNFCCC, UNCCD), international initiatives (UN Forest Forum)) and events (World Parks Congress in 2014) was called for. **However, some Delegates called upon UNESCO to review the current institutional structure for administering the MAB Programme and its WNBR and make necessary adaptations to fully exploit the transdisciplinary and intersectoral contributions they could make towards sustainable development learning.** Concepts such as green economy and sufficiency economy must be enhanced with appropriate relevance not only to growth but also introducing appropriate sustainable livelihoods and life styles based on moderate consumption and cultural patterns. **The future of MAB and WNBR claiming a clear and strong niche in the future of the sustainable development agenda would most critically depend upon the National MAB Committees, UNESCO National Commissions and biosphere reserve co-ordinators interacting with appropriate Government Ministries and Departments to make their experience and lessons widely known** (paragraphs 64 to 65).

9. **The ICC requested the Secretariat to use both a small expert group (the Bureau Members) as well as the open-ended consultations with Member States using the ISG Mechanism to prepare a draft strategy for MAB and WNBR futures for the period 2014-2021 for the consideration of the 25th session of the ICC in 2013; this draft with necessary changes proposed would then be updated and submitted for the consideration of the 37th session of the UNESCO General Conference later in 2013** (paragraph 66).

10. General observations and remarks on the issue of periodic reviews of biosphere reserves included a request from a Member State for flexibility in the deadline for upgrading first generation sites, as the bottom-up approach and consensus process with stakeholders as well as zonation design imply long term processes. A Member State highlighted the need for adequate capacity building especially for monitoring activities to support countries in the process. **A Member State requested the Secretariat to provide statistics on the number of countries that have not sent a periodic review report and/or have not sent any information on the implementation of the recommendation at its next Session** (paragraph 203).

11. The Council took note of the updated versions of biosphere reserve periodic review and nomination forms prepared by an electronic group chaired by Prof. Barbault, Chairman of French MAB

national committee. While several Member States congratulated Professor Barbault and the working group for the very detailed and comprehensive work achieved on both forms, they regretted that no communication was issued directly to the MAB National Committees to inform them that the updated forms had been on-line for comments since February 2012. **The MAB Council therefore requested that the Secretariat sends electronically the updated forms both in track changes and in a clean version to the MAB National Committees and to UNESCO Delegates so that they can provide comments by 30 October 2012 if they so wish. The MAB ICC decided to delegate to the MAB Bureau the final approval of both forms once the additional comments received from Member States and MAB National Committees as of the deadline of 30 October 2012 are incorporated, so that the updated forms could be used and replace the existing ones for biosphere reserve nomination and periodic review report as of 1st January 2013** (paragraphs 206 to 207)

12. The Secretariat briefly introduced document SC-12/CONF.202/10 [Michel Batisse Award for Biosphere Reserve Management] and indicated that it had received six files from six countries. Five files met the criteria for consideration. The Members of the International Advisory Committee for Biosphere Reserves recommended Ms Elizabeth Taylor (from Colombia) for her case study on "Improving sustainable development and coral reef conservation through community-based watershed management in the Seaflower Biosphere Reserve", as the winning candidate for the 2012 Michel Batisse Award to the Members of the outgoing Bureau of the MAB Council. This recommendation was transmitted electronically to all Members of the outgoing Bureau of the MAB-ICC in April 2012 who unanimously endorsed it. Ms Taylor presented her case study on the Seaflower Biosphere Reserve and received her Award from the Chair of the MAB Council. **Member States and observers warmly congratulated Ms Taylor for her presentation and a Member State highlighted the need to better share the Michel Batisse case studies broadly as good and inspiring practices** (paragraphs 208 to 209).

13. The Secretariat introduced document SC-12/CONF.224/13 which describes mapping efforts taking place in the WNBR including the printed map which has been published regularly since 2008 and will next be released in 2013, the inclusion of the WNBR in the multi-touch mapping table in the Open UNESCO exhibit, and regional efforts in detailed zonation mapping. The Secretariat described their plan to develop a digital zonation map documenting the total area of each biosphere reserve with boundaries for each zone delineated, which they will compile through a new requirement for digital maps in the nomination form, periodic review and contact with individual sites. The prototype of the AfriMAB interactive web-based GIS tool showing the zonation of biosphere reserves in Africa was presented. The ICC responded very positively to this proposal, highlighting the participatory way in which the mapping in Africa has been developed and praising the many connections which can be made to educational tools, policy making, and land-use planning. In particular, it was highlighted that there are two types of maps needed: an external tool of the WNBR which provides a picture of the network for educational purposes and an individual zonation tool for management and decision making. A connection to SMART Biosphere Initiative for developing educational tools with mapping was encouraged. The work of IberoMAB as well as that of EABRN Network to develop an atlas with many different maps with the support of the Chinese Academy of Sciences was highlighted. **In the further development of this map, Member States requested that the Secretariat pay special attention to the background file and boundaries out of which the WNBR is mapped and to ensure an easily updatable user-friendly tool.** Some speakers expressed concern that the requirements would be difficult for all biosphere reserves to meet and that workshops and capacity building on digital mapping would be needed. The Secretariat was also encouraged to develop these maps with appropriate partners as well as other tools such as Google Maps, World Database of Protected Areas and the European Environment Agency's Eye on Earth project could be important institutions for collaboration. A working group on 'spatial data for biosphere reserves' was proposed to help the Secretariat develop this work in a strategic, staged manner. Finally, one Delegate recommended focusing mapping efforts on those post-Seville sites which are up-to-date on their periodic reviews. **The ICC requested that the Secretariat provide an update on the status of**

