

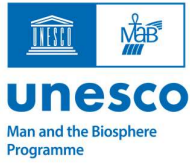
UNITED NATIONS EDUCATIONAL, SCIENTIFIC AND CULTURAL ORGANIZATION
International Co-ordinating Council of the Man and the Biosphere (MAB) Programme

Thirty-fourth session

Paris, France, 13 –17 June 2022

ITEM 14 OF THE PROVISIONAL AGENDA: Thematic Networks of Biosphere Reserves

1. The Man and the Biosphere (MAB) Programme, with its World Network of Biosphere Reserves (WNBR), constitutes an important and valuable platform for research and experimentation on the ground, to build knowledge on practice-based sustainable development and share it globally with a view of supporting Member States to address critical issues related to global environmental change and achieve SDG's.
2. Adopted by the MAB ICC at its 27th session, the MAB Strategy 2015-2025 provides a comprehensive yet succinct framework to achieve these goals. Much emphasis is put in this document on the WNBR, and all efforts spent to develop and strengthen this network have the ultimate aim of disseminating models for sustainable development and help Member States explore and test policies, technologies and innovations to meet the SDGs.
3. In this view, the WNBR needs to be viewed and used more systematically as a network of "territorial labs", a research and educational infrastructure dedicated to interdisciplinary research and experimentation, where to facilitate and develop biodiversity and sustainability science, education for sustainable development (ESD) and capacity building. These are in fact the main components of Strategic Objective 3 of the Strategy 2015-2025.
4. The recommendation to establish an "international network of scientists working in biosphere reserves" (ER 3.2. of the Strategy) has materialized so far in the existence of 7 Ecosystem-specific networks that associate biosphere reserves and scientists/experts and, for the most part, have been established spontaneously in the course of years, in response mainly to concerns and needs of sets of biosphere reserves sharing environmental, ecosystem, geopolitical and cultural commonalities.
5. To fully use its networking potential, the MAB Programme could consider the possibility to encourage its Member States to establish and run a new generation of Thematic Networks – **Theme-specific Networks** - going beyond the regional affiliation or ecosystem-specificity of the BRs involved, thus focusing on cross-cutting themes of interest such as (for example) Education for Sustainable Development, BRs and industrial activities or urbanization, ecosystem restoration, desertification and the oasis model, ecotourism, etc.
6. At its 33rd session, the MAB-ICC was invited to provide guidance on how to strengthen and manage thematic networks and suggested that a document be prepared to standardize the establishment and functioning of these thematic networks, to be reviewed at the 34th session of the MAB-ICC. Document SC-22/CONF.234/12 has been prepared by the Secretariat to stimulate and facilitate a discussion on this item by the Council. Annex 1 includes a very first draft of "**Guidelines for the establishment, implementation and monitoring of Thematic Networks**", and Annex 2 includes a first outline of a "**Template for the submission of a proposal to establish a Thematic Network**".
1. The MAB Council is invited to examine these documents and provide its comments and recommendations to the MAB Secretariat, especially with regard to the establishment of an Ad Hoc Working Group on Thematic Networks that could be given the task to revise and finalize these guidelines, in view of their discussion and approval on the occasion of the 35th session of the MAB-ICC in 2023.



