

UNITED NATIONS EDUCATIONAL, SCIENTIFIC AND CULTURAL ORGANIZATION

International Co-ordinating Council of the Man and the Biosphere (MAB) Programme

Thirty-third session

Abuja, Nigeria (Hybrid meeting)
13 – 17 September 2021

ITEM 14 OF THE PROVISIONAL AGENDA: MAB Youth Activities

1. Within the overall framework of the UNESCO Operational Strategy on Youth (2014-2021), aimed to ensure that young women and men are engaged in policies and programmes affecting them, the organization of the 2017 MAB Youth Forum has marked a turning point in MAB's engagement with youth. The 1st MAB Youth Forum was organized to offer an opportunity for young people who care about the special territories in which they live in to become active in the MAB Programme and to contribute to the sustainable development of their communities, in line with the Lima Action Plan.

2. For the celebration of the 50th anniversary of the Programme in 2021, six youth spokespeople have been nominated to represent and act on behalf of the Programme.

3. Representing UNESCO's five geopolitical regions and the Roots & Shoots Programme of the Jane Goodall Institute, the six youth are active at the biosphere reserve and regional levels and have engaged in a series of activities to celebrate the anniversary and increase the visibility of the Programme, especially among other youth and youth networks.

- AfriMAB: Rebecca Laibich (Kenya) born and raised in Mount Elgon Biosphere Reserve.
- ArabMAB Amel Mechmech (Tunisia) dedicates her professional career to the preservation and valorization of natural and cultural heritage.
- APBRN (Asia-Pacific Biosphere Reserves Networks): Xiaoge Ping (China) researcher at the Institute of Zoology at the Chinese Academy of Sciences has conducted much of her work within Chinese Biosphere Reserves.
- IberoMAB: Obed Palagot Echavarria (Mexico), born and raised in Los Tuxtlas Biosphere Reserve in Mexico.
- EuroMAB: Alicia Donnellan Barraclough (Great Britain - Spain) works in Nordhordland Biosphere Reserve in Norway
- Emanuel Anthony Kilugala (Tanzania) from the Gombe Masito Ugalla Biosphere Reserve in Tanzania and represents the Roots & Shoots Programme of the Jane Goodall Institute

4. Furthermore, youth-led events have been organized in biosphere reserves throughout the World Network to celebrate the 50th anniversary of the Programme. Strong engagement has been observed and has led to the consolidation of national MAB youth networks, demonstrating the sincere intention of youth to be active in their biosphere reserves.

5. Expected to take place in 2020, the IberoMAB Youth Forum has been postponed due to the COVID-19 pandemic. This forum is envisioned for 2021 and will take place virtually or physically depending on the evolution of the sanitary conditions and travel restrictions. Additionally, in May 2021, a virtual meeting has been organized for all the members of the network to discuss the work that has been done. The draft Action Plan for the network was presented during the meeting and the final version will be presented during the coming forum.

6. In the past year, EuroMAB Youth has focused efforts on strengthening the communication both between the network and with external parties. In 2021 it has developed a seasonal newsletter that is drafted by the members of the network. Additionally, EuroMAB youth members have also been active publishing scientific outreach on the contributions of young people in BRs, including a publication of the MAB Youth declaration in the International Journal of Biosphere Reserves and a piece on the pivotal role of youth in BR in the high-impact academic Journal of Global Environmental Change. Furthermore, discussions to hold a EuroMAB Youth forum gathering youth from Europe and North America have initiated.
7. In the past year, AfriMAB Youth has worked in the organization and establishment of the network as well as the establishment of national chapters. They have hosted several virtual meetings with representatives from different countries to organize the structure of the network and the future Work Plan. In the long-term the network hopes to organize the first AfriMAB Youth forum. Members of AfriMAB Youth have also organized different events to celebrate the 50th Anniversary of the MAB Programme at the biosphere reserve and country levels.
8. A global MAB Youth forum focusing on climate is envisioned to take place during 2022. Initially, this forum would have been organized during 2021, but due to the sanitary conditions it has been decided to postpone it until presential meetings can be held. This will allow MAB Youth to take stock of the decisions to be taken at COP 26 and to elaborate possible climate actions that could be implemented by MAB Youth within their biosphere reserves. This forum will be organized jointly with the Youth UNESCO Climate Action Network (YoU-CAN) to join forces and create a coalition among youth groups. To facilitate the connections between these 2 youth networks, one MAB Youth representative is a member of the YoU-CAN ad hoc steering group.
9. Participation of the MAB Youth Spokespeople is expected during the IUCN World Conservation Congress in September in Marseille, France and at UNESCO's General Conference in November. Additionally, the possibility of convocating MAB Youth members to participate at events jointly organized with YoU-CAN during the UNFCCC pre-COP26 is being explored.
10. The MAB Council is invited to discuss and share its youth related experiences, lessons learnt and good practices, and to provide its guidance and recommendations regarding the strengthening of youth participation in the MAB Programme and its World Network of Biosphere Reserves. Members of the Council are also invited to consider the possibility to support the participation of young delegates of their respective country in the above-mentioned activities.