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Man and
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Programme

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**UNITED NATIONS EDUCATIONAL, SCIENTIFIC AND CULTURAL ORGANIZATION
International Co-ordinating Council of the Man and the Biosphere (MAB) Programme**

Thirty-second session

ONLINE SESSION

27 – 28 October 2020

FINAL REPORT

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1. Due to the current Covid-19 health crisis and following the decision of the Bureau of the Man and the Biosphere (MAB) Programme, the 32nd Session of the International Co-ordinating Council of the MAB Programme (MAB-ICC) was held virtually on 27 and 28 October 2020.
2. A total of 273 participants, including representatives of the following Members of the MAB Council as elected by the UNESCO General Conference at its 39th and 40th sessions, attended the session: Argentina, Australia, Austria, Colombia, Congo, Côte d'Ivoire, El Salvador, Estonia, France, Germany, Ghana, Haiti, Indonesia, Italy, Kazakhstan, Kenya, Luxembourg, Maldives, Mexico, the Republic of Moldova, Morocco, Nigeria, Oman, Peru, Republic of Korea, Russian Federation, South Africa, Spain, Sudan, Sweden, Ukraine, United Arab Emirates, Vietnam and Zambia. Observers from the following Member States were registered: Afghanistan, Andorra, Angola, Armenia, Bahrain, Belarus, Benin, Burkina Faso, Brazil, Canada, Chile, Cameroun, Comoros, Costa Rica, Cuba, Denmark, Djibouti, Dominican Republic, Egypt, Gabon, Guatemala, Holy See, Honduras, Jamaica, Japan, Lebanon, Liberia, Libya, Lithuania, Madagascar, Malaysia, Mozambique, Myanmar, , Netherlands, Nicaragua, Niger, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Rwanda, Saint Kitts and Nevis, Saudi Arabia, Serbia, Slovak Republic, Slovenia, Sri Lanka, Swaziland, Switzerland, Thailand, Trinidad and Tobago, Turkey, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, United States of America and Zimbabwe.
3. Representatives from Asia-Pacific MAB Youth Network, Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) GmbH (Germany), Terra-Sana environmental consulting (Germany) and Project RBT-WAP/GIC-WAP (Niger) were present.
4. The full list of the participants is presented in Annex 1 to this report.

I. Opening by the Chair of the MAB-ICC

5. Before the official opening, the newly elected Chair Mr Adepoju Adeshola gave a floor to the MAB Secretary Mr Miguel Clüsener-Godt in order to provide key technical information to participants on aspects to conduct this online session. The MAB Secretary welcomed all the participants and pointed out that it is the first time that the MAB-ICC is held virtually and emphasized that all will be done to have a successful meeting. He mentioned training sessions having been done prior the Council in order to handle best the 32nd online session. He also shared the list of best practices and technical information best use of the online platform. Mr Clüsener-Godt further explained that it is an open meeting so there is also a high number of observers. By recalling of not easy Covid-19 situation but in the same time an enthusiasm of all the MAB community and entire UNESCO he passed the floor to the Chair to open the 32nd Session of MAB-ICC
6. The elected Chair of the MAB International Coordinating Council (MAB-ICC), Mr Adepoju Adeshola from Nigeria provided an opening speech, welcoming all participants to the 32nd session of the MAB Council and giving his appreciations to the UNESCO's Director-General – Mme Audrey Azoulay, Assistant Director General for Natural Sciences – Mme Shamila Nair-Bedouelle, Bureau Members, Member States and particularly, the MAB Secretariat for organizing this virtual



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meeting. He recalled that this is the first of its kind in the history of MAB-ICC, though it was originally scheduled to physically take place in Nigeria.

7. The Chair pointed out that the pandemic has revolutionized traditional meetings with virtual meetings. He recalled that forty-nine years ago, in 1971, the first iconic session of the MAB-ICC took place in Paris. Then, the general overview of MAB programme was centered on interdisciplinary programme of research dedicated to an ecological approach to the study of interrelationships between man and the environment. Inclusively, one of the cardinal objectives of the programme then was to predict the consequences of today's actions on tomorrow's world and thereby increase human's ability to manage efficiently our natural resources. In this regard, he highlighted that today we are all living with one of the consequences of our actions on the environment – the Covid-19 pandemic outbreak.

8. He mentioned that global record indicates over 42 million people infected by Covid-19 with over 1.2 million deaths, aside from the social, economic, environmental impacts. He also highlighted that the pandemic has disrupted many international treaties, meetings, and negotiations for the conservation of biodiversity most of which has been postponed. But ultimately, the pandemic has allowed us to ponder on the interdependence between humanity and biodiversity.

9. Furthermore, the Chair pointed out that coincidentally, the vision 2050 for biodiversity is hinged on a world of "Living in harmony with nature" where "by 2050, biodiversity is valued, conserved, restored and wisely used, maintaining ecosystem services, sustaining a healthy planet and delivering benefits essential for all people.

10. Mr Adeshola recalled that the vision of 1971 has today metamorphosized into a bigger scope and the immeasurable and multidimensional contributions of MAB programme cannot be overemphasized in terms of relevance, peace and sustainable development, human and socio-economic growth, ecosystem conservation as well as advancement of biological and cultural diversity.

11. Finally, he expressed his deep honour to be elected as the Chair of the MAB Council and its Bureau. He reiterated that not just him, but Africa has been elected to hold this esteemed position. The Chair also expressed his gratitude to the former Chair Ms Enny Sudarmonowati for her selfless dedication and commitment overtime to UNESCO in general.

12. He welcomed again all members of the MAB Council, new elected Bureau members, Delegates from UNESCO's Member States, Observers as well as Representatives of International Organizations and declared the 32nd Session of the MAB International Coordinating Council officially opened.

II. Opening remarks by Ms Shamila Nair-Bedouelle, Assistant Director-General (ADG/SC) for Natural Sciences



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13. In her opening remarks, Ms Shamila Nair-Bedouelle, having been delighted to open the 32nd session of MAB-ICC, welcomed the new and outgoing Chairs, the MAB-ICC Member States (MSs), observers and all the participants. She regretted that this meeting cannot bring physically together all the participants and thus, shall be held online and she expressed big hopes that we will meet the next year in Abuja, Nigeria.

14. ADG/SC recalled that the pandemic has changed the daily life of all of us and highlighted a need to cope with the new normal, develop innovative solutions, understand each other better, understand our role on Mother Earth and its role in providing us our well-being.

15. Ms Nair-Bedouelle also highlighted that a fine equilibrium between humans and nature was destroyed and we need to find a way how to work better. In this regard, she also recalled that current situation moved people to worsen economic situation and pointed out an importance of biodiversity as a living fabric of our planet and for people's prosperity. In this conjunction, she pointed out a need for intergovernmental actions.

16. She recalled words of UNESCO's Director General, Madame Audrey Azoulay, who said during the Global Biodiversity Summit in New York at the beginning of October: "Crises also create opportunity – the opportunities to change how we see our relationships with nature, with each other, and with the Earth. We know that there is no future for business as usual. We need a "new normal" for biodiversity."

17. She also highlighted that the MAB Programme found innovative solutions within the last months to manage the new situation by continuing its work to promote the concept of biosphere reserves to highlight the importance of nature conservation and protection to support human life which is more than ever needed. In this connection, she listed several key examples like the coordination of the International Day for Biological Diversity, the World Environment Day, meetings of the MAB regional and thematic networks, etc.

18. Ms Nair-Bedouelle emphasised the importance of better understanding on how BRs serve as real models for sustainable development showing us possibilities to live in harmony with nature. She highlighted that the MAB Programme is the only UN programme bringing a multitude of actors from science, education, culture and communication to be involved in an effort to live in sustainable way.

19. Ms Shamila Nair-Bedouelle also briefed on the next year when we will have a full agenda with global events to advance sustainable development, that were postponed due to the COVID-19 pandemic. In this regard, she recalled the post-2020 global biodiversity framework to be adopted during the COP15 to the CBD next year.

20. At the last parts on her opening speech, Ms Shamila Nair-Bedouelle highlighted the 50th anniversary of the MAB programme in 2021. In light of this, she recalled that the MAB Programme is UNESCO's longest standing scientific intergovernmental programme already established in 1971 in order to enhance the relationship between people and their environments within a scientific framework. She emphasised that we need to ensure that no one stands behind



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when celebrating the anniversary and promoting sustainable development and cooperation for peaceful society through BRs.

21. She thanked the MAB Secretary and the team for organizing the session in this difficult time. By closing her speech, Ms Shamila Nair-Bedouelle shared that during Covid-19 lockdown people have started again to appreciate nature. Through BRs we can valorize and continue to promote living in harmony with nature and the Coalition with Nature is a reality within BRs which helps to protect, transmit and empower our future generation to respect Mother Earth and future of our planet.

22. Ms Nair-Bedouelle welcomed again all the participants and wished a fruitful meeting.

III. Report of Ms Enny Sudarmonowati, Outgoing Chair of the ICC

23. The outgoing Chair of the MAB-ICC, Ms Enny Sudarmonowati, welcomed all participants to the 32nd Session of the MAB Council.

24. In her report, Ms Sudarmonowati recalled that we all together have gone through a very fruitful two years period with the additional of four months due to the 32nd ICC MAB postponement of due to COVID-19. Approaches conducted were two ways, external and internal UNESCO which included MAB Programme with its Biosphere Reserves (BR) in Member States. Although since the end of the last year we have been facing the pandemic COVID-19, our strengthened collaboration facilitated our proper responses on the way to “build back better”.

25. The outgoing Chair explained that as there were enormous activities in which she was involved or took part in, as well as which she initiated and conducted during her tenure. She divided her report into two parts: the first part is related to meetings at UNESCO Headquarters (HQ), events by the ADG for the Natural Sciences, and that of the Bureau and Secretariat’s activities; the second part is more on addressing the six issues she underlined in her inaugural speech as a new Chair of MAB ICC in July 2018. The full text of the Report is in Annex 2.

26. Ms Sudarmonowati briefed the Council that the MAB Bureau was very active in having online meetings in times of this COVID-19 situation. There were 7 virtual meetings since March last including the special meeting on the questionnaire dedicated to a consultation of the MAB Programme in relation to the New Mid-term Strategy 2022-2029 of UNESCO. In addition, there were 4 other meetings with partners/consultants on specific issues. In this regard, she pointed out *i.a.* meetings related to Technical Guidelines for Biosphere Reserves (TGBR), MAB Young Scientists Awards (YSA), Lima Action Plan (LAP) mid-term evaluation, etc. She also pointed out that during her presidency, several working groups have been established.

27. The outgoing Chair recalled a support of the Secretariat to the MAB Community and mentioned also her participation in events conducted by UNESCO Regional Offices not just on MAB events but taking the opportunity to introduce and promote MAB and its BRs in the presentation during other not directly linked MAB events. She admitted that a lot of online



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meetings/webinars/virtual conferences dedicated to MAB related activities were held across the world during the Covid-19 situation.

28. In this regard, she pointed out an importance that every regional network actively made an effort for innovation in the BRs addressing Covid-19 and she listed key activities having been done.

29. Regarding the 50th anniversary of the MAB Programme, Ms Sudarmonowati acknowledged that the MAB Secretariat has been working hard to have a good work plan for this anniversary, which has accommodated Bureau Members' suggestions during several Bureau's meetings and pointed out that MAB youth and young scientists are one of key target groups and important catalysts.