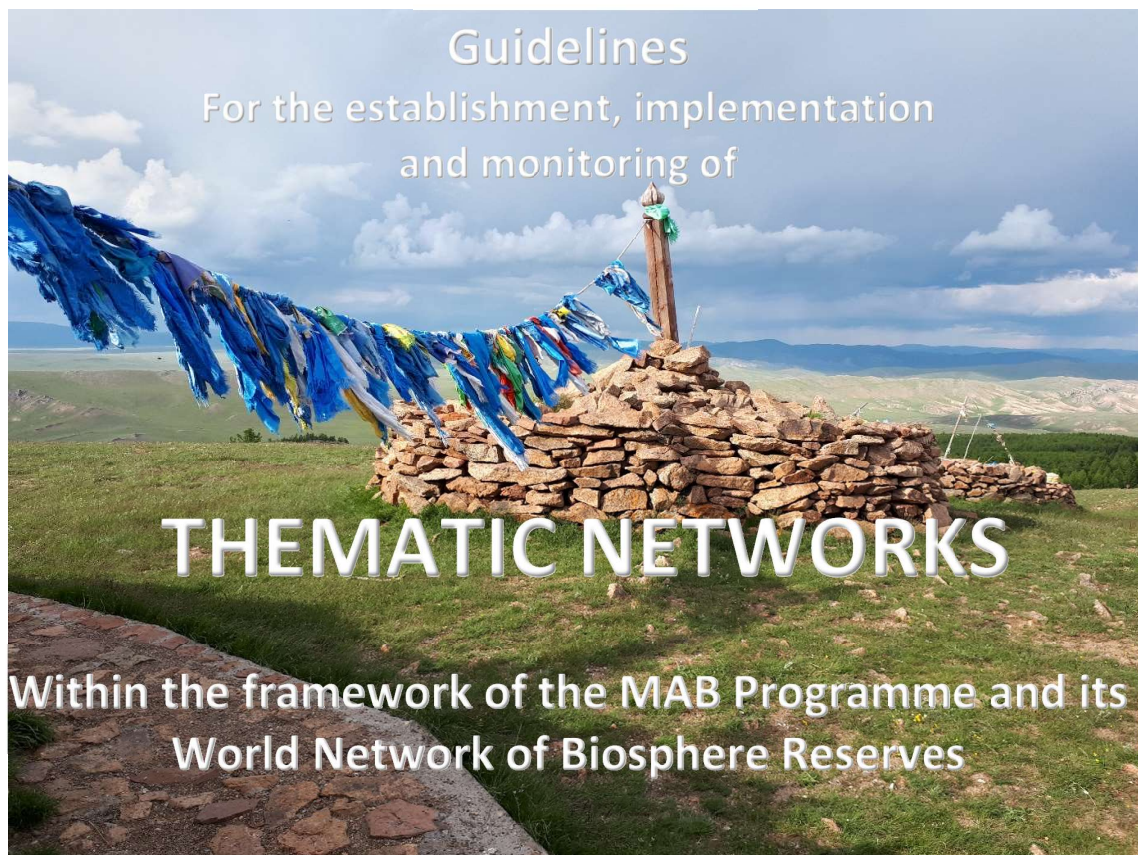
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ANNEX 1



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Man and the Biosphere
Programme



**First Draft
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1. Background and purpose

1.1. Background

The Man and the Biosphere (MAB) Programme, with its World Network of Biosphere Reserves (WNBR), constitutes an important and valuable platform for research and experimentation on the ground, to build knowledge on practice-based sustainable development and share it globally. Thanks to this practical approach, the MAB Programme supports the efforts of UNESCO Member States to address critical issues related to biodiversity, ecosystem services, climate change, and other aspects of global environmental change. Adopted by the MAB ICC at its twenty-seventh session, the MAB Strategy 2015-2025 provides a comprehensive yet succinct framework to achieve these goals and contribute to the global Sustainable Development Goals.

Much emphasis is put in this strategic document on the WNBR, this dynamic and interactive network of sites of excellence, which works to foster the harmonious integration of people and nature for sustainable development. All efforts spent to develop and strengthen this network have the ultimate purpose of disseminating models for sustainable development that will help Member States and stakeholders explore and test policies, technologies and innovations for the sustainable management of biodiversity and natural resources, as well as the mitigation and adaptation to climate change. In one word: to urgently meet the Sustainable Development Goals.

In this view, the WNBR needs to be viewed and used more systematically as a network of “territorial labs”, a research and educational infrastructure dedicated to interdisciplinary research and experimentation, where to facilitate and develop biodiversity and sustainability science¹, education for sustainable development (ESD) and capacity building. These are in fact the main components of Strategic Objective 3 of the Strategy 2015-2025, which requires that close collaboration should be established:

- At a biosphere reserve level, between all the different stakeholders, including scientists, policy-makers, members of local communities and the private sector. All together, they play key roles in operationalizing and mainstreaming sustainability science and ESD at local and regional levels, in order to build scientific knowledge, identify best practices, and strengthen the interface between science, policy and education and training for sustainable development. They also provide sound basis for a participatory decision-making and management in the biosphere reserves (ER 3.3 of the Strategy).
- At a network level (national, regional, global), between biosphere reserves having a common interest in exploring together particular issues of concern or interest, in order to engage with international, regional, national and subnational research and demonstration initiatives and programmes that contribute to the 2030 Agenda for

¹ Sustainability science is an integrated, problem-solving approach that draws on the full range of scientific, traditional and indigenous knowledge in a transdisciplinary way to identify, understand and address present and future economic, environmental, ethical and societal challenges related to sustainable development.

sustainable development, and other internationally agreed objectives and frameworks (ER 3.1 of the Strategy).

