



United Nations
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Man and
the Biosphere
Programme

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UNITED NATIONS EDUCATIONAL, SCIENTIFIC AND CULTURAL ORGANIZATION

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

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

Monday 27 April 2020, from 10:00 am to 11:15

Bureau members

Chair: Indonesia (Group IV): Ms Enny Sudarmonowati

Vice-chairs:

Sweden (Group I) serving also as the Rapporteur: Ms Johanna MacTaggart

Honduras (Group III): Mr Carlos Madariaga

Nigeria (Group V A): Mr Adepoju Olatunde Adeshola

Sudan (Group V B): Ms Salwa Mansour Abdel Hameed

Estonia (Group II): Mr Toomas Kokovkin

MAB Secretariat:

Mr Miguel Clüsener-Godt, MAB Secretary

Ms Noëline Raondry Rakotoarisoa

Ms Meriem Bouamrane

Ms Marie Prchalova

Mr Bandiougou Diawara

Ms Maria Rosa Cardenas Tomazic

Mr Peter Dogsé

Ms Martha Vogel

Ms Sima Taheri-Gauter

Ms Patricia Ramé

Ms Sandrine Baron

UNESCO Office in Abuja

Mr Simone Grego

1. The third meeting of the Bureau of the International Coordinating Council of the Man and Biosphere Programme (MAB-ICC) was held through Skype for Business on 27 April 2020.
2. The six MAB Bureau Members attended the session: the Chair representative of Indonesia, representatives of Estonia, Honduras, Nigeria, Sudan and Sweden. Twelve participants from the UNESCO Secretariat attended the meeting including one colleague from the UNESCO Office in Abuja.
3. The full list of participants is presented at the beginning of this report.

4. The meeting was opened by the MAB Secretary, Mr Miguel Clüsener-Godt. After a brief introduction on the current situation vis-à-vis of the COVID-19, the Secretary informed that the situation is improving in France and in Europe in general while in Africa the numbers of cases is still relatively low. It is planned that the deconfinement starts on 11 May in Paris and even though having not received any further instructions, it is probable that office would start in May.

5. The meeting was chaired by Ms Enny Sudarmonowati who thanked the Bureau Members and the MAB Secretariat for the organization of this third meeting. She stated that the world situation, impacted by COVID-19, is still unstable, therefore, we need to keep updated before making any decision on the hold of 32nd MAB-ICC. Furthermore, she mentioned that suggestions and comments were received by the Chair and the Secretary of MAB after the circulation of report of the First Bureau Meeting, on the decision concerning 32nd and 33rd MAB- ICC, the celebration of the 50th MAB Anniversary and formal recognition of Periodic Reviews that show that Biosphere Reserves have the criteria in the Statutory Framework.

Adoption of the Agenda

6. The Bureau members of the MAB-ICC adopted the agenda of its third Skype meeting without modification.

7. Item 4 of the agenda was about the update on COVID-19 situation with regard to the 32nd session of the MAB-ICC planned in 2020 in Abuja.

8. Mr Simone Grego, from the UNESCO Office in Abuja provided concrete information about the number of COVID cases highlighting that Nigeria is also facing the usual exponential rate of infection, even if the total number of contamination cases are still low compared to the figures in Europe. These figures can be explained by the low number of test available, making the official figures not always reflecting the real situation, which remains alarming in three cities: Abuja, Lagos and Kaduna. The Nigerian government will announce in the coming days if the lock down will continue. Therefore, at this stage large gatherings cannot be foreseen. It will be possible to have a better picture in two months' time and some projections foresee the end of the epidemy by August.

9. Nigeria confirmed the report made by Mr Grego, specifying that the situation will be clearer by the end of July.

10. The Chair concluded that the decision on the date of the upcoming MAB-ICC cannot be taken and we will wait until the end of June to decide.

11. The Bureau members accepted the proposition made by the Chair without modification on the item 4 of the agenda.

12. Item 5 of the agenda was about the progress on the logistic of the upcoming MAB-ICC.

13. Ms Noëline Raondry Rakotoarisoa mentioned that the Secretariat is now waiting for the Additional Appropriation Letter to be signed by Nigeria for the transfer of funds to UNESCO HQs. All other aspects of the logistics are in order and the MAB Secretariat is waiting for the new date to be identified in order to send the letters of invitation. Mr Simone Grego added that the preparation of the 32nd session of the MAB-ICC planned in 2020 in Abuja is a good example of cooperation between UNESCO HQs and the Field Office and also between UNESCO and the host country such as Nigeria.