30. The outgoing Chair also briefed that she participated in two meetings (2019 and 2020) of the International Advisory Board for Biosphere Reserves (IACBR) and acknowledged members of IACBR dedicated work to examine new BR proposals and periodic reviews.

31. As it is her last report as the Chair, Ms Sudarmonowati provided summaries of other key meetings in which she attended during her mandate and made there presentations and promotion of the MAB Programme and its World Network of Biosphere Reserves (WNBR).

32. Ms Sudarmonowati then recalled the MAB activities undertaken during her tenure, which are related to the six priority programmes. She underlined in her inaugural speech as the newly elected Chair in 30th ICC MAB in Palembang Indonesia: (1) visibility and formal recognition of MAB, biosphere reserves (BRs) in Member States; (2) linkages with other UNESCO Programmes as well as initiatives and collaborations in support of Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs); (3) adaptation and replication of biosphere reserves as a sustainable development model; (4) sharing information and enhancement of communication within WNBR as well as its regional and thematic networks; (5) resource mobilisation mechanism for the development of biosphere reserves; (6) promoting science-based policy for sustainable use of natural resources based on research conducted in biosphere reserves.

33. She then pointed out that the MAB Programme's response to the pandemic COVID-19 may be considered as "seventh" overarching and interlinked programme. As we are now in the new normal era, in addition to collaboration, an innovation to support the new sustainability is important.

34. Ms Sudarmonowati highlighted collaborations among biosphere reserves, an importance of regional networks and collaboration between BRs and UNESCO Chairs and UNESCO Category 2 Centers may be considered as a prerequisite for an efficient function and proper governance of these designated sites. She recalled that the UNESCO Programmes such as the Intergovernmental Hydrological Programme (IHP) and the Management of Social Transformations (MOST), and UNESCO Chairs could promote MAB Programme and biosphere reserves as the sites for the programme implementation.



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35. Furthermore, she mentioned suggestions to create sister biosphere reserves for mediating peace on Earth. In this regards, she recalled a great, touching, emotional moment during 30th MAB-ICC. There it happened for the first time that the Delegates of Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK) and of the Republic of Korea (ROK) greeted and congratulated each other after the announcement of approval of their new biosphere reserves. The moment was documented with her accompanied by the MAB Secretary stood in the middle while on the right and left hand sites stand both country delegates.

36. The outgoing Chair also briefed on her initiative on funding schemes to choose BRs as project sites and mentioned a reinforcement of links with other international programmes and initiatives through approaching international programmes to use BR sites. She also mentioned that more universities are aware of the important to conduct research in the BRs and research topics are more broadened, integrated, multidisciplinary and relate to the LAP and SDGs.

37. Ms Sudarmonowati highlighted in her report that communication is a continuous effort to increase awareness all layers especially for new local government leaders due to dynamic changes. In this regard, the #ProudToShare video campaign made by BRs of member states based on MAB Secretariat's initiative is a powerful communication mechanism in addition to other social media such as Facebook, Instagram, which have drawn an interest of a young generation. Therefore, introducing BRs to the young generation through programmes conducted by others in the regions or member states such as Youth Climate Change Summit held in Indonesia this year, is also of an importance. She also mentioned an excellent video programme initiated by the Secretariat this year on a young generation with their solution addressing Covid-19 in their BRs. Sharing information among BRs have been conducted on a "site to site" basis but a more structured and interactive mechanism has been initiated in a form of Data Management System which will provide two forms of data to be accessed by a scientific community and for a public to be launched in 2021 to celebrate the 50th MAB Anniversary.

38. Ms Sudarmonowati expressed her hopes that the new Chair and the Bureau Members could continue programmes and activities that have been initiated because two years is not sufficient time to fully address the underlined 6 aspects. Concerning the number of 701 BRs in 124 countries, which nominations will increase with the level of development and country conditions are varied, worsened by the outbreak of the Covid-19, many efforts are still needed and a number of homework needs to be conducted.

39. In her concluding sentences, Ms Sudarmonowati thanked the MAB National Committees, National Commissions, Biosphere Reserve Managements and Local Governments of all visited countries, and UNESCO Regional Offices and other institutions for the mediation, assistance and hospitality during her mandate. She also thanked the Bureau and ICC members and the MAB Secretariat for the support during her tenure and expressed high acknowledgements to all the Member States and their Biosphere Reserves, which she has worked with either directly or indirectly. Last but not least, she highlighted an effort of new countries having joined the World Network of Biosphere Reserves and countries which are on the way to join this Network.



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40. The MAB Secretary thanked the outgoing Chair for all the advice and appreciated her work and cooperation.

41. Before introducing the next item, the MAB Secretary briefed on the agenda and in particular, agenda item 7. He recalled that in order to address the different time zone constraints and to fit the two days duration of the meeting, the agenda and timetable have been adapted. The agenda is lighter for this special online session as some items such as the Exit Strategy, Excellence Process, and Periodic Review Reports need decisions that will be taken in presential at the upcoming 33rd session. In addition, item 7 of the agenda, dedicated to the Reports on actions undertaken by Member States / regional and thematic MAB Networks in the context of MAB with a focus on the Lima Action Plan will not be a part of the agenda of the meeting. To remedy this, MAB National Committees were invited to submit written reports on their activities, preferably in electronic format, to the Secretariat in advance of the Council session, so they were accessible with the working documents on the dedicated MAB-ICC webpage.

IV. Report on Election of the new Bureau Members of the Council - Introduction of the new Bureau members

42. The MAB Secretary briefed on the election process and results. The full report is attached as Annex 3.

43. He informed that due to the Covid-19 situation the full functioning of the Council had to be changed including an election of the new Bureau. An election process was conducted as a presential one. The outgoing Chair Ms Sudarmonowati could not be physically presented. Therefore, she was represented in the physical presence by the Vice-chair and Rapporteur Ms Johanna Mac Taggart.

44. The composition of the Bureau, as elected on 20 October 2020, prior to the holding of the 32nd session of MAB-ICC, is as follows:

Chair: Mr Adepoju Adeshola, Nigeria (Group Va African States)

Vice-chairs:

Group II (Eastern European States): Russian Federation

Group III (Latin-American and Caribbean States): Peru

Group IV (Asian and Pacific States): Kazakhstan

Group Vb (Arab States): Sudan

Rapporteur: Group I (Western European and North American States): Austria

45. The MAB Secretary wished to the new Bureau a lot of success in its work and recalled that the new Bureau had already two meetings. He is looking forward to work together with the new Bureau in the same dedicated spirit as with the outgoing Bureau led by Ms Sudarmonowati.

V. Adoption of the agenda and timetable

46. The MAB-ICC adopted the agenda and timetable of its 32nd session without modification.



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VI. Report of the Secretary of the MAB Programme

47. The Secretary provided an overview on actions and activities undertaken by the MAB Secretariat since the 31st session of the MAB-ICC including the impact of Covid-19 situation. His report included in the document SC-20/CONF.232/5 was accompanied by the PowerPoint presentation which is attached as the Annex 4.

48. Mr Miguel Clüsener-Godt mentioned that a lot of events took place and despite Covid-19 situation, the MAB Programme has been moving, living and producing a lot of activities. Therefore, just main results were presented.

49. His presentation started with key global facts on the MAB Programme and main highlights and recalled that the programme is living and very dynamic. In this regard, he mentioned that today we have 701 BRs in 124 countries but these figures will change on 28 October when new sites will be approved by the Council.

50. Mr Clüsener-Godt also shared some curious facts on biosphere reserves (BRs) – like, a country with largest territory of BRs, highest percentage of BRs, biggest number of BRs, biodiversity protection issues, first BR entirely managed by indigenous people, etc.

51. The Secretary then moved to key information on the Exit Strategy and Process of Excellence and Enhancement, and on Technical Guidelines for Biosphere Reserves (TGBR).

52. He recalled that in accordance with the adoption of the Exit Strategy in 2013, biosphere reserves were requested to submit periodic review reports to their compliance with the Statutory Framework of the World Network of Biosphere Reserves (WNBR). At the time, 270 sites in 75 countries were concerned by the Exit Strategy. These sites were mostly nominated before Seville Strategy when criteria were different. Zonation and governance were main problematic issues in proper functioning of these BRs.

53. Significant progress had been made since with all countries responding to this request. Countries were invited to improve functioning of BRs concerned and to perform a progress on assessment and monitoring. Several capacity building workshops were organized and technical missions to 13 countries were undertaken. As a result, a vast majority of sites enhanced zonation, management and governance.

54. The MAB Secretary recalled the Council decision to complete the Exit Strategy in 2020. As the completion may end up with MAB-ICC decisions that some biosphere reserves will not be anymore part of the WNBR, the examination of this item is to be considered and completed at the next MAB Council meeting in presential. 30 sites are still concerned by the Exit Strategy (3 sites are in conflict zones) and all have provided information to the Secretariat in due time. The Exit strategy will be completed in 2021 at the next MAB Council session in presential.



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55. The Secretary informed the MAB Council that in 2020 the Secretariat received requests from Member states for the self-withdrawal of 11 sites in 4 countries. He also recalled that up to now, countries voluntarily withdrew in total 49 sites from the WNBR.

56. With regard to the Technical Guidelines for Biosphere Reserves (TGBR), the MAB Secretary recalled an overall process leading to TGBR development including an establishment of the Working Group (WG) and pointed out that guidelines will provide a clear guidance on how the MAB Programme and WNBR should work in order to comply with and complement the Seville Strategy and Statutory Framework for Biosphere Reserves.

57. He further mentioned an excellent work of four thematic sub-groups leading to an online draft TGBR currently available. The Secretary also recalled that 70 experts from 32 countries well geographically and gender balanced were involved in the process which was also supported by the consultant hired to support work of thematic sub-groups. Thus, we have an open access web-based living document compiled of contributions and experiences from the MAB community on specific items.

58. The MAB Secretary continued in reporting and focused on governance issues of the Programme – MAB-ICC, UNESCO General Conference (GC), UNESCO MAB Prizes and Awards.

59. In this regard, the Secretary briefed that at the 31st session of the MAB-ICC, which took place in Paris, France in June 2019, 18 new biosphere reserves were nominated, including one new country – Kingdom of Eswatini and the inscription of Nordhordland marked Norway's renewed commitment to the biosphere programme, 22 years after the withdrawal of its only other site, Northeast Salvbard Biosphere Reserve. In addition, the session approved eight extensions and/or re-namings of existing reserves. The WNBR at this moment comprises 701 biosphere reserves in 124 countries, including 20 transboundary biosphere reserves.

60. Mr Clüsener-Godt recalled that around 20 new BRs are approved yearly and this may well indicate an efficiency and visibility of the MAB Programme. In addition, a number of new countries joining the WNBR also well monitors that the Programme is relevant, successful and has a support of Member States.

61. The Secretary recalled an impressive award of Michel Batisse for outstanding achievements in the management of the biosphere reserves in line with the recommendations of the Seville Strategy. He further pointed out a substantial prize of the UNESCO Sultan Qaboos Prize for Environmental Conservation. The Secretary also highlighted MAB Young Scientists Awards (YSA) and briefed about 2020 MAB YSA winners selected by the Bureau to be endorsed by the Council. While he mentioned still a low amount available from the UNESCO budget to each MAB YSA winner, he emphasized that a quite high number of countries is interested, and MAB YSA has become to be well competitive and prestigious for young people helping to bring young scientists on the board to implement MAB Programme.



