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

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ITEM 8 OF THE PROVISIONAL AGENDA: The post-2020 Global Biodiversity Framework

1. Document SC-22/CONF.234/6 includes the recommendations concerning the rôle and positioning of the MAB Programme of UNESCO in the on-going negotiations on the post-2020 Global Biodiversity Framework led by the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD).

Background

2. During the fourth online meeting of the Bureau of the International Coordinating Council of the Man and the Biosphere Programme (MAB-ICC), held on 2nd of December 2021, the MAB Secretariat reported on the role of UNESCO as observer in the ongoing negotiations of the post-2020 global biodiversity framework led by the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD).
3. The Secretariat laid out the challenges ahead for the MAB Programme and UNESCO: (i) how to ensure the MAB program is included in the Post-2020 Global Biodiversity Framework (GBF) framework and; (ii) how to recognize the unique contribution of the WNBR as an implementation tool for Member states in implementing the Post-2020 GBF.
4. In this regard, the MAB Secretariat provided support to a technical note describing how biosphere reserves are related to the OECM definition (Annex 1).
5. The Bureau adopted the following recommendations on behalf of the MAB Council:
 - a. The Bureau supports further engagement with the IUCN Thematic Group on biosphere reserves to promote visibility of biosphere reserves as tools to implement the post-2020 global biodiversity framework, and the Bureau recommends to Members of the Council to advocate in the group.
 - b. The Bureau fully supports the submission of a MAB side event in cooperation with the Global Youth Biodiversity Network in the margins of the 3rd meeting of the Open-ended Working Group on the Post-2020 Global Biodiversity Framework and requested that the Secretariat should submit a proposal in time to be considered.
 - c. As for the mention of UNESCO and its World Network of Biosphere Reserve in the draft of the post-2020 Global Biodiversity Framework (Appendix), the Bureau recommended

that biosphere reserves should be considered as a whole entity. It is up to Member States to choose to recognize some of their designated biosphere reserves as an OECM.

Follow-up

6. As recommended by the Bureau, the Secretariat organized a 1-day workshop with support of UNESCO Geneva Liaison Office on March 12 on “*Rethinking Conservation: Intergenerational Pathways for Reconciliation with Nature Reflections on qualitative criteria for area-based conservation*”, in the margins of the CBD 3rd Open Ending Working Group (OEWG3). It was co-organized with the Global Youth Biodiversity Network and attended by 40 people in person, and up to 70 persons online worldwide. UNESCO provided technical and financial support, as well as concluding remarks reaffirm its vision on qualitative criteria for area-based conservation and support youth engagement within the post-2020 Global Biodiversity Framework process.
7. The outcomes of this workshop were presented during a side-event during the CBD OEWG3 on March 18, engaging the discussion on qualitative criteria for area-based conservation with Parties to the Convention and other stakeholders. The side-event was moderated by GYBN and interventions were given by Basile van Havre and Francis Ogwal (CBD OEWG on post-2020 GBF co-chairs), Yukihiro Haisa (Deputy Division Director, Nature Conservation Bureau, Ministry of the Environment of Japan), Anna Luise (Institute for Environmental Protection and Research, Head of Global Issues and Agenda 2030 Themes Unit, Italy) and Cornelia Krug (Director of biodiscovery). The MAB Secretariat provided concluding remarks by recalling its vision on biodiversity and commitment to support the post-2020 Global Biodiversity Framework.
8. Finally, UNESCO took part in the CBD OEWG3 SBI Item 8 discussions on “*Cooperation with other conventions, international organizations and initiatives*” on March 18 and 19 sessions, to reaffirm UNESCO’s intersectoral strategy on biodiversity and to position its networks of designated sites as key elements to support the implementation of the post-2020 Global Biodiversity Framework.