14. The Chair concluded that the budget provided by Nigeria is available until the end of this year as previously confirmed by Professor Adepoju Olatunde Adeshola.

15. The Bureau members took note without comments on the item 5 of the agenda.

16. Item 6 of the agenda was about the progress on the documents preparation of the upcoming MAB-ICC.

17. Ms Noëline Raondry Rakotoarisoa mentioned that all is on track and as soon as the necessary information is received the documents will be finalized and sent to the translation section.

18. The Bureau members took note without comments on the item 6 of the agenda.

19. Item 7 of the agenda was about the progress on the communication with the Member States.

20. Ms Patricia Ramé mentioned that the communication on the postponement of the upcoming MAB-ICC has been done on 30 March through PAX (Sector of Priority Africa and External Relations) informing UNESCO Member States. Another communication has been sent through the same channel on 21 April about the new deadline for submission of additional information until 30 September 2020 and also the extension of deadline for Proposals for new Biosphere Reserves and Extensions/ Modifications/ Renaming to Biosphere Reserves by 15 December 2020 instead of 30 September 2020 in order to be assessed by the 33rd session of the MAB-ICC in 2021.

21. The MAB Secretary provided some more clarification about this item. The report of the last MAB-ICC Bureau meeting is available on the MAB webpage in English, French and Spanish.

<https://en.unesco.org/mab/governance>

And a message of solidarity from the Secretary of MAB Programme, on the COVID-19 crisis has been posted on the MAB webpage on 10 April.

<https://en.unesco.org/news/message-secretary-unescos-man-and-biosphere-mab-programme-miguel-clusener-godt-covid-19-crisis>

22. The MAB Secretariat will send a survey to the World Network of Biosphere Reserves (WNBR) to find out how they deal with the situation regarding the COVID-19. Ms Maria Rosa Cardenas mentioned that this survey has been sent to different MAB networks, starting by IBEROMAB and the response rate is about 35% until now. This survey will be sent to ASPAC network and then to Africa and Europe regions as well as the Arab States. A second survey will be sent to the MAB Youth Network.

23. Ms Meriem Bouamrane mentioned the series of webinars the MAB Secretariat is preparing which will be offered to the WNBR in different languages in order to share solutions and good practices and to see how they cope with the situation in their respective Biosphere Reserves.

24. The Chair welcomed this initiative and pointed out that MAB-ICC Bureau members can also participate to these webinars.

25. The Bureau members took note with thanks of the item 7 of the agenda.

26. Item 8 of the agenda was about the update on status of TGBR.

27. Ms Noëline Raondry Rakotoarisoa mentioned that the first draft is circulating among the MAB Secretariat colleagues and will be sent to the members of the TGBR working group by 2 May 2020.

28. Estonia requested to receive this first draft in his quality of expert and not in his quality of Bureau member.

29. The Chair suggested to also send the first draft to all Bureau member.

30. Ms Noëline Raondry Rakotoarisoa indicated that the TGBR work is organized by entity and the MAB-ICC will review it in full in July. However the MAB Secretariat will send it to the Bureau Members for their information and potential comments. Therefore, the first draft document is attached to this report.

31. On item 9, the Bureau members agreed that the next Skype meeting could be held on 29 May 2020 at 10 am CET (Paris time). A Skype invitation will be sent at a later stage. The MAB Secretary stipulated that by this time we should know more about the deconfinement process and the continuation of the discussion on the postponement of the 32nd Session of MAB-ICC.

32. On item 10, Nigeria mentioned that a lot is happening in Nigerian Omo Biosphere Reserve during this period in terms of supporting and ameliorating the practices. The COVID-19 pandemic outbreak by producing herbal-based sanitizer with the use of herbal plant materials from Omo Biosphere Reserve. The MAB Secretary suggested that Nigeria send further information with photos to the MAB Secretariat for posting and communicating the news through the MAB website.