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62. The MAB Secretary then recalled the 40th session of UNESCO GC where new Member States were elected for MAB-ICC. In this connection he mentioned a continuous interest of countries to be a part of the MAB Programme and reaffirmed that the Programme substantially contributes to implement SDGs and biosphere reserves are places of global observatories for climate change mitigation and adaptation, environmental protection, biodiversity conservation and sustainable use of its elements, education for sustainable development and disaster risk reduction. He reminded the words of UN Secretary-General Mr António Guterres especially devoted to the MAB Programme and biosphere reserves in his welcoming address at the 40th session of UNESCO GC. His statement that BRs and other UNESCO designated sites are very important tools to implement SDGs is a significant sign not only within UNESCO realm but within UN as the whole and gave a high appreciation to all the MAB Community.

63. The Secretary also briefed on the establishment of the new Category 2 Centre (C2C) “Global Research and Training Centre for Internationally Designated Areas (GCIDA)” located in the Jeju Special Self-Governing Province of the Republic of Korea. The main objective of the Centre is to provide research and training globally for the improved management of Internationally Designated Areas (IDAs), namely Biosphere Reserves, World Natural Heritage Sites, UNESCO Global Geoparks and Ramsar Sites, including Multi-Internationally Designated Areas (MIDAs), in a coordinated and integrated manner in order to ensure environmental conservation in line with sustainable development objectives. The C2C shows the link between the programmes and performs intersectoral connections.

64. Mr Clüsener-Godt then presented some main regional and sub-regional activities and recalled that due to the COVID-19 pandemic, virtual meetings were held with MAB regional and thematic networks to reconnect and support all members and redefine work plans. The key MAB activities since the 2019 MAB-ICC are summarized in chapter 3 of the document SC-20/CONF.232/5 Report of the Secretary of the MAB Programme. In this chapter there are also details on webinars which the MAB Programme organized to support Member States due to the current pandemic situation. In this regard, the Secretary pointed out MAB Global Communication Strategy webinar series focused on designing promotion initiatives that reflect the MAB Global Communication Strategy approved in 2018. The Secretary *i.a.* highlighted a webinar on Covid-19 and the loss of biodiversity as threats to the survival of the Great Apes, recalled a webinar on 'Sustainable Production and Food Security in times of COVID19' and mentioned different exhibitions and poster presentations as well as he briefed on show casting of biosphere reserves' best practices within Proud to Share initiative. In this regard, he recalled that this year 24 countries submitted new videos. All the videos are available on MAB website and channeled also on youtube.

65. He further recalled the outgoing Chair's report having emphasized communication and dissemination in order to enhance visibility of the Programme. In this regard, the Secretary briefed on new MAB infographic, new designs including the MAB website, the WNBR map and other outreach products as well as an enhancement of MAB Programme visual identity on big social media.



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66. The MAB Secretary then pointed out partnerships being very important for the MAB - for instance, the African Development Fund (ADF) supporting the Biosphere and Heritage of Lake Chad (BIOPALT) project, a five-year partnership with Louis Vuitton Moët Henessy (LVMH) group to support the work of the MAB programme on biodiversity, the Abertis Foundation and a number of other key partnerships. Details may be found in the document SC-20/CONF.232/5 Report of the Secretary of the MAB Programme.

67. In conclusion of his reporting, Mr Clüsener-Godt highlighted that the MAB Programme has reached quite significant achievements over the year despite difficult times of Covid-19 situation, expressed a hope to have a little light in front of us and emphasized that our joint work continues. The Secretary thanked again to Member States, all the MAB Community and partners for outstanding cooperation and overall support.

68. The Chair thanked the MAB Secretary for the comprehensive report and opened the floor for a discussion.

69. **France** referred to the MAB Secretary report (SC-20/CONF.232/5) specifying in para 2.6. that “Due to the current pandemic situation, and in discussion with MAB Bureau Members, countries have been given more time to conclude this process and the proposal from the ad hoc working group and the exit Strategy will be completed at the next MAB Council in 2021.” In this regard, French delegation pointed out that BRs concerned were requested to send respective documents by September 2019 and thus, quite well before the Covid-19 pandemic has started. If not done so, sites should be withdrawn. Moreover, French delegation also questioned if the Bureau has a mandate to give an extension.

70. France further referred to para 2.8 of the Secretary report stating that 45 sites are still part of the Process of Excellence. In this regard, French delegation reminded that the Process of Excellence and Enhancement concerns the whole network and not only sites concerned by the Exit strategy and recalled the same confusion in para 5.3. stating “to finalize the Excellence strategy next year”. The delegation pointed out that in fact, the Exit strategy shall be finalized and the Excellence process shall be pursued to avoid coming back a situation when BRs might not comply with the Statutory Framework for BRs and asked the Secretariat to clarify it based on decisions having been made by MAB-ICC.

71. France congratulated the MAB Secretariat for the work having been done during this quite difficult period.

72. Upon acknowledging France for congratulations, the MAB Secretary pointed out that the Bureau has not been mandated to extend any decision concerning the Exit Strategy completion and no extension has been granted.

73. The Secretary took note of the confusion in using the finalization of the Exit strategy and the implementation of the Excellence and Enhancement Process in the document and will ensure that this is rectified in forthcoming documents.



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74. Regarding the sites concerned by the Exit strategy, the Secretary recalled that all sites provided the requested information in time and these information were first to be examined by the Advisory Committee, then the Bureau for the MAB Council final decisions. The only extension given was the time to reply due to COVID 19 situation.

75. **Germany** thanked the MAB Secretary for his excellent report and Secretariat's effort to implement the MAB Programme in difficult times of Covid-19 pandemic. Germany expressed its continuous support to work on TGBR.

76. Like France, Germany underlined the work of ad-hoc Working Group (WG) on the Excellence Process where Germany had a pleasure to participate and highlighted appreciations of working with co-members and thanking the Secretariat for a support in this regard. The representative recalled that during and between WG virtual meetings important results were achieved including respected draft recommendations to the ICC on the Excellence Process. While understanding that these recommendations will not be a subject of this ICC, German delegation pointed out that an important progress was done and therefore, Germany proposed that this ICC should formally agree to complete the Exit Strategy next year. Such decision would give a very positive signal just in time of the 50th anniversary of the MAB Programme to be celebrated in 2021.

77. With regard to an enhancement of the excellence of WNBR, Germany recalled that in order to achieve and maintain this excellence, MAB-ICC decisions on new BRs and Periodic Reviews fully rely on rigorous applications of criteria by the Advisory Committee and high quality documents provided to the Council. Therefore, the MAB Secretariat should again ensure high quality documents to be provided throughout a process.

78. The MAB Secretary thanked Germany for the nice words concerning the work of the Secretariat and also of the work of the excellence ad-hoc working group. He recalled that the WG made spectacular progress and pointed out a set of recommendations to be examined at the forthcoming MAB Council session.

79. Regarding rigorous applications of the criteria in the Advisory Committee's examination process, the MAB Secretary welcomed this remark and agreed on an importance to look at this further. In conjunction with this issue, he referred to a letter sent by the French MAB Committee expressing concern about the uneven application of the criteria when considering new biosphere reserves, in particular with regard to the requirement for a management plan or policy and an authority for its implementation. The French MAB Committee also stressed that when setting up a process of excellence, the rigorous and harmonised application of the criteria was all the more important.

80. Mr Miguel Clüsener-Godt thanked France for very careful reading of recommendations of the Advisory Committee and informing the Secretariat accordingly. He further mentioned that the point made by Germany is going in this direction. He also briefed the ICC that upon the request of French MAB Committee, the letter was submitted to the outgoing and the new Bureaus and



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long discussions were held in this regard. The Secretary then asked the Chair to follow on this point.

81. The Chair thanked Germany for its point linked to the letter of the French MAB Committee and appreciated that France opened this important issue in its letter. He pointed out that both - the outgoing and the new Bureau went very carefully through the issues contained in the letter and agreed that all sites cannot be the same and must be treated independently. However, at the same time the Advisory Committee must ensure that all the requirements are met, and a site complies with the criteria of the Statutory Framework. Concerning a management plan, the Chair recalled that an elaborated management plan is not compulsory in a stage of a nomination dossier submission and if not developed yet, a site shall provide information how such plan or policy will be developed, and the timeframe. In case of a compulsory existence of a management plan during the nomination process, current criteria have to be revised. This will require a high-level discussion, establishing a working group to revise criteria, nomination form etc. However, it would require additional time.

82. The Chair further mentioned that French MAB Committee in the letter does not provide examples of inconsistent case(s) and respective recommendations and thus, he understood it as a general concern.

83. In his response, the Chair emphasized that the Advisory Committee and the Bureau have been consistent in examining and reviewing new biosphere reserves.

84. The Secretary wanted to give the floor to the Chair of the Advisory Committee, but it was not possible at that moment due to limited connections in Sudan. However, her views are in line with what has been said by the Chair of the MAB-ICC and included in details in Bureau reports in this regard.

85. **Italy** congratulated the elected Chair and thanked the Secretary for the report that shows Member States (MSs) how the Secretariat works for the MAB community in this difficult time of Covid-19 pandemic. It further recalled that UNESCO MAB Programme represents a priority for Italy, and it is a best practice for integrating environment and human activities.

86. Italy pointed out that the Italian Parliament passed the law declaring national parks and protected areas as environmental economic zones and government introduced in national parks a mechanism to reward economic activities and investments respectful of environmental, natural and ecosystem values. Italy further recalled that the Italian Minister for Environment launched an experimental programme for UNESCO designated sites including biosphere reserves in order to create with UNESCO a network of international environmental experts. This team intends to mobilize a worldwide support and training for conservation, restoration, management, sustainable use of biodiversity, ecosystems and natural resources. This Programme will be mainly implemented in biosphere reserves and is open to all Member States.

87. In its closing words, Italy thanked again the Secretary and the Chair and looked forward to cooperate further.



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88. The Secretary acknowledged the Italy's contribution and recalled that UNESCO and MAB Secretariat is very proud that Italy offered this experts' network. He further pointed out that the Secretariat has already a number of requests from MSs on training needs. Thus, it is highly appreciated to have a tool immediately responding such needs.

89. **Austria** addressed two points regarding the letter of French MAB Committee. In this regard, Austria recalled that French MAB Committee expressed feelings that evaluations of new BR proposals the Advisory Committee (AC) sometimes measured in double standards regarding fulfillment the criteria of the Statutory Framework. As Austria has been currently elected in the Bureau, the Vice-chair had an opportunity to look closer at a decision-making process of the AC and thus, could convinced that the Committee has always strived to provide very helpful and correct recommendations in a very consistent manner.

90. Austria further pointed out that the follow-up on and implement the Process of Excellence is very important to ensure the credibility of the MAB Programme. However, Austria expressed that it is not simply possible to judge countries' proposals strictly according to the single standard template as each proposed site is unique and its establishment is a complex of environmental, social and political factors. Thus, while assessing a proposal according to the same degree of set-up criteria, examinations shall consider at the same time individual features of each site. Austria explained that its MAB Committee considers an implementation of a biosphere reserve management as a development process which can really start after an official designation of UNESCO. In this regard, Austria shared details on its mechanism to develop a management plan and management and governance structures to be fully operational. It mentioned that a strategy which Austria applies could be used by other countries.

91. In its concluding words, Austria reiterated that it is entirely necessary to act according to the Process of Excellence but it is important to consider individual features of each site.

92. The Chair thanked Austria for its comments. The MAB Secretariat also acknowledged Austria's important notes - in particular, referring to the work of the Advisory Committee and its consistent approach.

