

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 15 OF THE PROVISIONAL AGENDA: celebration of the 50th anniversary of the MAB Programme

1. The Man and Biosphere (MAB) Programme, as UNESCO's longest standing scientific intergovernmental programme, is celebrating its 50th anniversary in 2021.
2. The celebration is dedicated to all those who have worked and devoted their time and energy to the Programme, making it possible for MAB to become an international reference on sustainable development. It will also shed light on what has been achieved, the lessons learned and where the Programme needs to go in the future, considering younger generations and new visions.
3. The celebration has taken place throughout 2021 and will continue until December 2021. In the framework of the celebration, the MAB Secretariat has launched some key activities and products, played a central role in facilitating the celebrations in biosphere reserves and ensured that people living in biosphere reserves all over the world take ownership of the 50th anniversary.
4. While a different timeline was forecast, the conditions imposed by the COVID-19 pandemic along with considerably reduced human resources have represented a significant setback for the organization of the celebration and resulted in delaying some activities.
5. The activities carried out and under preparation to this day are the following:
 - Spokespeople: The MAB ICC has nominated ethologist and environmentalist Dr Jane Goodall DBE, founder of the Jane Goodall Institute and UN Messenger of Peace, as the spokesperson of the 50th anniversary of the MAB Programme. Dr Goodall was chosen by the ICC because she represents the values of the Programme, which are rooted in scientific research, respect for biodiversity and the promotion of sustainable development. This nomination is also a tribute to her work over the years in defence of nature and the local populations that depend on it, globally and specifically in the Gombe Masito Ugalla Biosphere Reserve in Tanzania.
Six youth spokespersons representing UNESCO's five geopolitical regions and the Roots & Shoots Programme of the Jane Goodall Institute have been nominated to join Dr Goodall in promoting the work of MAB and its World Network of Biosphere Reserves during the 50th anniversary, especially among other young people and youth networks.
 - AfriMAB: Rebecca Laibich (Kenya)
 - ArabMAB: Amel Mechmech (Tunisia)
 - ASPACMAB: Xiaoge Ping (People's Republic of China)

- EuroMAB: Alicia Donnellan Barraclough (Spain - United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland)
 - IberoMAB: Obed Palagot Echavarria (Mexico)
 - Roots & Shoots: Emanuel Anthony Kilugala (Tanzania) from the Gombe Masito Ugalla Biosphere Reserve in Tanzania
- The MAB Secretariat hosted a Mobilization Session on 17 February 2021 in order to coordinate a global and diverse campaign with the entire MAB Community. The Secretariat made resources available to the World Network of Biosphere Reserves, shared work plans and welcomed plans for the celebration from Member States.
 - The official launch of the 50th anniversary of the MAB Programme took place during the UNESCO Biodiversity Forum on 10 March 2021. The event counted with the participation of the Director-General of UNESCO and Dr Jane Goodall DBE, spokesperson of the 50th Anniversary of the MAB Programme. During the event, Dr Goodall introduced the young spokespeople who will accompany her in her work during the 50th anniversary. Representing UNESCO's five geopolitical regions and the Roots & Shoots Programme of the Jane Goodall Institute, the six young people from the People's Republic of China, Kenya, Mexico, Tanzania, Tunisia and Spain-UK introduced themselves through video messages to the international community and committed to participate in a series of activities to celebrate the anniversary and raise the visibility of the Programme.
 - For its 50th anniversary, the MAB Programme partnered with renowned Brazilian contemporary artist Vik Muniz, a UNESCO Goodwill Ambassador whose works are exhibited in the world's most prominent museums. During this year, Mr Muniz will create an artwork with canvases and photos of materials collected on a voluntary basis in different biosphere reserves around the world that represent their cultural and biological uniqueness, and their inhabitants' relationship with the living. The artwork will be presented during the UNESCO General Conference and at major events related to sustainable development.
 - Since 2020, the MAB Programme has been preparing its new database. In early 2021, data collection started in pilot biosphere reserves in five MAB regional networks, and between July and August a survey was sent to the entire World Network of Biosphere Reserves to collect all the data that will feed the database. The database is expected to be launched by the end of the year in order to benefit the entire World Network with up-to-date, quality information.
 - The official exhibition of the 50th anniversary of the MAB Programme has been developed thanks to the support of the Abertis Foundation, the National Parks Autonomous Agency (OAPN) of Spain, Volkswagen and the Alliance of International Science Organisations (ANSO). The exhibition will be officially opened at the end of September 2021 in Barcelona and will be presented in different parts of the world in the following months. The exhibition is a virtual journey to different biosphere reserves around the world. The panels give access to podcasts of interviews with different biosphere reserves managers, members of local communities, researchers, artists and many more to learn about their activities and projects, as well as the sounds of emblematic species.

Printable materials for use in biosphere reserves can be accessed through the exhibition website.

- Personalities recognised for their work on issues related to biodiversity conservation and sustainable development have been invited to be interviewed. These conversations are part of a series of mini-documentaries about their work that will help inspire the World Network of Biosphere Reserves and raise the visibility of MAB.
- A series of interviews with MAB Young Scientist Award laureates has been published on the website. The aim is to show how this award has supported the research and careers of young scientists throughout MAB's history.
- The MAB Programme is currently producing educational material on biosphere reserves that will be launched at the end of the year. The material, in the form of a game, aims to teach, in a playful way, the work of MAB and the importance of biosphere reserves worldwide.
- During this year, the MAB Programme has worked to strengthen its scientific basis and that of the World Network of Biosphere Reserves through different activities and partnerships. For example: (i) scientific work initiated through the Amazonia Project (UNESCO-LVMH) led by Eduardo S. Brondizio, professor at Indiana University (USA) and co-chair of the IPBES Global Assessment Report on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services; (ii) activities initiated with the Mountain Research Initiative (Switzerland) to support mountain biosphere reserves; (iii) activities initiated with Heidelberg University of Education (Germany) to support the management of biosphere reserves through the application of digital geomeia; and (iv) assessment of the state of ecosystem restoration in biosphere reserves in 2021 to monitor their contribution to the UN decade .

6. A list of activities that have been organized within the World Network of Biosphere Reserves are presented in Annex 1.

7. The MAB ICC is invited to provide guidance to the MAB Secretariat on the celebration of the 50th Anniversary of the MAB Programme.