While it is indeed expected that, by its acquired international status, each biosphere reserve should have an active research programme, based on the principles of sustainability science, the recommendation to establish an “*international network of scientists working in biosphere reserves*” (ER 3.2. of the Strategy) has materialized so far in the existence of several Ecosystem-specific networks that associate biosphere reserves and scientists/experts and, for the most part, have been established spontaneously in the course of years, in response mainly to concerns and needs of sets of biosphere reserves sharing environmental, ecosystem, geopolitical and cultural commonalities.

As of the beginning of 2022, there are 7 existing thematic networks established within the framework of the MAB programme:

1. The **World Network of Island and Coastal Biosphere Reserves** (WNICBR), launched in 2009, has its 2 secretariats in the biosphere reserves of Jeju (Republic of Korea) and Menorca (Spain), and includes more than 80 biosphere reserves in 30 countries. 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. Activities include 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/>
2. The **World Network of Mountain Biosphere Reserves** (WNMBR), re-launched in late 2021, has chosen a governance mechanism similar to that of the WNICBR, with 2 technical secretariats established at the Center of Eco-Environmental Sciences of the Chinese Academy of Sciences (China) and at the Los Valles de Omaña y Luna Biosphere Reserve (Spain). The goal of the network is i) to increase the scientific knowledge of the managers/coordinators of mountain biosphere reserves, to improve the management of their sites; ii) to facilitate exchange of scientific and local/indigenous knowledge between scientists and local communities in mountain biosphere reserves, and; iii) to improve knowledge exchange among scientists and policymakers in order to make science-based decisions and facilitate adaptive governance relating to mountain biosphere reserves. More information about this Network can be found at: https://en.unesco.org/sites/default/files/mountain_br_network_description_en.pdf
3. **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/>

4. 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/>
5. **NordMAB** is a sub-network of EuroMAB that includes Canada, 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/>
6. 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 is established as 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 valorization of natural and cultural heritage, understanding the specificity of the historical relations at the Lusophone level, their uniqueness and universality.
7. 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.

These networks facilitate exchanges and the implementation of joint investigation and researches on a great variety of issues, providing biosphere reserves with not only the necessary knowledge basis for their sound management, but at the same time a global perspective on sustainable development. They also have the potential to deliver results that could be of interest to the surrounding territories and inspire actions and policies for sustainable development by the Member States themselves (also in the wider context of internationally agreed objectives and frameworks like the CBD, the UNFCCC or the UN Decade on Ecosystem Restoration), thus fully supporting biosphere reserve to carry out their role of model territories for sustainable development.

To fully use this potential, the MAB Programme could consider the possibility to encourage its Member States to establish and run new Thematic Networks, going beyond the regional affiliation or ecosystem-specificity of the BRs involved, thus focusing on cross-cutting themes of interest such as (for example) Education for Sustainable Development, BRs and industrial activities or urbanization (a new alliance), ecosystem restoration, deserts and the oasis model, climate change, ecotourism, etc. These should be named “theme-specific networks”.



Important note: In the remaining part of the document, the term “Thematic Network” will refer to both ecosystem-specific and theme-specific networks.

1.2. Purpose

Already in 1995, the Seville Strategy and Statutory Framework for the World Network of Biosphere Reserves were clearly inviting Member States to actively “participate in or facilitate co-operative activities of the Network, including scientific research and monitoring, at the global, regional and subregional levels” (Art.7 of the Statutory Framework), with activities also including exchanges of information, education, training and capacity-building efforts. According to Art. 8 of the Statutory Framework, Member States were therefore encouraged to constitute and operate Regional & Thematic subnetworks of the WNBR, even if no specific rules of procedure were given at that time for their establishment, governance or assessment.

Since then, as we have seen above, several sub-networks have been activated in response to the invitation and recommendations contained in the statutory documents. They are being perceived today as fundamental tools for the MAB Programme to achieve the process of excellence and quality of its WNBR and, beyond, to increase its delivery and impact. That is why the MAB ICC, in its 33rd meeting held in Abuja, Nigeria, in 2021, was invited to provide guidance on how to strengthen these thematic networks.

The present document has been prepared by the Secretariat and adopted by the MAB International Coordination Council at its XXth session, in order to guide the Member States, biosphere reserves and their partners, in **establishing** a Thematic Network, **running** it and

reporting on its activities in such a way that the MAB Council could be provided with the information needed to endorse and formalize their establishment, monitor and review their achievements, and decide on their continuation or closure.