93. **Colombia** congratulated to the outgoing Chair for her great work and the detailed report and reminded an impressive meeting in Palembang with an extraordinary Council where the Chair was elected and further kept the spirit of MAB Programme alive. Colombia mentioned that Ms Sudarmonowati maintained a lot of contacts with Latin America and the Caribbean (LAC) region which will be surely managed further by the new Chair.

94. Colombia thanked the Secretariat and in particular, the MAB Secretary for the detailed report. The country recommended for future to have a report with more indicators. In this regard, it gave an example of a communication strategy for which would be interesting to know how many countries, biosphere reserves and challenges remained for further actions. Thus, the report should be based on targeted indicators and goals in order to evaluate better a positive impact of the Programme.



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95. Similarly to Germany, Colombia agreed to conclude the Exit strategy next year and thanked the WG on Excellence process for their dedicated work. It recalled that it would be highly desirable to conclude this process considering the 50th anniversary of the MAB Programme to be celebrated next year. It will also enable to move forward with a greater clarity and avoid confusions between Exit Strategy and Excellence process.

96. The MAB Secretary entirely agreed that Palembang event was an extraordinary and Colombia gave us an idea how moving that event was. He expressed his believe that we will continue in the same spirit and thus, a lot of work is ahead us.

97. **Australia** congratulated the new Chair, acknowledged a great work of the outgoing Chair and thanked the Secretary for his persistence and dedication to organize this online session.

98. The representative of Australia added his voice to France, Germany and Austria and other countries on the matters raised on Exit strategy and Excellence process.

99. Australia then referred to para 2.9 of the Secretary report stating that Australia has withdrawn a number of sites.

100. Australia noticed that the World Network of Island and Coastal Biosphere Reserves (WNICBR) had virtual meetings on 'Mitigating the Impact of the COVID-19 Pandemic on Island and Coastal Biosphere Reserves'. Australia would like to know when the next actual meeting is planned.

101. Australia commended and congratulated the Secretariat on the 2nd MAB Youth Forum and highlighted that it was a great event and its connection to the Climate Change convention really upgraded the MAB Programme.

102. Australia then referred to para 3.1.6. concerning IPBES and highlighted that it is important that MAB is included in the IPBES assessment reports and include the potential which the MAB Programme has. This shall be improved and it should be done through national delegations to IPBES. Australia is aware that the Secretariat advocates the MAB role but national delegations to IPBES are key in this regard.

103. With regard to para 5.5, Australia reported with a great pleasure that after a long time the MAB National Committee was established and is operational. However, Australia expressed a slight disagreement with the word "larger" biosphere reserves. While we need to have more sites, their individual sizes are not so relevant if a biosphere reserve's size is appropriately defined and linked to sustainable development. The key point is a proper functioning of the site.

104. The MAB Secretary thanked Australia for all the comments and for continuous support to the MAB Programme. In his response, the Secretary confirmed that voluntary withdrawals of Australian sites concerned by the Exit Strategy will be acknowledged during this current 32nd session of MAB-ICC. He further informed that the virtual meetings of WNICBR were held and



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a presentational session was planned to be held in Germany this autumn but considering a continuous Covid-19 crises new postponed dates are not known yet.

105. Concerning the MAB presence in IPBES, the Secretary confirmed that UNESCO and MAB Secretariat are very active also thanks to the MAB focal point to IPBES. However, there are persistent issues that delegates highly consider MAB Programme at MAB related events and/or discussions while on other events and meetings they are not referring to it even if quite relevant. Therefore, the Secretary very welcomed Australia's point that more effort should be done through national delegations to IPBES.

106. The Secretary agreed with Australia that a size depends on an ecosystem and availability. Indeed, it is highly desirable to have more Member States joining the World Network of Biosphere Reserves.

107. **Spain** emphasized the finalization of the Exit Strategy the next year. In this regard, the Secretary thanked Spain for its unconditional support in it and in the implementation of the Process of Excellence. The Secretary further recalled that Spain provides funds to the WNICBR and pointed out that Spain is very active in this network's activities and reiterated that the Exit strategy should be completed in 2021 at the next MAB Council Session.

108. As there were not any further requests to take a floor, the Item 6 was concluded.

VII. Reports on actions undertaken by Member States / regional and thematic MAB Networks in the context of MAB with a focus on the Lima Action Plan

109. The Item 7 of the agenda, dedicated the Reports on actions undertaken by Member States / regional and thematic MAB Networks in the context of MAB with a focus on the Lima Action Plan was not part of the agenda of the meeting. MAB National Committees were invited to submit written reports on their activities, preferably in electronic format, to the Secretariat in advance of the Council session, so they were accessible with the working documents on the dedicated MAB-ICC webpage.

VIII. Mid-term evaluation of Implementation of the Lima Action Plan

110. After a brief introduction by the MAB Secretariat recalling that, in-line with action E3.2 contained in the Lima Action Plan (LAP) for MAB and its World Network of Biosphere Reserves (2016-2025), and at the request of the UNESCO Natural Science Sector, UNESCO's Internal Oversight Service (IOS) had undertaken a mid-term evaluation of the MAB Strategy (2015-2025) and the LAP, the Chair gave the floor to Ms Claudia Ibarguen, Head of Evaluation Office, IOS.

111. Ms Ibarguen informed that she would focus her intervention on the main mid-term evaluation findings contained in document prepared for the ICC (SC-20/CONF.232/7) categorized under relevance, effectiveness sustainability and efficiency and that more details could be found in full the evaluation report available on the IOS web site.



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112. In terms of relevance, the evaluation found that there is alignment between the MAB Strategy and the LAP and the recommendations stemming from the evaluation of the Madrid Action plan were well integrated into the Strategy and the LAP. The evaluation also concluded that MAB contributes to the 2030 Agenda, notably SDGs 13, 14 and 15, and that it largely responds to the need of Member States. The most widely acknowledged added value of MAB is what is referred to as its holistic approach linking man and nature, but also its support to partnerships and engagement with youth. The evaluation found that there could be stronger focus on gender and gender equality issues.

113. As concerns effectiveness and sustainability, the IOS mid-term evaluation had found that the rate of implementation was reasonable, however, there is not always sufficiently monitoring data available to make stronger statements concerning MAB's achievements. The acquisition of stronger monitoring data is therefore one of the evaluation recommendations. This said, the vast majority of stakeholders had indicated that the MAB Programme has had long-term effects for individuals and communities inside the BRs related to environmental awareness, training activities, support to local empowerment and job creation, but that these effects were constrained to within the BRs and not externally.

114. In term of efficiency, Ms Iburguen noted that the evaluation highlights that lack of resources is the programmes main constraint, but that MAB nevertheless manages to achieve results in a timely manner. There have been synergies with other UNESCO programmes, which has helped pool resources, although some opportunities in this regard have been missed. The visibility of MAB among donors is low, which partly could be explained by the lack of time and resources at the Secretariat level for addressing donors.

115. In summing up, Ms Iburguen noted that the evaluation report includes seven conclusions, briefly mentioning four of them: the MAB Programme and the Strategy/LAP are deemed relevant in supporting the achievements of the SDGs; however, the related visibility is still low; monitoring, evaluation and data systems could be stronger; communication enhanced; there is lack of financial and human resources; and the involvement of youth is critical for the dynamism and sustainability of MAB. She ended her presentation by inviting all Delegates to study the full IOS report.

116. The Chair thanked IOS for its valuable report and the presentation and opened the floor for comments.

117. Italy expressed its support for the conclusions and recommendations contained in the report. Notably, Italy supported the preparation and sharing of case studies and good practices under MAB for improved visibility and the importance of supporting BRs in developing countries and the role of youth at national and regional levels. References were made to Italy's support for environmental expert networking and to the fact that Italy hosted the "Towards COP21" -- Youth Meeting" under the Convention for the Protection of the Marine Environment and the Coastal Region of the Mediterranean (Barcelona Convention) in Naples, Italy (23 October 2019), and that Italy plans to organize, in partnership with the UK, events in support of youth engagement in the lead-up to COP26 in 2021 under the UNFCCC.



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118. Thanking the IOS for its efforts, Australia said this was one of the more significant items on the ICC agenda. While supporting all the seven recommendations of the evaluation, Australia highlighted three recommendations as key: 5 (partnerships) noting that a partnership with the Convention on the Conservation of Migratory Species of Wild Animals (CMS) would be useful; recommendation 6 (youth) suggesting that by simply looking at the profile of participants at this meeting, efforts were needed to try and rejuvenate MAB; and recommendation 7 (monitoring and evaluation) noting that while the LAP was very good in some ways but that the very complicated framework of all the indicators and so on actually puts people off following it through and getting good conclusions and this should be considered when making the next action plan simple, clear and easy to follow so that all biosphere reserves can take part in monitoring and evaluation.

119. Republic of Korea recalled that the UN Decade on Ecosystem Restoration will start in 2021 and that restoration is very important for increasing ecosystem services and for biodiversity conservation. As some BRs include areas degraded by human activities in need of restoration this would be an important topic for cooperation among MAB National Committees, BRs and other programmes to share experiences and good practices. Since the LAP will operate for another 5 years, Republic of Korea suggested that the restoration of degraded ecosystems could be emphasized under the LAP in conjunction with the UN Decade. Republic of Korea also underlined that BRs are perhaps the best places to demonstrate ecosystem-based adaptation to climate change. As the IOS evaluation had indicated that the visibility of MAB was relatively low, more focus on nature-based solutions to climate change in BRs could further enhance the BRs contributions to SDG 13 (climate action) and MAB's overall visibility.

120. Referring to SDG 9 (resilient infrastructure, inclusive and sustainable industrialization and innovation) Morocco called for solidarity among countries of all regions of the world in order that sustainable industrial development policies are shared more effectively and fairly, emphasizing that this is an important issue for MAB and BRs, including in the context of addressing SDG 13.

121. Kenya underlined that the evaluation had recognized that the empowerment and involvement of the local actors is the one sure way to promote the 2030 Agenda, urging therefore UNESCO to prioritize this important aspect of BR conservation. Recalling that the evaluation report highlights the ever-present problem of funding attributed to low visibility, Kenya noted that there is a MAB communication strategy in place and urged that it be strengthened for more visibility. Referring to the Covid phenomenon as a serious wakeup call on the seriousness of environmental conservation, Kenya stressed that now is the right time to get countries and donors to commit more towards environmental conservation and that the structured financing dialogue started in UNESCO could be further harnessed as an opportunity to raise extrabudgetary resources in support of the MAB Programme. Recalling that the LAP underlines the need to use BRs as priority sites and as observatories for ecosystem-based climate change mitigation, adaptation and research, and in order to achieve this, Kenya suggested that the MAB Secretariat could consider strengthening the capacity of MAB National Committees and BR managers to monitor the health of the BRs including through both ground-based approaches as well as GIS



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and remote sensing technologies. This would help to understand the patterns and trends based on agreed indicators that can be applied across the WNBR.

122. Austria informed that it had developed guidelines for the implementation of the LAP in Austrian BRs that gives an overview of the paths necessary for the BRs and responsible stakeholders in Austria in the context of the 2030 Agenda and the LAP. The guidelines were based on a position paper by the German MAB and Austria thanked their German colleagues, notably Lutz Möller, for their permission to use the paper for an Austrian version. Another version of the guidelines extended to the situation in Germany, Austria and Switzerland is going to be published in the near future in the book Biosphere 4.0 by Springer Publishing.

