

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 6 OF THE PROVISIONAL AGENDA: Overview on MAB Thematic Networks

1. The World Network of Biosphere Reserves not only counts with different regional and sub-regional networks, but also thematic networks.
2. Thematic networks bring together biosphere reserves that share environmental, ecosystemic, geopolitical and cultural similarities. They provide valuable insights into sustainable development models, and the potential for mitigation and adaptation to global change through collaborative research, knowledge transfer and capacity building.
3. There are currently six thematic networks:
4. The World Network of Island and Coastal Biosphere Reserves was launched in 2009. It aims to study, foster and disseminate island and coastal strategies to preserve biodiversity and heritage in order to promote sustainable development, and adaptation and mitigation strategies on climate change. The Network is composed of more than 80 biosphere reserves in 30 Member States. The Technical Secretariats of the Jeju and Menorca Biosphere Reserves are responsible for coordinating and supporting the Network's activities, such as annual meetings, research projects, publications, technical and financial assistance, seminars and training courses, newsletters, a database of experiences and a Zero Plastic working group. More information about this Network can be found at: <http://www.islandbiosphere.org/>
5. The World Network of Mountain Biosphere Reserves is currently being relaunched by the MAB Programme. A peer consultation process with a wide range of mountain experts and mountain biosphere reserve managers has resulted in a draft roadmap for the implementation of the Network, in line with the Lima Action Plan. Its proposed governance model is similar to that of the World Network of Island and Coastal Biosphere Reserves. It will include one or two Technical Secretariats hosted in mountain biosphere reserves that will support the overall coordination efforts of the MAB Secretariat and provide the Network with regular human and financial resources to organize activities and implement projects. The MAB Secretariat sent a circular letter on 9 June 2021 to all Member States to seek candidates for the role of Technical Secretariats of the Network. Proposals will be accepted until 10 September 2021. More information about this Network can be found at: https://en.unesco.org/sites/default/files/mountain_br_network_description_en.pdf
6. The Mediterranean Network of Biosphere Reserves (MedMAB) is an initiative promoted by the UNESCO Category 2 Centre on Mediterranean Biosphere Reserves (Unescomed), which began laying the foundations for its creation in 2015. The Network promotes biodiversity conservation and sustainable development in the region by strengthening relations between biosphere reserves across the Mediterranean through (a) the development of cooperation initiatives and exchange of experiences, and knowledge-

supporting transcontinental relations and North-South relations; (b) development of research on socio-environmental issues and challenges for Mediterranean biosphere reserves; and (c) the strengthening of links between biosphere reserves, academia, civil society and business, promoting projects related to key issues such as the bio-economy and sustainable management of water, natural resources, biodiversity and tourism.

More information about this Network can be found at: <https://www.unescomedcenter.org/>

7. NordMAB is a sub-network of EuroMAB that includes Canada, Greenland (Denmark), Norway, Sweden, Finland and Estonia. The objective of the Network is the collaboration of biosphere reserves, researchers, experts and government officials to address the challenges of regional sustainable development in a great northern context. The main issues addressed by this Network is urbanization, migration of young people, working with indigenous communities, tourism development, access to education, and collaboration with the private sector in major industrial sectors such as mining, forestry and energy.

More information about this Network can be found at: <https://www.nordmab.com/>

8. CaveMAB is a new initiative that values natural and cultural phenomena related to caves and karstic areas in biosphere reserves. The mission and objectives of the Network will be defined by the participating biosphere reserves. Among the first initiatives of the Network is the creation of a database of cave and karst formations to promote the protection of CaveMAB sites, promote education about caves and karst through educational materials and workshops, enhance community participation and sustainable development, and identify and analyse socio-economic and environmental benefits and challenges.

More information about this Network can be found at: <https://cavemab.com/>

9. The Lusophone Network of Biosphere Reserves is a new initiative to bring together 24 biosphere reserves in Brazil, Cape Verde, Guinea-Bissau, Mozambique, Portugal, and São Tomé and Príncipe.

The Network will be a platform for dialogue, cooperation and joint progress of the Lusophone developing world based on conservation and sustainable use of natural resources. It promotes and builds capacity on the MAB Programme and biosphere reserves, especially in Lusophone Member States without biosphere reserves. It also provides support to strengthen the technical and management skills of the Network's biosphere reserves to develop multidisciplinary scientific research. The Network promotes the valorisation of natural and cultural heritage, understanding the specificity of the historical relations at the Lusophone level, their uniqueness and universality.

10. The AfriMAB sub-network for biosphere reserves that are habitats for great apes was launched as an initiative during the 2019 AfriMAB General Assembly in Abidjan (Côte d'Ivoire). The Network aims to share knowledge and best practices related to great apes and their habitats, and coordinates the work of a diverse audience of stakeholders, including primatologists, biosphere reserve managers and civil society.

11. The MAB Secretariat recognises and supports the efforts that Member States, biosphere reserves, scientists, experts, foundations, among other key actors, are making to develop thematic networks to provide biosphere reserves with a global perspective on specific issues beyond regional perspectives .

12. The MAB ICC is invited to provide guidance on how to strengthen these networks.