To this end, the document also includes in annex reasoned templates which will guide, step by step, the proposers and/or coordinators of thematic networks in compiling the required documentation for the review and decisions of the MAB International Coordination Council.

2. Principles and guidelines for the establishment of Thematic Networks

2.1. The decisional framework

A proposal is elaborated and submitted to the MAB-ICC by the Secretariat with the involvement and support of the biosphere reserve(s) where the technical secretariat(s) of the Network would be located. This will be done using the Proposal Template as available in Annex 1.

The first part of the proposal template should list the Council members who are supporting this proposal before the MAB-ICC, as well as a reference to the Strategic Framework (MAB Strategy and related Action Plan) in force at the moment the proposal is made.

The decision of establishing a Thematic Network is taken by the MAB-ICC at the majority of its members, and that is why the proposal template need to be carefully filled-in in order to support the decisional process with the adequate details on the proposed network, its focus and objectives (and their alignment with strategic priorities and needs of the MAB Programme and the WNBR), its membership, its governance structure and coordination mechanisms, its plans and expected results, its budget.

All this should be prepared in reference to the current MAB Strategy and related Action Plan, and this means that the proposed network would have by definition an initial duration not overcoming the duration of the current MAB Strategy (presently 2015-2025) with, at the end of such a period, the possibility to be confirmed/renewed or revoked/dissolved, after a careful evaluation of a report on its main achievements and outputs during the same period (see Chapter 3 for more details on the reporting exercise).

A network could be established for a shorter period, considering the specificity of its objectives and the time needed to achieve them.

A proposal for a new Thematic Network should be presented to the MAB-ICC using the appropriate template given in Annex. The remaining part of Chapter 2. refers specifically to the various sections of this template (Para 2.2. of the present text corresponds to Section 2. of the template, Para 2.2.1 to Section 2.1, etc.).

2.2. The institutional set up and governance

2.2.1. The Secretariat

A Thematic Network needs a driving force that will assure coordination among members, the proper organization and running of a minimum set of activities (meetings, publishing results and information) as well as good communication with MAB instances (MAB-ICC, Regional Networks, Working Groups, etc.). Such a coordination role is carried out by the Secretariat of the MAB Programme, with the support of one or more technical secretariat(s) hosted by biosphere reserve(s) and/or their close partners such as universities, centers an chairs, foundations, etc.

These technical secretariats should guarantee that the necessary human and financial resources have been mobilized to fulfil these coordination tasks, while specific research, monitoring, educational or training efforts would require that additional resources are mobilized from donors. Coordination tasks shall include (not exhaustive):

- Maintaining contacts with members and partners ((including relationships with the MAB Secretariat);
- Preparing work plans and related budgets;
- Reporting;
- Organizing and facilitating meetings of the Steering Committee;
- Supporting the activities of Working Groups established for the conduction of specific projects and initiatives;
- Making visible the activities of the network (publications, webpage, leaflets);
- Representing the network;
- Raising funds.

2.2.2. Membership

Thematic Network are established by the MAB Program, where each BR can contribute and draw experience and through which, collectively, BR's can provide valuable insights into sustainable development models and climate change mitigation and adaptation possibilities. While Regional Networks are built on regional affiliation, a series of Ecosystem (and Habitat) specific Networks have been established in the course of years, focusing on research, capacity building and educational collaborations around:

- Mountains (World Network of Mountain Biosphere Reserves - WNMBR);
- Islands and Coasts (World Network of Island and Coastal Biosphere Reserves – WNICBR);
- Habitats for Great Apes (AfriMAB sub-network for biosphere reserves that are habitats for great apes);
- Caves and karstic areas in biosphere reserves (CaveMAB).

A new generation of networks could now be considered and promoted, focusing on themes and issues related to all possible aspects of Sustainable Development:

- Eco-tourism and outdoor activities;
- Integrated water management and Ecohydrology;

- Extractive and industrial activities;
- Management of multi-designated sites;
- Etc.

Similar networks will federate the efforts of all Biosphere Reserves having a particular interest in these issues and desire to cooperate with other BR's, beyond regional or ecosystem specificities.

To become members of a specific thematic network, interested BR's need to formally declare their interest to join and become active members of this network and their readiness to contribute to its activities. The list of members presented at the submission of a network proposal will include the BR's having already expressed their will to establish and run the proposed network. Other will have the opportunity to join the network at any time during its implementation.