123. Thanking the IOS for its hard work, Germany supported the findings of the mid-term evaluation and noted the management response, recalling that the mid-term evaluation with the management response was also tabled at the UNESCO Executive Board. Germany questioned how the shortcomings in the implementation of the LAP actually could be overcome. In reference to the already mentioned structured financial dialogue at UNESCO as one possible avenue for moving forward, Germany also mentioned that MAB has been successful in leveraging bilateral funding between countries in support of BRs and that Germany invests more than 10 million Euros annually in such partnerships.

124. Colombia thanked the IOS for the evaluation. In terms of clear and consistent data and indicators related to the impact of the MAB Programme, Colombia referred to the Global Coalition for Education Data and its work on indicators for SDG4 (Education) and its alignment with the multilateral education partners' commitments as an example to look at and possibly get inspiration from. Colombia also referred to the importance of boosting the presence of MAB in IPBES stressing that it would be welcome if BR research could be featured more prominently in IPBES.

125. Argentina stressed the value of twinning arrangements among BRs and of the involvement of youth and indigenous peoples. Argentina mentioned that it had put in place an indicator system adapted to its BRs based on a Spanish system, and that it would be pleased to share information about it.

126. The Chair thanked all the delegates for their interventions giving the floor back to the MAB Secretariat. On the issue of visibility, the MAB Secretary noted that, while visibility in major newspapers etc. of course is important, what really matters is that MAB is visible in the field and on the ground through its actions and initiatives. Reiterating the evaluation finding that MAB lacks financial and human resources, and that despite the recent positive trend in of governmental and private sector support, the MAB Secretary underlined that lack of resources will continue limiting MAB's work. Regarding the issue of provision of data, the MAB Secretary gave the good news that a new Associate Expert had joined that MAB Secretariat and that she was assigned to develop a MAB database and that collaboration was established with UNESCO's central IT services for support, harmonization and synergies among data efforts of different UNESCO programmes. The MAB Secretary agreed that the connection with other programmes and conventions is important, such as with the World Heritage Convention and the Intergovernmental Hydrological Programme (IHP), and that MAB is involved with IPBES.



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127. The MAB Secretariat also recalled that it is involved as an institutional partner in the UN Decade on Ecosystem Restoration working in close collaboration with the UN and FAO for the success of the Decade. In terms of evaluation and monitoring of the future implementation of the MAB Strategy and the LAP, the MAB Secretariat informed that it would be exploring options in collaboration with the MAB Bureau for a more effective evaluation and monitoring system for the consideration of the MAB ICC at its next session.

128. In response to the debate, the Head of Evaluation Office, IOS, Ms Claudia Ibarguen expressed satisfaction with the fact that the evaluation findings were deemed useful by the MAB ICC, inviting all delegates to look at the full IOS report available on-line.

IX. Proposals for New Biosphere Reserves and Extensions/ Modifications/ Renaming to Biosphere Reserves that are Part of the World Network of Biosphere Reserves (WNBR)

129. In introducing this item, the Secretariat referred to document SC-20/CONF.232/8.rev It outlined that at its 26th meeting held in UNESCO HQ from 17 to 20 February 2020, the International Advisory Committee for Biosphere Reserves (IABCR) had examined 30 proposals: 25 for new biosphere reserves including one transboundary site, two resubmissions and three requests for extensions/modification and/or renaming of already existing biosphere reserves. Five new countries submitted proposals: Andorra, Cap Verde, Comoros, Luxemburg and Trinidad and Tobago.

130. The MAB Bureau met online on 23 and 26 October prior the 32nd session of the MAB ICC. The members decided that for sites recommended for approval, the recommendations of the Advisory Committee be forwarded to the Council without any change.

131. In some cases, the Advisory Committee had recommended that further information be requested from Member States by 30 September 2020. The additional information received by the MAB Secretariat by that date was subsequently reviewed by the MAB Bureau and approved at Bureau's online meeting on 26 October to be submitted to the Council for its final decisions. The MAB Bureau's recommendations thereon were reported orally online and presented on the screen to the 32nd MAB ICC on 28 October 2020.

132. Taking into account the recommendations of the Advisory Committee for Biosphere Reserves contained in SC-20/CONF.232/8.rev and the Bureau's further deliberations on 23 and 26 October 2020, the MAB-ICC took the following decisions:

A. New nominations

133. **Ordino (Andorra).** The MAB Council welcomed this first proposal of Andorra. Based on the recommendations of the Advisory Committee contained in document SC-20/CONF.232/8.rev, the MAB Bureau examined the additional information sent by the authorities as per the Advisory Committee request, namely on the rationale for why a small part of the main core



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area borders directly on a transition area without buffering and on the need of assessment of ecosystem services.

134. As the information received was satisfactory (natural barrier, map provided as well as summary of ecosystem services assessed), the Council **approved** the site.

135. **Complex W-Arly-Pendjari WAP (Benin, Burkina-Faso, Niger)**. The MAB Council welcomed this new proposal and endorsed all the recommendations of the Advisory Committee contained in document SC-20/CONF.232/8.rev without any change. The MAB Council **approved** the site.

136. **Oueme Lower Valley (Benin)**. The MAB Council welcomed this new proposal and endorsed all the recommendations of the Advisory Committee contained in document SC-20/CONF.232/8.rev without any change. The MAB Council **approved** the site.

137. **Fogo (Cabo Verde)**. The MAB Council welcomed this first proposal of Cabo Verde and endorsed all the recommendations of the Advisory Committee contained in document SC-20/CONF.232/8.rev without any change. The MAB Council **approved** the site.

138. **Maio (Cabo Verde)**. The MAB Council welcomed this new proposal of Cabo Verde and endorsed all the recommendations of the Advisory Committee contained in document SC-20/CONF.232/8.rev without any change. The MAB Council **approved** the site.

139. **Mwali (Comoros)**. The MAB Council welcomed this first proposal and endorsed all the recommendations of the Advisory Committee contained in document SC-20/CONF.232/8.rev without any change. The MAB Council **approved** the site.

140. **Asterousia Mountain Range (Greece)**. The MAB Council welcomed this new proposal and endorsed all the recommendations of the Advisory Committee contained in document SC-20/CONF.232/8.rev without any change. The MAB Council **approved** the site.

141. **Panna (India)**. The MAB Council welcomed this new proposal. Based on the recommendations of the Advisory Committee contained in document SC-20/CONF.232/8.rev, the MAB Bureau examined the additional information sent by the authorities as per Advisory Committee request, namely:

- a completion of identified sub-chapters;
- the exact numbers of the core area and the resulting total area, in order to resolve discrepancies in the nomination dossier;
- a clear explanation regarding the process of consultation(s) or stakeholder involvement for a proposed biosphere reserve (not a national biosphere reserve);
- a proposal to modify the management/coordination structure to involve non-government stakeholders and managers of the World Heritage site located in the transition area, particularly in relation to tourism management;
- a management plan or measures to reduce the negative impact caused by mass tourism in the proposed biosphere reserve and to increase ecotourism; and



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- current and/or planned measures to conserve key animal species (sloth bear, tiger, leopard, wildcat, crocodiles, etc.), particularly in the Tiger Reserve.

142. The Bureau pointed out that it is a very good example how to respond to the Advisory Committee recommendations. It also noted with a satisfaction that the country updated on a status to declare an Eco-sensitive Zone in Panna National Park, currently under consideration by the Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change.

143. As the information received was satisfactory, the Council **approved** the site.

144. **Bunaken Tangkoko Minahasa (Indonesia)**. The MAB Council welcomed this new proposal and endorsed all the recommendations of the Advisory Committee contained in document SC-18/CONF.230/8.rev without any change. The MAB Council **approved** the site.

145. **Karimunjawa-Jepara-Muria (Indonesia)**. The MAB Council welcomed this new proposal and endorsed all the recommendations of the Advisory Committee contained in document SC-20/CONF.232/8.rev without any change. The MAB Council **approved** the site.

146. **Merapi Merbabu Menoreh (Indonesia)**. The MAB Council welcomed this new proposal and endorsed all the recommendations of the Advisory Committee contained in document SC-20/CONF.232/8.rev without any change. The MAB Council **approved** the site.

147. **Almaty (Kazakhstan)**. The MAB Council welcomed this new proposal. Based on the recommendations of the Advisory Committee contained in document SC-20/CONF.232/8.rev, the MAB Bureau examined the additional information sent by the authorities as per the Advisory Committee request, namely:

- a justification for the absence of transition area in the eastern, western and southern parts of the proposed biosphere reserve;
- a topographic map with names in English including the boundary of the administrative unit;
- a land use map or vegetation map of the whole proposed biosphere reserve and information on the international protection status of key animal and plant species;
- detailed information on the development function in the transition area including the main economic activities;
- an exact population count and date of the census; and
- detailed information on mining and tourism and measures to cope with the potential negative impacts of such activities.

148. As the information received was satisfactory, the Council **approved** the site.

149. **West Altai (Kazakhstan)**. The MAB Council welcomed this new proposal. Based on the recommendations of the Advisory Committee contained in document SC-20/CONF.232/8.rev, the MAB Bureau examined the additional information sent by the authorities as per the Advisory Committee request, namely:



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- a justification for the absence of transition area in the northern and southern parts of the proposed biosphere reserve;
- a topographic map with names in English including the boundary of the administrative unit;
- a land use map or vegetation map of the whole proposed biosphere reserve and information on the international protection status of key animal and plant species based on the most recent data;
- detailed information on the development function in the transition area including the main economic activities;
- an exact population count and date of the census; and
- detailed information on mining and tourism and measures to cope with the potential negative impacts of such activities. management plan covering all three functional zones after the designation.

150. As the information received was satisfactory, the Council **approved** the site.

151. **Minett (Luxembourg)**. The MAB Council welcomed this first proposal and endorsed all the recommendations of the Advisory Committee contained in document SC-20/CONF.232/8.rev without any change. The MAB Council **approved** the site.

152. **Addu Atoll (Maldives)**. The MAB Council welcomed this new proposal. Based on the recommendations of the Advisory Committee contained in document SC-20/CONF.232/8.rev, the MAB Bureau examined the additional information sent by the authorities as per the Advisory Committee request, namely the submission of additional information on the current status of the remaining core zone areas.

153. As the information received was satisfactory, the Council **approved** the site.

154. **Fuvahmulah (Maldives)**. The MAB Council welcomed this new proposal and endorsed all the recommendations of the Advisory Committee contained in document SC-20/CONF.232/8.rev without any change. The MAB Council **approved** the site.

155. **Toson-Khulstai (Mongolia)**. The MAB Council welcomed this new proposal. Based on the recommendations of the Advisory Committee contained in document SC-20/CONF.232/8.rev, the MAB Bureau examined the additional information sent by the authorities as per the Advisory Committee request, namely:

- an explanation of the current zonation and the resubmission of the map in a readable format using the colours to distinguish the boundaries of three zones be changed for clarity;
- an additional map showing the administrative divisions of the Toson-Khulstai Biosphere Reserve is also requested.

156. As the information received was satisfactory, the Council **approved** the site.



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157. **Hadejia-Nguru-Bade (Nigeria).** The MAB Council welcomed this new proposal and endorsed all the recommendations of the Advisory Committee contained in document SC-20/CONF.232/8.rev without any change. The MAB Council **approved** the site.

