

## THE EBERSWALDE DECLARATION

### UNESCO Biosphere Reserves: Knowledges for a better future together, fostering a new generation

Under the leadership of the Biosphere Reserves Institute (BRI) at Eberswalde University for Sustainable Development (HNEE), more than 100 early career researchers, UNESCO Biosphere Reserves (BR) managers and national and international BR experts from 46 countries met in the Schorfheide-Chorin BR in Germany from May 16 to 20, 2022. They developed this proposal to strengthen science, Indigenous and other knowledge systems and research in, for and with UNESCO Biosphere Reserves.

The conference was supported by the German Federal Agency for Nature Conservation (BfN) with funds from the Federal Ministry for Environment, Nature Conservation, Nuclear Safety and Consumer Protection (BMUV), as well as the Ministry of Science, Research and Culture of the State of Brandenburg.

In the first half of the conference, early career researchers had energetic discussions on their experiences and formulated their expectations for better implementation of the UNESCO MAB Programme. In the second half of the conference, science practitioners as well as Indigenous and other knowledge holders from a) agencies, b) BRs and c) academia presented best practice examples and reviewed the results of the early career researchers.

After intense discussions across and among regions, genders, ages and specialisms, the participants wish to **make** the International Coordinating Council of the Man and the Biosphere programme (**MAB-ICC**) **aware** of their key **conclusions, proposals, and recommendations for action** by MAB-ICC, the MAB- and other relevant elements of the UNESCO Secretariat, MAB National Committees, Member States, and other relevant stakeholders.

The Lima Action Plan of 2015 asks for an active and open interdisciplinary network of scientists and other knowledge holders sharing the MAB Vision and Mission, which should develop a joint research and knowledge exchange agenda. This conference may be regarded as an important first step towards the establishment of such a network and, at the request of the participants, the BRI of Eberswalde University for Sustainable

Development offers to explore ways in which such a network could be further developed in an efficient and sustainable manner.

As the MAB Programme is an intergovernmental science programme, the conference participants stressed the urgent need **to revitalize and boost the MAB Programme's focus on research, knowledge sharing, training and education**, using the BRs of the refreshed, strong, and growing World Network of Biosphere Reserves (WNBR) as spaces for innovative sustainability research and partnerships. These should have a particularly strong emphasis on Youth and Indigenous Peoples.

Considering global challenges and increasing risks, the MAB Programme must foster inter- and transdisciplinary research to play a much stronger role in combating the climate and biodiversity crises and promoting human wellbeing. This requires new forms of adaptive and innovative sharing of all types of knowledge, supported by effective international exchange.

The participants formulated specific recommendations to all relevant target groups:

- the UNESCO Secretariat,
- the Member States,
- the MAB National Committees,
- individual BRs of the WNBR,
- subnational administrations,
- research institutions, and
- funding agencies and the donor community.

The recommendations are listed in Annex 1.

## **Annex 1** to the Eberswalde Declaration

### **‘Science and research in, for, and with UNESCO Biosphere Reserves’:**

#### **Recommendations of the conference:**

#### **The participants of the conference recommend that ...**

##### **the UNESCO Secretariat**

- define and actively communicate thematic research priorities,<sup>i</sup>
- encourage new and strengthen existing thematic networks,<sup>ii</sup>
- continuously develop the evaluation of BRs and make the results accessible,<sup>iii</sup>
- provide a regularly updated, comprehensive and easily accessible database on basic BRs data.

##### **the Member States**

- increase funding, and identify other ways to improve framework conditions, for research in BRs,
- create a regularly updated, comprehensive and easily accessible database on basic BRs data, for the availability of comparable data,
- increase communication and visibility of research and science in BRs;

##### **the MAB National Committees**

- set and communicate research priorities for BRs on the national scale and, together with other regional MAB National Committees, on a regional scale,
- support access to data on BRs to researchers and institutions;

##### **the individual BRs of the WNBR**

- attract researchers to work in, and investigate challenges faced by, BRs through:
  - a) making existing research results accessible,
  - b) actively reaching out to researchers,
  - c) holding research conferences in the BR,
  - d) setting up long-term continuous monitoring,
  - e) making long-term monitoring data accessible,
- approach local universities and research institutions, partner with them and jointly develop research agenda,
- approach and work with UNESCO chairs and UNESCO Category II centres & institutes,

- identify and communicate local research needs and priorities, identified through dialogue and consultation with stakeholders,
- communicate and publish research results;

#### **subnational administrations**

- define research priorities together with the administrations of BRs on their territory,
- interact with BR management boards, indigenous peoples and local communities to develop guidelines for research in BRs,
- support UNESCO MAB awareness and engagement about BRs on their territory;

#### **research institutions**

- strive for a demand-driven research from BRs and local communities, co-create research questions, and collaborate on equal terms,
- interact with BR administrations in a transparent way about research objectives,
- weave Indigenous and traditional knowledge with other knowledges,
- consider local communities as equal partners,
- publish results in a FAIR (Findable, Accessible, Interoperable, Reusable) manner,
- share knowledge and outcome with stakeholders of BRs in an iterative manner;

#### **funding agencies and the donor community**

- strengthen the funding for research (including long term research and monitoring) in, for, and with BRs.

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<sup>i</sup> Research priorities can be set parallel at the global scale and at a regional scales. Research priorities could be set in a participatory process based on an online survey among all BR with the guidance of the MAB Scientific Advisory Board.

<sup>ii</sup> New thematic networks could focus on topics considered important for many BR (e.g. climate change, urbanization, rural outmigration, education, youth involvement, BR governance).

<sup>iii</sup> In particular, evaluations should also encourage the reporting of failures and unexpected results. They should be used for learning and adaptive management.