2.2.3. The Steering Committee

The Steering Committee of a Thematic Network is renewed every three years and shall be composed of:

- a) One representative of the MAB Secretariat;
- b) Representative(s) of the biosphere reserve(s) hosting the technical secretariat(s)
- c) MAB focal point(s)/representative(s) of the government(s) where the biosphere reserve(s) hosting the secretariat(s) are located;
- d) One representative of each UNESCO region (biosphere reserve, expert) involved in the network;
- e) One representative of every major sponsor of activities.

The Steering Committee shall meet in ordinary session at regular intervals, at least once every calendar year; it shall meet in extraordinary session if convened by its members. The Steering Committee shall:

- a) Adopt the rules and regulations;
- b) Approve the vision, long-term objectives, specific objectives and expected results of the network;
- c) Approve the annual work plan and related budget of the network;
- d) Examine the annual reports submitted by the technical secretariat(s);
- e) Represent the network in conferences, networks, platforms.

2.2.4. Partnerships (key partners)

To properly function and deliver results, a Thematic Network will seek partnerships with institutions to potentiate its efforts towards the development of the network. Partners could be Universities and Research institutions (and particular projects, initiatives, networks of the same), UNESCO centers and chairs, Foundations, UN Agencies, Local communities, etc. Their role could vary from financial support to in-kind contributions to research or educational activities, the co-organization and hosting of events, etc.

Scientific partnerships will help to link a Thematic Network to the global scientific community in particular areas of interest and to jointly promote research involving and benefitting to Biosphere Reserves belonging to the network (also in terms of data/information access).

Partnerships should also facilitate synergies in communication and dissemination of news, opportunities and calls as they arise, and of course offer visibility of the support of particular initiatives to the MAB Programme. This is for example the case of the partnership and synergies established between the World Network of Mountain Biosphere Reserves and the Mountain Research Initiative (MRI).

Science should be turned into action. Establishing synergies between a Thematic Network could finally have the purpose of translating research in a particular thematic area into opportunities for implementing UN international frameworks towards sustainable development in the WNB. R.

2.2.5. Coordination structure and implementation mechanism

In this section of the template, the proposers have the opportunity to better describe (also with graphics) the coordination structure and implementation mechanism of the networks, showing how the Steering Committee and the Secretariat of the network will function together, but also including- if relevant – specific working groups and project groups that could be established for the implementation of specific activities and projects of the network.

2.3. The strategic and implementation framework

2.3.1. Context, knowledge gap and needs

The interest of establishing a new Thematic Network should have been checked through various activities/moments (congresses, conferences and workshops, participation in international projects, visits to biosphere reserves, etc.) and confirmed by a critical number of biosphere reserves and related stakeholders (universities and research centers, scientists and experts, UNESCO centers and chairs, foundation, etc.). In this section of the proposal, the promoters of a Thematic Network will therefore summarize the reasons why such a network should be established. These could be the need to federate the efforts of an ecosystem-specific sub-set of the WNB. R, to fill a specific knowledge gap in environmental sciences, to respond to requests of support expressed by biosphere reserves in a particular field of BR management/implementation (community-based conservation, ecotourism, extractive activities, multi-designations management, etc.) or to elaborate a position of the MAB programme on questions arising in the global arena on specific issues (biodiversity conservation, ecosystem restoration, climate change, etc.).

2.3.2 The thematic focus

The name (acronym) of a Thematic Network will be directly related to the chosen thematic focus, whose relevance should be demonstrated and supported by a significant number of Biosphere reserves and associated partners, and could be checked making reference to the outcomes of MAB Congresses, thematic conferences or workshops, as well as statutory meetings of the MAB programme and its WNB. R, also taking into consideration their involvement in particular international initiatives (conferences of parties, the post-2020

Global Framework Agenda, the UN Decade on Ecosystem Restoration, etc.) and research programmes.

See para 1.1. for a clearer definition of Ecosystem-specific and Theme-specific networks.

2.3.3 Long-term objectives

The long-term (or goals) of a Thematic Network should be an expression of what the involved actors (mainly biosphere reserve managers/coordinators, specialists, universities, research centres, local communities, UN agencies and programmes, association and NGO's) intend to achieve together in order to (non exhaustive):

- Increase the knowledge of, and exchange between, biosphere reserve managers/coordinators to improve the governance and management of the sites and to share best practices;
- Build capacities on BR management issues among local decision makers and stakeholders and contribute to the realization of SDGs;
- Generate exchange of scientific and local/indigenous knowledge between scientists and local communities (including citizen science);
- Improve knowledge exchange among scientists and policymakers in order to promote science-based decisions that would positively influence the adaptive governance of biosphere reserves as well as the formulation of sustainable development policies in a wider context;
- Support the development of new biosphere reserves in countries and regions that do not have such as up to now and attract financial and logistic support for their successful implementation;
- Support international collaboration through the establishment of shared governance in transboundary biosphere reserves.