158. **Oban (Nigeria).** The MAB Council welcomed this new nomination. Based on the recommendations of the Advisory Committee contained in document SC-20/CONF.232/8 rev. the MAB Bureau examined the management plan for the proposed Oban biosphere reserve provided in response to the request of the Advisory committee. The MAB Bureau noted with satisfaction that the management plan, based on community engagement, was compliant with the biosphere reserve concept and the relevant management structure based on community engagement. The MAB Bureau considered that clarification regarding the reason for creating two biosphere reserves out of the same national park was satisfactory.

159. As the information received was satisfactory, the MAB Council **approved** the site.

160. **Okangwo (Nigeria).** The MAB Council welcomed this new nomination. Based on the recommendations of the Advisory Committee contained in document SC-20/CONF.232/8.rev the MAB Bureau examined the management plan for the proposed Okwangwo biosphere reserve provided in response the request of the Advisory committee. The MAB Bureau noted with satisfaction that the management plan, based on community engagement, was compliant with the biosphere reserve concept and the relevant management structure based on community engagement, The MAB Bureau considered that clarification regarding the reason for creating two biosphere reserves out of the same national park was satisfactory.

161. As information received was satisfactory, the MAB Council **approved** the site.

162. **Bosques de Neblina - Selva Central (Peru).** The MAB Council welcomed this new proposal and recommendations of the Advisory Committee contained in document SC-20/CONF.232/8 to approve the site. In follow-up on the letter received by the MAB Secretariat in September 2020 from the Peruvian authorities stating that one municipality had decided to withdraw its territory because it had decided to participate in another proposal for a neighbouring biosphere reserve named "Aviveri Vraem", the Bureau examined the new Aviveri Vraem proposal and found that there are no major changes in terms of representation of ecosystems and cultural diversity. Part of the buffer area is left without a transition zone, but the new Aviveri Vraem proposal will include this area as a transition zone. The rugged topography limits the possibilities of access and development of activities that could generate damage to the buffer zone.

163. As the technical report received was considered to be satisfactory, the Council **approved** the site.

164. **Island of Porto Santo (Portugal).** The MAB Council welcomed this new proposal and endorsed all the recommendations of the Advisory Committee contained in document SC-20/CONF.232/8.rev without any change. The MAB Council **approved** the site.



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165. **Kologrivsky Forest (Russian Federation).** The MAB Council welcomed this new proposal and endorsed all the recommendations of the Advisory Committee contained in document SC-20/CONF.232/8.rev without any change. The MAB Council **approved** the site.

166. **Gishwati Mukura Landscape (Rwanda).** The MAB Council welcomed the submission of a nomination for a relatively young national park. Based on the recommendations of the Advisory committee contained in document SC-20/CONF.232/8.rev, the MAB Bureau examined the revised zonation map provided by the national authorities in response to the request of the Advisory committee and noted with satisfaction that it clearly indicates the transition area referred to in the text of the nomination form. However, the MAB Bureau recommend that the legend of the map be revised in concordance with MAB terminology for the core area, the buffer zone and the transition area.

167. As the information received was satisfactory, the MAB Council **approved** the site.

168. **North-East Tobago (Trinidad and Tobago).** The MAB Council welcomed this first proposal of Trinidad and Tobago and endorsed all the recommendations of the Advisory Committee contained in document SC-20/CONF.232/8.rev without any change. The MAB Council **approved** the site.

B. Resubmission, Extension, Re-zoning or Re-naming of existing biosphere reserves recommended for approval

169. **Dja Biosphere Reserve (Cameroon). Resubmission and Extension.** The MAB Council welcomed this resubmission which consists of a revised zonation and extension of Dja Biosphere reserve and its efforts to expand the territory and functions of the biosphere reserve to meet the criteria, as the site fell under the exit strategy.

170. Based on the recommendations of the Advisory Committee contained in document SC-20/CONF.232/8.rev, the MAB Bureau examined the additional information sent by the authorities as per Advisory Committee request, namely the updated management plan (2020-2024) for the entire biosphere reserve. The MAB Bureau noted with satisfaction that the management plan was developed through a participatory process and took note of the information that national authorities are exploring the possibility of increasing the buffer zone as suggested by the advisory committee which shall involve all relevant stakeholders.

171. As the information received was satisfactory, the MAB Council **approved** the extension and rezoning of the site.

172. **Falasorma-Dui Sevi (France). Extension and renaming (former Vallée du Fango).** The MAB Council welcomed this extension and renaming of Vallée du Fango Biosphere Reserve and its efforts to expand the territory and functions of the biosphere reserve to meet the criteria, as the site fell under the exit strategy.



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173. The MAB Bureau examined the additional information requested by the Advisory Committee on why a small part of the core area, close to Manso, borders directly on the transition area. The MAB Bureau considered that the explanation was satisfactory (reality of the field (steep) and map provided).

174. As the information provided was satisfactory, the MAB Council **approved** the extension and renaming of the site.

175. **Mount Kenya - Lewa (Kenya). Resubmission, extension and renaming (former Mount Kenya).** The MAB Council welcomed this resubmission which consists of a revised zonation and extension efforts to expand the territory and functions of the biosphere reserve and the renaming of former Mount Kenya Biosphere reserve.

176. The MAB Council endorsed all the recommendations of the Advisory Committee contained in document SC-20/CONF.232/8.rev without any change. The MAB Council **approved** the extension and renaming of the site.

177. **Black River Gorges-Bel Ombre Biosphere Reserve (Republic of Mauritius). Extension and renaming** (former Bel Ombre Biosphere reserve). The MAB Council welcomed this extension and the efforts to expand the territory and functions of the biosphere reserve to meet the criteria, as the site fell under the exit strategy, and renaming of former Bel Ombre Biosphere reserve.

178. The MAB Council endorsed all the recommendations of the Advisory Committee contained in document SC-20/CONF.232/8.rev without any change. The MAB Council **approved** the extension and renaming of the site.

179. **Vindelälven-Juhttáhka Biosphere Reserve (Sweden). Renaming (former Vindelälven-Juhtatdahka).** The MAB ICC welcomed the letter sent by the authorities on 30 September 2019, with a formal request to change the spelling of the Vindelälven-Juhtatdahka Biosphere Reserve.

180. MAB ICC **noted** the new spelling of the Vindelälven-Juhttáhka Biosphere Reserve.

C. Voluntary withdrawals

181. The MAB Secretariat had received letters informing on voluntary withdrawn for 11 sites by Member states concerned. These are: five sites in Australia, four sites in Bulgaria, one site in the Democratic Republic of Congo and one site in Mexico. The MAB-ICC therefore took note that the following biosphere reserves no longer are part of the WNBR:

- Uluru (Ayers Rock-Mount Olga), Australia
- Croajingalong, Australia
- Riverland (formerly Bookmark), Australia
- Kosciuszko, Australia
- Unnamed (Mamungari), Australia



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- Ali Botouch, Bulgaria
- Douпки-Djindjiritza, Bulgaria
- Mantaritzza, Bulgaria
- Parangalitsa, Bulgaria
- Lufira, the Democratic Republic of Congo
- Reserva de la Biosfera Islas del Golfo de California, Mexico

182. With 25 new Biosphere Reserves approved by the MAB Council, one of them being a transboundary encompassing two national and one transboundary existing biosphere reserves, and the withdrawal of 11 BRs, the WNBR counts now: **714 biosphere reserves in 129 countries including 21 transboundary sites. Five new countries joined the WNBR: Andorra, Cabo Verde, Comoros, Luxemburg and Trinidad and Tobago.**

183. The Delegate of France congratulated new BR and new countries for their inclusion to the WNBR as well as the extended, rezoned and renamed existing biosphere reserve. He recalled that the MAB ICC decisions are always based on IABCR assessment followed by the revision of the MAB Bureau. The exceptional conditions of this 32nd session due to COVID-19 outbreak has made this work difficult and he thanked the MAB Secretariat for its effort to clarify the decision of the MAB ICC. As this has already been mentioned by the MAB Secretariat in his report during the first day of the session, the delegate of France pointed out MAB national committee of his country considered that some of the evaluations presented in the document SC-20/CONF.232/8.rev were not fully harmonized. He further explained that in some cases new site are be recommended for approval although it was not fully compliant with the criteria of the statutory framework, for instance the lack of a management or a policy plan. In the contrary, in some cases management or policy plan was necessary before the proposed biosphere reserves could be approved. In the future, he said that his delegation would like to state firmly that all the proposals presented should be examined in the same way by the IABCR in full respect of the provision of the criteria of the statutory framework. Therefore, he requested that the Secretariat make tangible proposals to the next IABCR and to MAB ICC in order to improve the fair treatment of all proposals and the full compliance with the statutory framework using in particular the technical guidelines for Biosphere reserves whose quality was underlined.

184. The Chair ensured the Delegate of France that his concerns are well noted and that they will be discussed during the forthcoming MAB Bureau meeting for the seek of credibility of the network. He took the opportunity to thank the IABCR to review all the dossier and prepare recommendations for the decision of the MAB Council. He said that the provision of management plan and policy plan were always fully considered when assessing a proposal dossier.

185. The MAB Secretary responded to the Delegate of France that his point will be fully captured in the report. He confirmed, as the Chair already said, that this point will be put on the agenda of the next MAB Bureau meeting and that MAB Secretariat will follow up all his advice concerning the Advisory Committee.

186. The Director General of Institutional Development and Promotion of the National Commission on Natural Protected Areas of **Mexico** (CONANP), Mr Camacho Rico, announced



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that CONANP and the Mexican MAB Committee agreed to withdraw the Islas del Golfo de California Biosphere Reserve from the World Network of Biosphere Reserves. For five years both entities sought options to modify the zonation of the biosphere reserve, as requested by the MAB-ICC. Due to the large territory, which covers four states of the Mexican republic, a long coastline and many islands, this modification is extremely difficult because of its large territory. This decision by the Mexican government is aimed at redesigning the zonation of the biosphere reserve and probably splitting it up to ensure that each one complies with the Statutory Framework. Mr Camacho Rico stated that the Islas del Golfo de California Biosphere Reserve is a pre 'Seville Strategy and its Statutory Framework' site, which joined the World Network of Biosphere Reserves 25 years ago. The review process took five years and required collective consultation and analysis carried out with the technical support of CONANP staff whose effort and experience in finding solutions he recognized. Mr Camacho Rico thanked the Advisory Committee, the International Coordinating Council and the MAB Secretariat for their efforts and reiterated his appreciation of the MAB Programme.

X. MAB Young Scientists Awards Scheme

187. The MAB Secretariat introduced the document SC-20/CONF.232/9 and presented the winners of the MAB Young Scientists Awards (YSA) 2020 selected by the Bureau of the MAB-ICC. The MAB-ICC was invited to consider and endorse the proposed winners of the MAB YSA of 2020.

188. The Secretariat through the respective MAB National Committees and National Commissions for UNESCO received forty-six (46) eligible applications from thirty-one (31) countries (Annex 5), twenty-five (25) of the applicants were women. Applications were received from the following countries: Algeria, Argentina, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Benin, Botswana, Bulgaria, Colombia, Côte d'Ivoire, Cuba, Egypt, Gambia, the Republic of Guinea, Indonesia, Iran, Kazakhstan, Kenya, Madagascar, Mali, Mexico, Mongolia, Morocco, Nigeria, Philippines, Romania, Russian Federation, Sri Lanka, Trinidad and Tobago, Uzbekistan, Viet Nam and Zimbabwe.