33. Honduras asked if there is an emergency funds available for countries in crisis. The MAB Secretary provided some possibilities for funding through the UNESCO Participation Programme and explained that currently only the World Heritage Centre has a crisis fund (Rapid Response Facility - RRF). He also mentioned the VISUS project on School Safety, elaborated by the unit of Disaster Risk Reduction of EES Division.

<http://www.unesco.org/new/en/natural-sciences/special-themes/disaster-risk-reduction/school-safety/>

34. Sudan asked when the next Advisory Committee for Biosphere Reserves will be meeting, taking into consideration the postponement of deadline for new applications. The MAB Secretary proposed February or March as the end of January 2021 would be too tight mentioning also that the date would be depending on the number of files the MAB Secretariat will receive.

35. The Chair emphasized on the fact that giving the situation, the MAB-ICC Bureau is becoming more and more active and the Bureau members can operate as ambassadors of the MAB Programme. She asked that a guideline be sent with the survey, so the Bureau members can see how to assess the social and environmental impact of the COVID-19 on the Biosphere Reserves.

36. The Chair enquired about the Exit Strategy and specifically on the Periodic Reviews that show that Biosphere Reserves have the criteria in the Statutory Framework. Ms Meriem

Bouamrane provided some information about its status. She mentioned that the countries, which are under the 'process of excellence' can have more time if there is a postponement of deadlines and this will allow to decrease the number of countries under the process.

37. Estonia questioned about the Mid-term Evaluation of MAB Programme and Mr Peter Dogné provided some information about the ongoing process. He confirmed that UNESCO Internal Oversight Service (IOS) is leading the evaluation and processing the information they already received. IOS is now looking for complementary information and will be finalizing the evaluation by the end of May or beginning of June.

38. The Chair asked if the MAB Secretariat is planning any events at the occasion of the 50th Anniversary of the MAB Programme. The MAB Secretary mentioned that there is not yet any concrete discussions and that it will also depend on whether the celebration would start during the upcoming MAB-ICC which will be held in 2020 or 2021.

39. While Nigeria agreed that it is too early to decide, the Chair stated that we should start thinking about it. Ms Meriem Bouamrane mentioned that because of the postponement and rescheduling of some international events such as IUCN Congress, the Programme should take this opportunity to start the celebration of its 50th Anniversary as of January 2021 at the IUCN Congress and throughout the year 2021. Taking this occasion, we can start to brand some of our activities in our pavilion during the IUCN Congress. Furthermore, the next EuroMAB will be held in Austria in September 2021 and some events are already planned to celebrate the 50th Anniversary of the MAB Programme. Youth EuroMAB are also planning some events to celebrate during the IUCN Congress with key issues engaging all Biosphere Reserves. This will be also discussed during the upcoming MAB webinars in June and July, and the results will be shared with the MAB-ICC Bureau.

40. The Chair welcomed these initiatives and highlighted the fact that the Programme should think about events throughout the year 2021 celebrating the 50th Anniversary of the MAB Programme. The MAB Secretary stated that all our events in 2021 will focus on this 50th Anniversary and an extra day can be added to the agenda of the 33rd MAB-ICC, specially dedicated to this 50th Anniversary.

41. Nigeria fully supported this proposition and the Chair mentioned that pre-events are also important to make people aware of this 50th Anniversary. She mentioned the involvement of all MAB Committees and the use of a logo specially prepared for this 50th Anniversary as it is necessary to communicate about it. The MAB Secretary welcomed the idea of logo for the event and suggested to involve also the colleagues from the Field Offices.

42. Ms Noëline Raondry Rakotoarisoa informed that the MAB Secretariat was tasked to coordinate UNESCO's contributions to the draft implementation strategy of the UN Decade on Ecosystem Restoration (2021-2030). She specified that a large consultation process is ongoing till 30th April 2020 on the UNDER website. The Chair mentioned that the Bureau members should get involved on this opportunity and this will be mentioned in the report. Ms Noëline Raondry Rakotoarisoa proposed that the necessary documentation be sent to the Bureau members after the meeting.

43. Ms Marie Prchalova mentioned that a publication about the MAB Young Scientist Awardees is under preparation with contributions and interviews of alumni. The Chair welcomed this initiative and thanked the MAB Secretariat.

44. The Chair thanked the Bureau members and the MAB Secretariat for their active participation and holding these virtual meetings and closed the meeting.