In this respect, it is fundamental that long-term objectives would consider and distinguish clearly what could be done through the network:

- FOR the Biosphere Reserves, in order to improve their management and overall achievement of SDGs, mobilizing and making available the necessary knowledge basis. In such a case their participation in a network has also the purpose of making their needs better known to their partners (research institutions, experts, donors, etc.);
- WITH the Biosphere Reserves, in order to federate their potential contribution to national and international (scientific) projects, initiatives, platforms, etc., and therefore support them to better deliver collectively.

In defining long-term objectives, proposers will finally make a particular reference to the present MAB Strategy and related Action Plan.

2.3.4 Specific objectives and expected results/outcomes

Considering the operational development of a network, more specific objectives and expected results need to be formulated, with particular reference to their potential contribution to

Expected Results of the present MAB Strategy. In this view, specific objectives and expected results could be expressed considering the following areas of action (non exhaustive):

- Support to the development of the WNBR (establishment of new BRs);
- Support to the management and governance of BRs;
- Knowledge development and sharing (including indigenous knowledge);
- Research in strategic areas;
- Monitoring;
- Education, training and capacity-building;
- Information and communication.

Expected results need to be formulated in such a way that the potential impact of activities could be clearly apprehended (number of stakeholders trained, knowledge delivered, improved area of governance/management, etc.).

2.3.5 Implementation framework

The above expected results will be achieved through activities that need to be summarized in the Table 3.5., considering the Specific Objectives announced in the previous section. The following are given as examples:

- Support to the development of the WNBR (establishment of new BRs): field visits in existing BRs to inspire the establishment of new ones in particular countries/regions, expert missions, etc.
- Support to the management and governance of BRs: organization of training courses, exchanges among BRs, expert visits/advice, production of guidance materials and toolkits, publication of supporting maps/databases, etc.
- Knowledge development and sharing (including indigenous knowledge): organization of educational and training programmes, workshops, conferences, exchanges, involvement of communities and stakeholders in (scientific) projects and governance processes, etc.
- Research in strategic areas: research developed with scientific partners in the BR(s), participation of BR(s) in national/international (funded) projects, etc.
- Monitoring: monitoring of particular indicators, sharing of data with international networks, development of approaches/technologies for monitoring, etc.
- Education, training and capacity-building: based on the knowledge gained throughout the network (from both daily experiences and research projects), organization of courses, summer schools, (on-site) training seminars for national and international audiences, contributions from BRs to University courses, establishment of UNESCO Chairs and Centers, etc.
- Information and communication: launching of a thematic series of publications, journals, webpage, information center, online databases, organization of events, campaigns, exhibitions, etc.

2.3.6 Activity timeframe, responsibilities and budget

As explained in Para 2.1. (Decisional Framework), it is recommended that Thematic Network are established for an initial duration not overcoming the duration of the current MAB Strategy (presently 2015-2025), in order to be able to refer precisely to objectives and expected results of these strategic documents. As stated above, a network could also be established for a shorter period, considering the specificity of its objectives and the time needed to achieve them. This is suggested to encourage members and partners to elaborate and implement time-bound and result oriented plans of action, in response to specific needs and requests of member states.

To be successful in this, thematic networks will have to mobilize the necessary human and financial resources, for a good coordination and animation of the network on one side, and for the implementation of specific activities and projects on the other side.

As far as the coordination and animation is concerned, a model successfully implemented so far (for example for the World Network of Island and Coastal Biosphere Reserves as well as the World Network of Mountain Biosphere Reserves) implies that the overall coordination is assured by the MAB Secretariat (focal point), supported by one or biosphere reserve-based Secretariat(s) who provide a secretariat to the network by mobilizing the necessary financial and human resources. These should basically cover the needs for the organization of regular meetings of the network, programming and reporting efforts as well as assuring the basic visibility of the network (webpage).

Additional activities (research, monitoring, education and training, organization of events, representation, etc.) will usually require the in-kind and financial contribution/support of partners and donors (to be specified in the table 3.6. of the template). Best use should be done of on-line modalities for meetings and working groups. Opportunities to convene working group meetings could also arise from the participation of members of the network in statutory meetings and congresses of the MAB programme, in international projects/consortia or conferences organized by other institutions.