189. The Secretariat briefed the Council on a selection procedure. It further informed that the outgoing Bureau of the MAB-ICC at its online meeting on 19 October 2020 approved unanimously the selection of the six winners of 2020 MAB YSA to be endorsed by the 32nd Session of the MAB-ICC. It further recalled that the Bureau members also pointed out their satisfaction with selected winners and their studies and acknowledged that some projects address to the upcoming UN Decades on Ocean Science for Sustainable Development and Ecosystem Restoration.

190. The Secretariat emphasized that this year female candidates and winners were prevailing. It further shared a summary discussion of the outgoing Bureau on the PowerPoint presentation.

191. It further informed that the new Bureau was briefed at its first online meeting on 23 October about the Selection of the 2020 MAB Young Scientists Awards and supported the selection to be endorsed by the MAB-ICC.



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192. Before asking the Council to endorse the selection, the MAB Secretary again called upon the Member States for an extrabudgetary support enabling to increase a number of MAB YSA winners.

193. In accordance with the revised criteria and conditions for the MAB Young Scientist Awards (MAB YSA) approved by the 29th session of MAB-ICC, the Bureau of the MAB Council reviewed the applications received and selected the six (6) winners of the 2020 MAB Young Scientists Awards funded by UNESCO.

194. The Council then endorsed the winners of the 2020 MAB Young Scientists Award. The winners and the title of their research studies are:

GENDER	SURNAME	NAME	COUNTRY	REGION	TITLE OF STUDY
F	PRAPTIWI	Radisti Ayu	Indonesia	ASPAC	Understanding the impact of climate change to cultural ecosystem services in tropical marine biosphere reserve Taka Bonerate Kepulauan Selayar
M	FALEMARA	Babajide Charles	Nigeria	AFR	Economic valuation of tropical tree species and soil carbon sequestration potential as ecosystem services in the context of climate change in the core, buffer and transition zones of Omo biosphere reserve
M	ADEYEMI	Opeyemi	Nigeria	AFR	Assessing and mapping communities' preferences for ecosystem services in Omo Biosphere Reserve, Nigeria: an approach to enhance sustainable management of Biosphere Reserve and promote people's livelihood
F	DELFIN DE LEON	Sandra	Cuba	LAC	Farming, propagation and assisted reproduction of stony corals for the study of reef restoration in Cuba
F	THIERRY DE VILLE D'AVRAY	Laure	Philippines	ASPAC	The Influence of artificial reefs on fish communities and their potential socio-economic benefits. A study in Palawan Biosphere Reserve (Philippines)



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F	GANEA	Iolanda-Veronica	Romania	ENA	Designing efficient strategies for the implementation of an ecotourism network in Sfântu Gheorghe Channel area of the Danube Delta Biosphere Reserve
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195. The Chair opened a short discussion.

196. Ghana congratulated to all the winners and recalled a relevance of the MAB YSA as one of important tools to strengthen a youth involvement in the MAB Programme. She recalled that Ghana is the country with one of the highest numbers of MAB YSA winners and mentioned that in past 10 winners were selected. In this regard, she asked to re-examine ways in seeking funds to support more winners. The delegate from Ghana also highlighted that the Award Scheme empowers women and strengthens their and youth's role in science. She further mentioned that Ghana is on the way to innovate a youth network and would like to encourage other MSs to share their experience in this regard.

197. In a response, the MAB Secretary mentioned that funds are continuous issue and is not expected a significant increase of the regular budget. Therefore, he again encouraged governments and NGOs to seek an extrabudgetary support to this Young Scientists Awards Scheme which is a great programme for and in biosphere reserves and helping youth to be involved in.

198. South Africa also congratulated to all winners and recommended that the MAB Secretariat will establish a youth platform where MAB YSA research results will be placed. The Delegate of South Africa mentioned a MAB publication planned to be launched next year on the occasion of the 50th anniversary of MAB Programme and recommended that MAB YSA research studies as well as Michelle Batisse activities will be included there.

199. The Secretary thanked the Council for endorsing the six winners and looked forward for suggestions in future how to increase a number of these excellent young researchers working in biosphere reserves.

XI. Technical Guidelines for Biosphere Reserves (TGBR)

200. The MAB Secretariat introduced document SC-20/CONF.232/10 concerning Technical Guidelines for Biosphere Reserves (TGBR) and provided background information on its development and final validation process.

201. The MAB Secretariat recalled that the decision to develop TGBR was taken by the 27th Session of the MAB Council, while the MAB Bureau approved the TGBR terms of reference and roadmap at its 30th Session in 2018 in Palembang, Indonesia. TGBR is intended to TGBR enable Member States and the MAB-ICC to respond to the various practical challenges and technical questions encountered in the implementation of the Seville Strategy and the articles of the



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Statutory Framework of World Network of Biosphere Reserve (WNBR). TGBR will foster the implementation of current MAB strategy (2015-2025), the Lima Action Plan (2016-2025) and future Strategies and Action Plans. The TGBR will be an open access web-based living document compiling contributions and experiences from the MAB community. It will be supported by a so called “TGBR support platform” which will serve as repository of references and case studies to illustrate the topics and to provide more practical details.

202. The MAB Secretariat also recalled the process of nomination and establishment as well as the composition of the TGBR Working Group (WG) and its four thematic subgroups (TSGs) as well as the Bureau (Chairs and Rapporteurs). By November 2018, 70 experts from 33 countries composed the working group, approximately representative of number of Biosphere Reserves in each region (with an average of 1/3 female members) were invited to confirm their participation in the TGBRs to form a core of active experts by theme. The TGBR working groups (TGBR-WGs) and TGBR-Thematic Sub Groups (TGBR-TSG's) worked exclusively online and in English. The TSG's started working on January 2019.

203. The MAB Secretariat informed the MAB Council that in line with the recommendation of 31st session of the MAB Council, a consultant was hired to support the drafting process since March 2020.

204. TSG's drafting process was completed in May 2020. The four thematic documents were consolidated in a single draft which was reviewed by the TGBR-WG bureau by June 2020. In line with MAB ICC recommendation, the subsequent draft was reviewed by IABCR in July 2020. The MAB Bureau reviewed the revised draft by IABCR and approved the final draft in September 2020 which is the version contained in Annex I of the document SC-20/CONF.232/10.

205. The MAB Secretariat underlined the need to increase the number and the regional representativeness of case studies in the current version and inform the MAB Council that next step will be to create the TGBR webpage with its support page.

206. The representative of the MAB Secretariat paid tribute to the work of the members of the TGBR-WG and TSG's as well as to the consultant, Mr Petr Čupa, former member of the IABCR Advisory committee who provided excellent support to the drafting process. She also acknowledged with thanks the work done by the IABCR and the MAB Bureau which enriched the draft.

207. The MAB Council was requested to examine and *to take note* of the final draft of the Technical Guidelines for Biosphere Reserve; to provide guidance to the MAB Secretariat with regards to possible new items to be added to the TGBR ; and to encourage Member States to send relevant case studies for the 4 priority items: to provide support towards the further development of the document.

208. The Chair gave to the floor to the representatives of the TGBR-WG and the former Chair of the MAB Bureau. The Chair of IABCR and Mr Čupa were also invited to talk but they could not join the online meeting due to technical issues.



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209. Mr Martin Price, Delegate of the United Kingdom, Chair of the TSG's on Zonation and of the TGBR-WG started by acknowledging the excellent process which learned a lot from the development the Lima Action Plan and that the groups did a very good job with regards to the consultation process and repressiveness which allows everyone to contribute. Due to the voluntary basis of the experts' commitment and the online nature of the work, the process was not always very conducive to produce the very best product and therefore he warmly paid tribute to Mr Čupa's contribution in pulling out all the pieces to produce this final draft which still need to be cleaned up before its goes on the web.

210. Mr Martin Price underlined that this document would never be a final document because it is meant to be a living document. Therefore, there is a need to have a formal method to maintain the document in good quality and useful to serve our MAB family. He suggested that a small review committee, distinctive of the IABCR, and with volunteered members, be established to maintain the quality of the TGBR. He agreed that more case studies on good practices should be identified and included in the TGBR. Finally, he stated that to be useful to the maximum of people, the TGBR should be translated in other languages with for instance the help of National Commissions for UNESCO.

211. Ms Enny Sudarmonowati, Delegate of Indonesia and former Chair of the MAB ICC started by underlining the lengthy process of the development of the TGBR. She informed on the thorough full review of the MAB Bureau. She also pointed out that she was personally very keen to increase the representativeness of the regions in the case studies which is now improved in this last draft. She also raised the issue of the difficulty to get the information from the site even though it is known as good example. By now, the TGBR includes 56 cases and a representativity from each region, but it is an ongoing process. She thanked the MAB Secretariat and the consultant for the support in the revision process.

212. The Chair then opened the floor to the Council for comments.

213. The Delegate of Colombia congratulated the entire team for having achieved this result despite the challenges including the representativity by region. He thanks the MAB Secretariat for organizing a second call of proposal for experts. He also claimed for more publicity on the work that has been delivered. He recommended that the name of the experts and their country and institutions be publicized in recognition of their effort. He also stressed the importance of translation of the document in other languages. Since it is a living document, he also proposed that periodic report on the changes of the document be done to the Council.

214. The Delegate of Republic of Korea congratulated and expressed her appreciation to the TGBR-WG and MAB Secretariat for the quality of the draft and for the hard work. She emphasized the need to regularly update this living document and to provide additional case studies. She requested that the MAB Secretariat clearly design a maintenance plan and process and supported the idea of establishing a review committee as suggested by the Delegate of UK; but she also said that this could be done annually by the IABCR. The report on the update could be done to the MAB Bureau including the option of using annual meetings of the IABCR. She also stressed



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the need to translate the document in other languages to maximise its outreach and she suggested that MAB Secretariat may provide additional fundings for this purpose. She suggested that the MAB ICC encourage Member States to develop national guidelines for their own needs based on the TGBR as some as countries have already done.

215. The Delegate of France thanks for the presentation and said that his country was very keen to have such TGBR which is vital for the network especially with regards to the implementation of the excellence process and enhancement for the quality of WNBR in the future. He recalled that the idea of the TGBR is to have a document which support the implementation of the article 4 of the Statutory Framework, to guide Member states to manage their biosphere reserves and to do their periodic review. It also serves as a jurisprudence which will help the IABCR to avoid discrepancies. He said that the MAB Secretariat, the Chair of the working groups and the experts must be congratulated for remarkable efforts. The Delegate emphasized that the document should not be formally adopted by the MAB ICC because it is not be binding; he pointed out that the TGBR are not replacing the statutory framework of biosphere reserves; but shall shade light on it and makes its implementation easier. However, the provision of the guidelines should not be laxer than the statutory framework and he gave two examples of discrepancies in the guidelines. He recommended that the document be re-read to be in total conformity with the statutory framework before it is published on the web. Finally, with regards to the draft decision asking for possible additional themes, he stressed that the document was complete and suffice for its objectives detailed above and that its needs to be enriched with additional cases rather than with additional themes.

216. The Delegate of Germany applauded the work done by the TGBR-WG, the consultant and the MAB Secretariat and inform that her country was happy to have contributed to 3 out of the 4 TSG's. She fully supported France on the statutes of the guidelines which should not be adopted by the MAB Council as it is a guiding document. Being a living document, the delegate says that this draft still needs to be reviewed and reformulated. For instance, in the zonation part, the high difference of legal protection all over the world should be fully reflected in the document. She said that there are no needs for additional themes, but more case studies would be useful. She ended by thanking the MAB Secretariat for guiding the TSG's through this process which was not an easy one but was successful.