Recommendations

9. The MAB Council is invited to consider and approve the following recommendations:
 - The MAB Council welcomes the efforts made by the MAB Secretariat to promote visibility of Biosphere Reserves as tools to implement the post-2020 global biodiversity framework.
 - The MAB Council recommends to UNESCO Secretariat to pursuing the efforts engaged in supporting youth participation to CBD 4th OEWG4, to be held in Nairobi 21-26 June 2022, as well as during the upcoming COP15, and for Member States to continue advocating for UNESCO and its designated sites (especially the Biosphere Reserves of the World Network of Biosphere Reserves (WNBR) to be mentioned in the Appendix of the Global Biodiversity Framework.

ANNEX 1: TECHNICAL NOTE ON BIOSPHERE RESERVES AND THEIR ROLE IN THE POST-2020 GLOBAL BIODIVERSITY FRAMEWORK OF THE CONVENTION ON BIOLOGICAL DIVERSITY

Biosphere Reserves and their role in the post-2020 Global Biodiversity Framework of the Convention on Biological Diversity

Background technical note for discussion

Biosphere Reserves, i.e., areas of terrestrial and coastal/marine ecosystems or a combination thereof, which are internationally recognized within the framework of UNESCO's programme on Man and the Biosphere (MAB), should be included in the implementation of the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD), as is set out by the Statutory Framework (UNESCO 1995) and the Lima Action Plan (UNESCO 2015). This document presents technical advice on how Biosphere Reserves, as essential instruments for UNESCO's commitment to biodiversity (UNESCO Draft Medium-Term Strategy for 2022-2029¹), contribute to the post-2020 Global Biodiversity Framework: (1) through ***in-situ* biodiversity conservation** in currently designated protected areas (i.e. mainly core areas and/or buffer zones; Annex III); (2) through ***in-situ* biodiversity conservation** outside currently designated Protected Areas, as Other Effective Area-based Conservation Measures (OECMs), which function under a range of governance and management regimes, implemented by a diverse set of actors, including by Indigenous peoples and local communities, the private sector and government agencies (i.e. buffer zones and transition areas); (3) as models of connected landscapes and seascapes for **mainstreaming of biodiversity conservation and its sustainable use** through cross-sectoral and cross-scale approaches which go beyond area-based targets and implement the SDG's.

1. Biosphere Reserves can function as OECMs which support countries' national targets to reach the global "30 by 30" target.

The CBD recognizes "**Other effective area-based conservation measures**" (OECMs) as a conservation designation for areas that are achieving effective *in-situ* conservation of biodiversity with associated ecosystem functions and services and, where applicable, cultural, spiritual, socio-economic, and other locally relevant values outside of Protected Areas. The Parties to the CBD adopted the OECM definition at their 14th Conference in November 2018, recognizing the potential of OECMs to advance on Aichi Target 11 (and further post-2020 Targets), because many areas outside recognized protected area networks also result in the effective *in-situ* conservation of biodiversity.

¹ <https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000378083?posInSet=4&queryId=f4082765-2f1f-4710-a706-047db14472d1-draft-data-297>

According to the IUCN WCPA website², “Governments, relevant organizations, Indigenous peoples and local communities are invited to apply **the voluntary guidance** on OECMs to identify, recognize and support OECMs, and report data on OECMs to the World Database on OECMs at the UN Environment World Conservation Monitoring Centre (UNEP-WCMC).”

OECMs will help contribute to post-2020 area-based global and national targets (Box 1). Biosphere Reserves meet the criteria for identifying OECMs set out by the CBD (CBD Decision 14/8), as shown through provisions set out in the **Statutory Framework** and the **Lima Action Plan** (Table 1 & Annex I). The criteria for Biosphere Reserve selection and evaluation, outlined in the Statutory Framework adopted by Member States, are adapted to national regional and local conservation contexts (Pool-Stanvliet 2018, UNESCO 2021).