2.4. Visibility

Thematic networks contribute greatly to the overall visibility of the entire MAB Programme and its World Network of Biosphere Reserves, in particular when it comes to its contribution to the conservation and sustainable use of specific ecosystems, to the development of knowledge bases on specific issues or the formulation of guidelines and policies for the proper governance and management of sustainable development issues.

2.4.1. Dissemination

The dissemination of information and knowledge, resulting from the activities of a thematic network, can take various forms (scientific articles and books, fact sheets, maps and infographics, policy briefs, educational toolkits, etc.), and the necessary support for similar efforts should be considered as an integral part of most of the activities implemented by the network (see Para 2.3.6.), in particular when resulting from important funded research projects.

2.4.2. Participation in events

Biosphere Reserve managers/representatives and their (scientific) partners are often involved in national and international events or networks, and their attendance of meetings and events represent usually a great and costless opportunity:

- To connect to outstanding communities of experts and benefit from their knowledge and experience in particular areas of interest;
- To spread the word about the MAB Programme, the activities and achievements of a specific thematic network.

2.4.3. Online presence

It is expected that the technical secretariat(s) of a network will develop and maintain a webpage of the thematic network, for the dissemination of news and announcements on the activities of the network, the main achievements, the tools and materials developed by the network, etc.

2.4.4. Other visibility tools

Specific dissemination initiatives could be considered in this section, such as the realization of a video movie, a special campaign on social medias, an exhibition, etc.

3. Principles and guidelines for the renewal or dissolution of a Thematic Network

3.1. The decisional framework

The decision of confirming/renewing or revoking/dissolving a Thematic Network is taken by the MAB-ICC at the majority of its members, at the last Council Session before a new Strategy and related Action Plan would be launched. That is why the attached reporting template needs to be used in order to support these decisional processes with the adequate details on the network, its governance structure and mechanisms, its functioning and, in particular, its achievements against the proposed objectives and expected results.

Together with this report, a request of renewal/continuation of an existing network should be presented using the same proposal template, indicating that it concerns a renewal/continuation instead of the establishment of a new Thematic Network.

After several years of existence, the renewal process would give an existing network the opportunity to:

- re-align its objectives and activities with the new Strategy and Action Plan, as well as other global frameworks for action if relevant (such as the post-2020 Global Biodiversity Framework, the UN Decade on Ecosystem Restoration, etc.);
- demonstrate and confirm the relevance of the issues it will continue to address, responding to new needs expressed by member states, the participating biosphere reserves and other stakeholders of the MAB Programme and its WNBR;

- define a new plan of action and expected results for the new period, and;
- based on lessons learned, extend its membership and renew its institutional set up if needed.

3.2. Monitoring a thematic network (reporting)

3.2.1. Yearly reporting

As it is already the case, regional and thematic networks are requested to report on a yearly basis to the MAB-ICC on the occasion of its regular sessions, highlighting their main achievements of the passed year.

3.2.2. Periodic evaluation

At the end of a strategic period (2025 in the present case), Thematic Networks will present a comprehensive report on their main activities and achievements during the considered period, together with a duly filled proposal template, that will be evaluated in view of a possible extension/renewal or dissolution of the network.

ANNEX 2



**Template for the submission of a proposal to
establish a**

THEMATIC NETWORK

**Within the framework of the MAB
Programme and its World Network of
Biosphere Reserves**

First outline
May 2022

THEMATIC NETWORK PROPOSAL

1.1 Name	XXXXXXXXXX
1.1. Acronym (if any):	
1.2. Proposal for:	<input type="checkbox"/> Establishment of a new Thematic Network <input type="checkbox"/> Renewal/Continuation of an existing Thematic Network
1.3. Within the framework of:	MAB Strategy (2015-2025) and Lima Action Plan (2016-2025) Evaluation due by: 2025
1.4. Supported by:	List of member states, members of the MAB International Coordinating Council, supporting the proposal.
1.5. MAB Secretariat focal point:	Name, Unit, E-mail address

2. Institutional set-up and governance

2.1. Secretariat *(add as many lines as necessary if the Technical Secretariat is provided by more than 1 institution):*

The Secretariat	
MAB Secretariat focal point:	Name, Unit, E-mail address
Technical Secretariat:	Name of the hosting institution, address (Biosphere Reserve, Center or Chair, Foundation, providing a technical secretariat to the network)
Focal person(s):	Name, Unit, E-mail address