217. The Delegate of Australia congratulated all concerned for this impressive document. The delegate pointed out that the mix of text and case studies in the document was disturbing the reading. He stressed that more attention should be given to the presentation of the document and proposed that a pdf version be made available for printing while the case studies would be maintained in a platform online. As the delegate of the Republic of Korea, he recommended an annual update of the living document after each Council where major decisions are made that may affect its content.

218. The MAB Secretary read the statement of the Delegate of Austria which could not take the floor due to technical problems. The Delegate of Austria acknowledged the work done so far and thanks the TGBR-WGs, TSG's and the MAB Secretariat for this excellent document. He also pointed out that illustrating the technical text with practical case studies really improve the



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usefulness of the document. He supported the proposal to have translation in other languages and call upon regional network to provide this support.

219. In its response, the MAB Secretariat welcomed the idea of having a TGBR review committee. We must see how to do it and to make sure we have a right balance. We need to increase the number of case studies with the support of the Member States. For the languages, this is vital that the TGBR be translated in many languages as possible. The underlined the need to translate the main text (not the case studies) in the 6 UN languages which will be sent to the MAB National Committees for review. The MAB Secretariat called upon other language group to translate the document to reach as much stakeholders as possible. However, the MAB Council should keep in mind that it is a matter of resources. As suggested by some delegates, the MAB Secretariat gave the insurance that the document will be re-read to avoid any discrepancies before it is put on the web. The MAB Secretariat confirmed that a web platform will be created for gathering the case studies which will solve the presentation issue raised by the honourable delegate of Australia. With regards to the additional case studies, it will be necessary to define some criteria to select them as best practices.

220. The Chair joined the delegates by congratulating and thanking the MAB Secretariat, M. Petr Čupa and the TGBR-WGs and TSGs for the excellent work and product. He asked the MAB Secretariat to ensure that the document be re-read before it is uploaded on the web to address concerns raised by some delegates and to avoid any contradiction or misinterpretation. The Chair stressed the importance for the Member States to establish well-functioning MAB national Committees for anything related to MAB programme and biosphere reserves.

221. The TGBR being a living document, the MAB ICC took note of the final draft of the Technical Guidelines for Biosphere Reserve and requested the MAB Secretariat to implement its recommendations.,

XII. Celebration of MAB 50th Anniversary - Proposal for Celebration of MAB 50th Anniversary

222. The Secretariat referred to the document SC-20/CONF.232/11 providing an overview on the four pillars that the 50th anniversary of the MAB Programme is based, as well as the main activities, and a roadmap to ensure the success of the celebration at a global level.

223. The Secretariat mentioned that in 2021, the Programme will not only celebrate 50 years, but also 75 years of the Organization. These anniversaries will be a major milestone to highlight UNESCO and MAB's commitment to the biodiversity and sustainable development global agenda.

224. It also emphasized that this event should be promoted on the four corners of the world, and therefore the Secretariat proposed to the MAB Bureau to invite Dr Jane Goodall, DBE, UN Messenger for Peace to become the spokesperson of the 50th anniversary of the MAB Programme.



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225. Dr Goodall is an internationally accredited scientist, mainly known for her innovative discoveries on chimpanzee behaviour. Much of Dr Goodall's research was conducted in the area that currently is the Gombe Masito Ugalla Biosphere Reserve, Tanzania, a proposal supported by Dr Goodall. UNESCO and especially the MAB Secretariat has worked closely with the Jane Goodall Institute and with Dr Goodall herself in the Great Apes Survival Partnership (GRASP). She is invited in December 2020 by the Director-General of UNESCO to highlight the high level of scientists working with the Organization.

226. The Secretariat closed the presentation by inviting Members States to provide guidance to the MAB Secretariat for the celebration and to be part of the celebration.

227. Germany welcomed the comprehensive presentation and proposed that, as for the 40th anniversary of the Programme celebrated in Dresden on the theme of climate change, the theme of "youth involvement" could be taken up this year, to highlight the role of the MAB Programme for future generations and the role of youth as the new generation that will keep the Programme alive. Germany will organize a 2nd MAB Youth Forum in September and will keep promoting youth involvement, for example by inviting youth to participate at the national committee. In regard with educational material, the country suggested to build on existing material developed by biosphere reserves that have already the experience.

228. Colombia appreciated the inspiring presentation and highlighted the innovative activities. It supported the idea of presenting sounds from biosphere reserves and mentioned that Colombia's National Parks Department has a Twitter that publishes sounds from the country's protected areas.

229. The delegate also suggested using the International Day for Biological Diversity and World Environment Day as platforms to communicate about the 50th anniversary.

230. Finally, Colombia expressed the importance that National Commissions, MAB committees and permanent delegations could accompany the Secretariat in this celebration.

231. Australia appreciated the impressive presentation but mentioned several concerns: the extensive programme of activities, as the Secretariat has limited human and financial resources; that the anniversary is tight to the UNESCO Biodiversity Strategy, and the programme works not only on biodiversity issues but in other aspects and expects that they will be also well represented. The country mention that the illustration of the anniversary should be reviewed.

232. Australia agreed that young people have an important role to play in the celebration, and for this reason cited there is concern that a non MAB personality such as Jane Goodall will be the spokesperson. It proposes that youth representatives from each region are invited to play the role of ambassadors for the celebration. It also asked the Secretariat to clarify the current status of the invitation to Dr Goodall. Australia suggested that a working group be formed to assist the Secretariat in organizing and raising funds for the celebration.



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233. The Secretariat mentioned that all points were well taken and assured that all the presented will be able to be carried out. The Secretariat mentioned that financial support is always welcome in order to carry out more activities.

234. The Secretary also explained that Dr Goodall's invitation had not yet been made and it was up to the MAB Council to decide whether she or someone else should be the spokesperson for this anniversary.

235. The Secretariat explained that UNESCO's Biodiversity Strategy, like MAB, has a holistic vision, and that it analyses environmental challenges not only from a biodiversity point of view, but also the interaction of humans with other species.

236. The Biodiversity Strategy will be a flagship in MAB, since through the 50 years of experience of the Programme, ideas can be created on how to inhabit the Earth in a more respectful way and generate responses to the crises we are going through. The Biodiversity Strategy was requested by the Member States as a response of the current environmental and sanitary crisis and is completely inter-sectoral, relying on education, natural and social sciences and culture to redefine the relations between humans and other living species.

237. Italy appreciated the clear presentation of the Secretariat and stressed the importance of increasing the visibility of the Programme, especially as 2021 is a very important year for the environment.

238. The country also appreciated the idea of remembering those who have participated throughout the history of the programme but also of working with young people. Italy agreed that the MAB programme should work on the issue of biodiversity from a holistic perspective.

239. Finally, the country offered the support of the MAB Committee for this celebration.

240. South Africa supported the idea of appointing Dr Goodall as a spokesperson for the 50th anniversary, as she is an internationally recognised scientist, and this can help MAB to increase its visibility. It also supports having youth representatives on a regional level.

241. France mentioned that the anniversary of focusing mainly on the future and proposes two actions: to facilitate the mobilization of young people around the world on the values of MAB and towards a sustainable world by influencing the social networks. It also proposes to reflect collectively on the contributions that can be made to the Earth Summit in 2022 and to be in the front line, as was the case in 1971 when the MAB Programme was created.

242. France will celebrate the anniversary in the country and during the IUCN World Congress which should take place in Marseille, France in 2021.

243. Austria thanked the Secretariat for its presentation and informed that the Austrian MAB Committee would be preparing a special issue on mountain biosphere reserves in the scientific journal "eco.mont".



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244. The Republic of Korea suggested that, on the occasion of the 50th anniversary, a message on biodiversity and sustainable development should be published so that the general public would know and understand the meaning and achievements of the MAB Programme.

245. The country also suggested that the role of UNESCO and biosphere reserves as spaces for peace should be highlighted, given that building peace is the core purpose of UNESCO.

246. After these interventions, the MAB Council approved the proposal to invite Dr Goodall to be the spokesperson for the 50th anniversary and to have youth representatives at the regional level.

XIII. Date and venue of the 33rd session of the MAB-ICC

247. The MAB Secretary recalled that the 33rd Session of MAB-ICC should be held not later than in June 2021 considering a pandemic situation and also an enormous number of both, planned meetings - like the Executive Board and UNESCO General Conference meetings, and postponed global events.

248. The Chair, as the representative of Nigeria, expressed that Nigeria stays ready to host the next ICC session if a pandemic situation allows. He further assured that funds have been committed for the next year and pointed out that the video to be played will again perform a Nigeria's support to the MAB programme and show all the beauties and commitments to nature.

249. Some countries, like Australia and France, recalled a need to have a plan B in the case if a situation will not allow to hold the 33rd session in Nigeria. The Secretary confirmed that the HQ is always a plan B.

250. The MAB Council then decided that the next MAB ICC will take place in Abuja, Nigeria, most probably in June 2021 although it may change to be held in UNESCO HQ as a subject of a pandemic situation. The Council also confirmed that the Exit strategy will be completed next year.

XIV. Other Matters

251. Spain proposed to promote a declaration of the International Day of Biosphere Reserves. The Delegate recalled that this rather long-term initiative has been discussed several times and in different IberoMAB meetings since the 2nd Congress on Biosphere Reserves. He also pointed that recently, Spain sent a letter to ADG/SC in this regard.

252. The Delegate of Spain mentioned that the country is very active in the MAB Programme with its 52 biosphere reserves. Spain assumed that a declaration of this international day in the year of the 50th anniversary of the MAB Programme would be an excellent opportunity to promote values of these model sites for sustainable development, and living in harmony with nature, and transmit these values especially to young people.



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253. Spain therefore asked the ICC to consider this proposal and briefed that country is ready to continue to achieve a declaration of the International Day of Biosphere Reserves. A prevailing majority of Member States supported Spain's proposal. Thus, the Secretariat will work with Spain on this subject. In this regard, Spain will provide a detailed proposal on way forward and actions needed to catalyze a declaration process of the International Day of Biosphere Reserves.

XV. Closure of the Session

254. The MAB Secretary expressed sincere thanks to all the participants for their patience and indulgency for various technical problems associated with the online session.

255. He pointed out that to organize online a worldwide conference, such the MAB-ICC session, is not an easy task but it has been jointly succeeded. The Secretary highlighted a role of Members States and their biosphere reserves which performed viability of the MAB Programme in the current pandemic crisis and expressed a proudness to serve as the Secretary with all the staff to this Programme.

256. On behalf of the Secretariat as well as of the staff in Field Offices and all the people supporting this online session, the Secretary thanked participants to stand by and also acknowledged work of interpreters and technicians, thanked the Bureau, the Advisory Committee and in particular, the Chair to take the participants successfully through the session and in this regard, he thanked also on behalf of the UNESCO Director-General. The Secretary also recalled that many UNESCO colleagues listened to this session and could learn a lot of positive lessons.

257. In his concluding words, the Secretary explained a process on a report drafting from this online session.

258. The Chair appreciated everybody's work and recalled that this MAB-ICC has been a worldwide meeting. He thanked the MAB Secretary and all the Secretariat's staff. He further acknowledged the Director-General, the Assistant Director-General for Natural Sciences, the delegates, the observers, the Bureau, the Advisory Committee, the interpreters and the technical staff.

259. The Chair expressed his hope to see all in Nigeria in 2021 and declared the 32nd session as closed.



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