Biosphere Reserve core areas, which are usually designated Protected Areas (Bridgewater et al. 1996), make up an estimated 18% of total area of Biosphere Reserves worldwide (Figure 1). The remaining **82% is made up of the buffer zones and transition areas**. Where these areas are not

overlapping with Protected Areas, they can be considered OECMs, as they harbor activities compatible with the **conservation of biological and biocultural diversity** (UNESCO 2015) (Annex I). Moreover, they support economic development through existing **socio-culturally and environmentally sustainable practices** (e.g., socio-ecological systems where human activities maintain certain types of ecosystems and biodiversity) and underpinning development through research, monitoring, education, and training. Biosphere Reserves should have comprehensive management plans which **facilitate participation** of relevant stakeholders and rightsholders, and promote **monitoring** of indicators for biodiversity, ecosystem services, and sustainable development (UNESCO 2021). Therefore, Biosphere Reserves contribute to ecologically representative and well-connected systems of areas of particular importance for biodiversity and ecosystem services, which are conserved through effectively and equitably management practices.

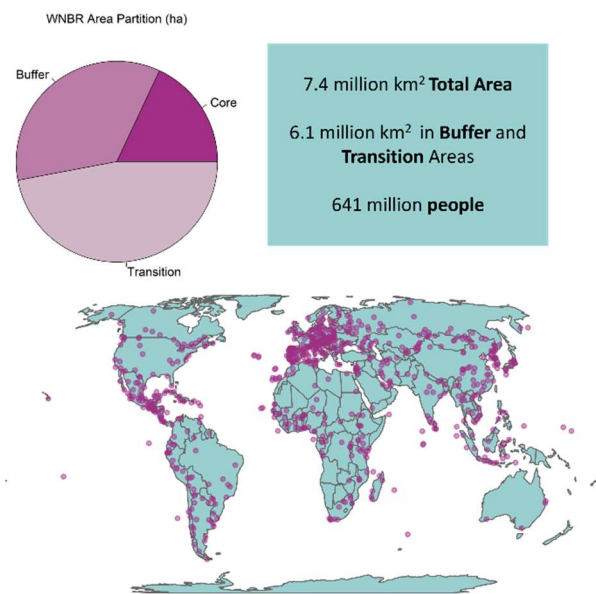


Figure 1 Partition of total BR area worldwide per BR zone (top left) and map showing global distribution of biosphere reserves (bottom).

² <https://www.iucn.org/commissions/world-commission-protected-areas/our-work/oecms>

Box 1 – Biosphere Reserves can contribute to meet area-based 2030 action targets of the post-2020 Global Biodiversity Framework

Biosphere Reserves (BRs) are managed and governed areas under integrated biodiversity-inclusive spatial planning. Consequently, they can serve as mechanisms to provide feedback indicators for national implementation of Target 1. Environmental management in BRs is based on good practices, creating, and maintaining complex landscape heterogeneity that improves connectivity (Bouamrane & Cerasi 2021), thus contributing to Target 2. BRs would also support accomplishing Post-2020 Target 3. In addition, BRs can contribute to Target 12 by building sustainable, healthy and equitable societies, economies and thriving human settlements in harmony with the biosphere. Therefore, BRs can contribute to all the following area-based 2030 action targets:




Target 1. Ensure that all land and sea areas globally are under integrated biodiversity-inclusive spatial planning addressing land- and sea-use change, retaining existing intact and wilderness areas.

Target 2. Ensure that at least 20 per cent of degraded freshwater, marine and terrestrial ecosystems are under restoration, ensuring connectivity among them and focusing on priority ecosystems.

Target 3. Ensure that at least 30 per cent globally of land areas and of sea areas, especially areas of particular importance for biodiversity and its contributions to people, are conserved through effectively and equitably managed, ecologically representative and well-connected systems of protected areas and other effective area-based conservation measures and integrated into the wider landscapes and seascapes.

Target 12. Increase the area of, access to, and benefits from green and blue spaces, for human health and well-being in urban areas and other densely populated areas.