mapping in the WNBR and the progress on the current work at the next meeting of the ICC (paragraphs 210 to 215).

14. The Secretariat informed the Council that it had received 63 eligible applications for the MAB Young Scientists Award Scheme from 39 countries. **The Council endorsed the twelve winners for the 2012 MAB Young Scientists Award as selected by the MAB Bureau** (paragraph 216). The winners and the topics of their research studies are:

Country	Winner	Project title
Benin	Mr KIKI, A. D. Martial	Managing conservation conflicts around Biosphere Reserve of Pendjari in Benin
Sénégal	Ms Hiraldo Lopez-alonso, Rocio	Opportunities and challenges to sustainable mangrove ecosystem governance in the sine-saloum delta biosphere reserve
Egypt	Ms Saeed, Nouran Mohamed	Impacts of Human-induced Disturbances on the Biodiversity of Omayed Biosphere Reserve-Egypt: Implications for Sustainable Planning and Management'
Togo	Mr Kemavo, Anoumou	Contribution a l'élaboration d'un plan directeur d'aménagement participatif de la réserve de biosphère d'Oti-Keran/Oti-Mandour
Ukraine	Ms Stryamets, Nataliya	Sustainable forest management within BR territories – Challenges and Opportunities
Côte d' Ivoire	Mr Djane, Kabran Aristide	Modélisation de la décision d'agir envers l'environnement de L'élève du primaire des villages de la zone de transition du Parc national de Taï en Côte d' Ivoire : les enjeux théoriques et sociaux
Indonesia	Ms Sabila Ajiningrum, Purity	Adaptation Strategy and Mitigation of Biological Resources Management of Local People in Lore Lindu Biosphere Reserve to Climate Change
India	Mr Kumar VM, Sathish	Population fluxes of commercially threatened sea cucumber species in Gulf of Mannar Biosphere Reserve- for sustainable harvesting strategies to regularizing sea cucumber fishery
Sénégal	Ms N'diaye, Fatou	Mise en place d'une stratégie de bonne gouvernance de la gestion des ressources marines et côtières dans le contexte de la Réserve de Biosphère Transfrontière du Delta du Fleuve Sénégal : cas de l'Aire Marine Protégée de Saint-Louis (AMP Saint-Louis)

Mali	Ms Maïga, Guindo Zeïnabou	Etude sur les activités humaines autour de la mare des Crocodiles de Dianguirdé (Reserve de biosphère de la boucle de Baoulé)
Russia	Ms Shatkovskaya, Alexandra	Ethno-landscape exposition "Forefathers' Path"
Thailand	Ms Prathep, Ancana	Seagrass bed as a Carbon Sink in Ranong Biosphere Reserve and Trang-Haad Chao Mai Marine National Park; an important role of seagrass

15. **Some delegates pointed out that the Bureau should give a greater consideration to the geographical distribution of the Award in order to ensure its visibility. The Secretariat should circulate the MAB Award announcement to National Commissions on 31st of October 2012 at the latest** (paragraph 218).

16. With regard to the date and venue of the 25th Session of the MAB ICC, **the Council in principle agreed for a date in late May/early June, and requested the Secretariat to check with World Heritage Center and other UNESCO events with regard to a date and then to circulate possible options for a date to Council Members for approval.** No clear offers have been received from Member States yet with regard to hosting next year's MAB-ICC. **Unless a clear offer is received latest by the end of the year, the next session of the MAB-ICC will be held at UNESCO Headquarters** (paragraph 219).

17. **The Council paid tribute to M. Ishwaran for his outstanding contribution to the MAB Programme and was informed of the nomination of Mr Thomas Schaaf as the acting Director of the Ecological and Earth Sciences Division and the Secretary of the MAB Programme** (paragraphs 222 to 223).