2.2. Membership (add as many lines as necessary – If longer than 1 page, put the full list in annex):

Region	Country	Name of BR	Contact Details
AFR	Name	Name	Focal point, e-mail address
	Name	Name	Address, e-mail address
	Name	Name	Address, e-mail address
ARAB	Name	Name	Address, e-mail address
	Name	Name	Address, e-mail address
	Name	Name	Address, e-mail address
ASPAC	Name	Name	Address, e-mail address
	Name	Name	Address, e-mail address
	Name	Name	Address, e-mail address
ENA	Name	Name	Address, e-mail address
	Name	Name	Address, e-mail address
	Name	Name	Address, e-mail address
LAC	Name	Name	Address, e-mail address
	Name	Name	Address, e-mail address

2.3. Steering committee members (add as many lines as necessary):

Name	Organisation	Contact Details
Name	UNESCO MAB Secretariat	Address, e-mail address
Name	Technical Secretariat 1	Address, e-mail address
Name	MAB NC representative country 1	Address, e-mail address
Name	Technical Secretariat 2 (if any)	Address, e-mail address
Name	MAB NC representative country 2	Address, e-mail address
Name	BR/Expert AFR	Address, e-mail address
Name	BR/Expert ARAB	Address, e-mail address
Name	BR/Expert ASPAC	Address, e-mail address
Name	BR/Expert ENA	Address, e-mail address
Name	BR/Expert LAC	Address, e-mail address
Name	Sponsor	Address, e-mail address

2.4. Key partners *(add as many lines as necessary – attach letters of support in annex):*

Name of organization (location)	Role in the network	Focal point
BR, University, Research Center, UNESCO Chair, Foundation, UN Agency, Local Community, etc.	Funding, contribution to research and training, host of events, etc.	Name, e-mail address
		Name, e-mail address
		Name, e-mail address
		Name, e-mail address
		Name, e-mail address

2.5. Coordination structure and implementation mechanism *(300 words):*

Text and graphs

3. Strategic and Implementation Framework

3.1. Context, knowledge gap, needs (500 words):

Text

3.2. The thematic focus (500 words):

Ecosystem specific:

or

Theme-specific:

3.3. Long-term objectives (300 words):

Describe long-term objectives of the network, with particular reference to their potential contribution to Strategic Objectives of the present MAB Strategy, as well as to meeting the needs expressed above.

3.4. Specific objectives and expected results/outcomes (add as many as necessary):

Describe specific objectives, with particular reference to their potential contribution to Expected Results of the present MAB Strategy. Please specify the expected results/outcomes in some or all the following areas of action (non exhaustive):

- Support to the development of the WNBR (establishment of new BRs)
- Support to management and governance of BRs
- Knowledge development and sharing (including indigenous knowledge)
- Research in strategic areas
- Monitoring
- Education, training and capacity-building
- Information and communication

Specific Objectives	Areas of Action	Expected Results / Outcomes
Specific Objective 1	See above and specify	Briefly describe
Specific Objective 2	See above and specify	Briefly describe
Specific Objective 3	See above and specify	Briefly describe
Specific Objective 4	See above and specify	Briefly describe

3.5. Implementation framework (*add as many activities and outputs as necessary*):

No.	Activities	Outputs
<i>Specific objective 1</i>		
A1.1	Describe Activity 1 for SO1	
A1.2	Describe Activity 2 for SO1	
A1.3	Describe Activity 2 for SO1	
<i>Specific objective 1</i>		
A2.1	Describe Activity 1 for SO1	
A2.2	Describe Activity 2 for SO1	
A2.3	Describe Activity 2 for SO1	
<i>Specific objective n</i>		
An.1	Describe Activity 1 for SO1	
An.2	Describe Activity 2 for SO1	
An.3	Describe Activity 2 for SO1	

4. Visibility

4.1. Dissemination of Information:

Describe your plans for the dissemination of information (material and virtual) related to the Thematic Network (select the relevant):

Channel	Brief description
Scientific article	
Leaflet	
Map	
Policy brief	
Infographic	
Fact sheet	
Education manual	
Etc.	

4.2. Participation in events

Describe your plans for the participation of representatives of the Thematic Network in events.

4.3. Online presence

Describe your plans for a presence of the Thematic Network on the internet (website/webpage).

4.4. Other visibility tools

Describe your plans for the use of other visibility tools such as video movie, a campaign on social medias, etc.