CRITERIA FOR OECM Biosphere Reserves (BRs) (Annex 1)
(CBD/COP/DEC/14/8
Annex III)

Criterion A: Area is not currently recognized as a protected area	In most cases, Biosphere Reserve buffer zones and transition areas are not protected areas. Buffer zones and transition areas make up an estimated 82% of the total area of BRs worldwide (Annex 2). See Bridgewater et al. (1996)	
Criterion B: Area is governed and managed	Each BR is a geographically defined space BRs have legitimate governance authorities BRs are managed to achieve positive and sustained outcomes for the conservation of biological and biocultural diversity with the participation of relevant stakeholders and rightsholders.	
Criterion C: Achieves sustained and effective contribution to <i>in situ</i> conservation of biodiversity	Effective (Annex 1) Sustained over the long term <i>In situ</i> conservation of biological diversity	

2. Biosphere Reserves go beyond the 30% global target and can provide holistic solutions to the biodiversity and climate change crises.

The idea of **mainstreaming biodiversity** conservation beyond area-based measures has gained increasing momentum. Firstly, leading researchers have shown that much more than 30% of the world's area will need to contribute to the conservation of biological diversity if we are to bend the curve of biodiversity loss (Ellis 2019). Thus, a combination of "land-sparing" (e.g. Protected Areas), and "land-sharing" is required to **enhance biodiversity in the landscapes we inhabit** (Kremen and Merenlender 2018). Secondly, cross-scale and cross-sectoral projects are required to enhance the **collaboration of all relevant actors** across institutions and jurisdictions. Implementing the global Action Targets under the Post-2020 Global Biodiversity Framework will require action beyond the administrative boundaries of Protected Areas, enlisting the assistance of actors beyond 'environmental' authorities (CBD, 2021). Doing so will require coordinated and compatible policy and governance practices outside protected areas to ensure effective integration of responses into landscape and seascape context.



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Biosphere Reserves have been implementing this holistic vision since the 1970s (UNESCO 1995), and implementing this model has the capacity to engage in the **transformation of key sectors** and facilitate sustainability change (Reed and Price 2019). Biosphere Reserves have been identified as hubs to **accelerate SDG implementation** and the Agenda 2030 (Heinrup et al. 2017). A major strength of Biosphere Reserves is that they connect actors across scales and interests (Reed and Abernethy 2019), and thus offer opportunities for the cross-sectoral collaboration required to respond to the grand challenges of biodiversity loss and climate change at local and regional levels (Reed and Price 2019).

Box 2 – Biosphere Reserves can contribute to meet 2030 action targets of the post-2020 Global Biodiversity Framework related to biodiversity mainstreaming

Conservation and sustainable development initiatives within Biosphere Reserves involve stakeholder participation and concertation, including scientists, the private sector and Indigenous peoples, and local communities. These initiatives can contribute to sharing feedback at national level of what works in terms of mainstreaming, including biodiversity indicators in the relevant sectors. Such mechanisms can contribute to incorporating biodiversity values in national planning and development processes, sectors, policy, and decision-making towards national targets, especially when Biosphere Reserves are legally recognized at the national level. Biosphere Reserves can contribute to the following 2030 action targets related to tools and solutions for implementation and mainstreaming:

Target 14. Fully integrate biodiversity values into policies, regulations, planning, development processes, poverty reduction strategies, accounts, and assessments of environmental impacts at all levels of government and across all sectors of the economy, ensuring that all activities and financial flows are aligned with biodiversity values.

Target 15. All businesses (public and private, large, medium, and small) assess and report on their dependencies and impacts on biodiversity, from local to global, and progressively reduce negative impacts, by at least half and increase positive impacts, reducing biodiversity-related risks to businesses and moving towards the full sustainability of extraction and production practices, sourcing and supply chains, and use and disposal.

Target 16. Ensure that people are encouraged and enabled to make responsible choices and have access to relevant information and alternatives, taking into account cultural preferences, to reduce by at least half the waste and, where relevant the overconsumption, of food and other materials.

Target 17. Establish, strengthen capacity for, and implement measures in all countries to prevent, manage or control potential adverse impacts of biotechnology on biodiversity and human health, reducing the risk of these impacts.

Target 20. Ensure that relevant knowledge, including the traditional knowledge, innovations and practices of indigenous peoples and local communities with their free, prior, and informed consent, guides decision-making for the effective management of biodiversity, enabling monitoring, and by promoting awareness, education and research.

Target 21. Ensure equitable and effective participation in decision-making related to biodiversity by indigenous peoples and local communities, and respect their rights over lands, territories and resources, as well as by women and girls, and youth.

Biosphere Reserves are core to UNESCO's strategy for Biodiversity and models for implementation of the SDG's and for the post-2020 framework.

Today, there are 727 biosphere reserves in 131 countries including 22 transboundary sites. The 50th anniversary of UNESCO's MAB Programme is a renewal of the commitment to live together in harmony with nature on Earth for our common future. UNESCO's ambition is to reconcile the co-existence of 100% of human beings with other species everywhere on Earth, for present and future generations.

The World Network of Biosphere Reserves provides myriad examples of good practices associated with Indigenous or local worldviews and cosmologies in which humans do not dominate nature. Such reconciliation and co-existence approaches emphasizes the diversity of values associated with life and seek to reconnect humans to the biosphere by changing their behaviour at the individual level, while promoting collective actions that shape public policy.

Biosphere Reserves are one of the key instruments to implement **UNESCO's intersectoral strategy on biodiversity**. Protecting 30% of the planet will be futile if humans continue to destroy the remaining 70%. The MAB Programme has shown that it is also, and above all, outside of protected areas that we must invest to design and implement an ecological and solidarity-based transition.

Biosphere Reserves constitute a major tool for Member States to contribute to UNESCO's commitment to the global goals and targets of the post-2020 Global Biodiversity Framework, as set in the Draft Medium-Term Strategy for 2022-2029 (41/C4).

Authors: Alicia D. Barraclough, Inger E. Måren & Martin F. Price. The MAB Secretariat provided comments on the draft versions.

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ANNEX I - Biosphere Reserves compliance to OECM criteria as supported by MAB framework and documents.

CRITERIA FOR OECM (CBD/COP/DEC/14/8 Annex III) OECM sub-criteria matched to Biosphere Reserve Characteristics as set out by UNESCO (UNESCO 1995)

Criterion A: Area is not currently recognized as a protected area

Not a protected area

Biosphere Reserve buffer zones and transition areas are usually not protected areas. Core areas have various designations, from protected landscape to protected area.

Buffer zones and transition areas make up 82% of the area of BRs on average.

Criterion B: Area is governed and managed

OECMs are a geographically defined space

Biosphere Reserve boundaries are geographically delineated and registered by the MAB Secretariat (UNESCO 1995, Article 4.4).

OECMs have legitimate governance authorities

Governance has legitimate authority established through the nomination process where Member States forward nominations to the MAB ICC (UNESCO 1995, Article 4.6).

Where applicable, governance by Indigenous peoples and local communities is self-identified in accordance with national legislation and applicable international obligations (UNESCO 1995, Article 4.6).

Biosphere Reserves reflect the equity considerations adopted in the Convention on Biological Diversity.

BR Governance is diverse, with models including a (1) single authority and (2) networked governance through collaboration among relevant authorities (UNESCO 2021).

BRs have demonstrated the ability to address threats collectively.

Managed

BRs are managed in ways that achieve positive and sustained outcomes for the conservation of biological diversity (UNESCO 1995 Article 3 (i), Reed & Price 2019).

Relevant authorities and stakeholders are identified and involved in management (UNESCO 1995, Article 4 para 6, 7c, Article 7). A management system is in place that contributes to sustaining the *in situ* conservation of biodiversity (UNESCO 1995, Article 4 paras 2, 5 & 7).

Management is consistent with the Ecosystem Approach, with the ability to adapt to achieve expected biodiversity conservation outcomes, including long-term outcomes, and including the

ability to manage a new threat (UNESCO 1995, Article 4 para 7c, Article 9).

Criterion C: Achieves sustained and effective contribution to *in situ* conservation of biodiversity

Effective

The area achieves, or is expected to achieve, positive and sustained outcomes for the *in situ* conservation of biodiversity (UNESCO 1995, Article 3 (i) & Article 4 paras 1, 2 & 4). In BRs this also includes contribution to conservation of ecologically representative areas and connectivity.

Threats, existing or reasonably anticipated ones are addressed effectively by preventing, significantly reducing or eliminating them, and by restoring degraded ecosystems (UNESCO 1995, Article 4 para 7 & Article 9).

Mechanisms, such as policy frameworks and regulations, are in place to recognize and respond to new threats (UNESCO 1995, Article 4 para 4, Article 9).

To the extent relevant and possible, management inside and outside the other effective area-based conservation measure is integrated (UNESCO 1995, Article 4 paras 5 & 7).

Sustained over long term

The other effective area-based conservation measures are in place for the long term or are likely to be (UNESCO 1995, Article 9).

“Sustained” pertains to the continuity of governance and management and “long term” pertains to the biodiversity outcome.

***In situ* conservation of biological diversity**

Identification of the range of biodiversity attributes for which the site is considered important (e.g., communities of rare, threatened or endangered species, representative natural ecosystems, range restricted species, key biodiversity areas, areas providing critical ecosystem functions and services, areas for ecological connectivity) (UNESCO 1995, Article 3, Article 4.1, 4.2 & 4.5; Article 7).

ANNEX II – NATIONAL CASE STUDIES

Country	PA/OECM Coverage (Terrestrial) ₁	PA/OECM Coverage (Marine) ₁	Registered OECMs (number of sites) ¹	BRs (number of sites)	BR Total Area (km ²) ₂	Buffer zone & Transition area (km ²) ₃	BR area considered OECM (%)	BR-only contribution to national 30x30 ₄
Benin	29.64%	0%	0	3	29 779.9	21 212	72.2	18.5%
Madagascar	7.49%	0.91%	0	5	11 187.2	9138.9	81.7	1.6%
Nigeria	13.93%	0.02%	0	4	17 657.6	14 617.8	82.8	1.6%
Senegal	26.39%	1.85%		5	34 524.8	33 338.3	96.6	16.9%
South Africa	8.69%	15.5%	17	10	87 936.2	66 539.9	75.7	5.5%
Lebanon	2.18%	0.23%	0	3	544.7	344	63.2	3.3%
Morocco	2.2%	0.68%	314	4	11 5498	104 299.9	90.3	23.4%
Saudi Arabia	4.76%	2.49%	0	1	5 768.9	2 892.9	50.1	0.1%
China	15.62%	5.48%	0	34	84 076.8	60 715.7	72.2	0.6%
Japan	29.75%	13.89%	0	10	13 468.7	12 530.2	93.0	3.3%
Indonesia	12.17%	3.06%	0	19	30 3250	248 138.5	81.8	3.0%
Rep of Korea	16.97%	2.46%	0	9	16 184	14542.4	89.9	14.5%
Canada	11.91%	8.86%	130	19	220 202.8	186 180.2	84.5	1.9%
France	27.28%	50.36%	0	16	124 259.6	168 388.4	87.4	26.6%
Germany	37.8%	45.39%	0	16	20 239.8	16 838.8	83.2	4.7%
Italy	21.49%	9.74%	0	20	38 981.4	37 029.9	95.0	12.3%
Spain	28.12%	12.76%	0	52	83 040.1	71 972.3	86.7	14.2%
Sweden	14.46%	15.38%	0	7	26 810	25 826	96.3	5.7%
Switzerland	11.96%	0%	0	2	845.2	641.8	75.9	1.6%
Colombia	16.91%	17.17%	2	5	128 655.5	102 905.5	80.0	9.0%
Costa Rica	28.42%	2.73%	0	4	26 626.4	20 047.3	75.3	39.2%
Peru	21.64%	0.48%	0	7	139 590.3	104 130.8	74.6	8.1%

¹ As downloaded from www.protectedplanet.net in November 2021

²Total BR area includes both marine and terrestrial areas

³ Although most buffer zones are not PAs this varies by site and country, please check for each case.

⁴Approximate orientation figures only (BR-OECM/National area). For countries with significant marine territories, this value will be overestimated, as BR area includes both marine and terrestrial environments (as per point 2). Please calculate on case-by-case basis.

ANNEX III – Key facts on WNBR

