

MAB follow-up to 39 C/20 Annex I.

39 C/20 ANNEX I

WORKING GROUP ON THE GOVERNANCE, PROCEDURES, AND WORKING METHODS OF THE GOVERNING BODIES OF UNESCO

RECOMMENDATIONS

PART 2. STRUCTURE, COMPOSITION AND METHODS OF WORK OF UNESCO'S INTERNATIONAL AND INTERGOVERNMENTAL BODIES (IIBs)

A. VISION AND PRINCIPLES

54. Sub-Group 2 recommends endorsing the vision of a more integrated, harmonized, coherent, and adapted system of International and Intergovernmental Bodies (IIBs) working closely with Member States, relevant partners, and each other in support of the Organization's objectives, medium-term strategy (C/4), and programme and budget (C/5), taking into account the specificities and requirements of individual mandates.

55. While recognizing the immense value of experts to the work of UNESCO, the intergovernmental nature of the IIBs needs to be reinforced. Thus, transparency and awareness-raising measures should be strengthened across the board. The work of IIBs must be as inclusive as possible and seek to involve Member States for greater impact and visibility.

B. GENERAL RECOMMENDATIONS FOR ALL INTERNATIONAL AND INTERGOVERNMENTAL BODIES (IIBs)

Efficiency (mandate, composition, structure, rules of procedure, methods of work)

56. IIBs are invited to update their mandates, as appropriate, including their objectives and programs to be more coherent with approved C/5 priorities and responsive to current global developments, such as the 2030 Sustainable Development Agenda and the Paris Agreement on Climate Change.

MAB is well aligned, notably as reflected in the MAB Strategy and the associated Lima Action Plan (LAP) 2016-2025 (see appendix 3 with refs to MAB as a 'best practice').

57. To promote diversity and inclusivity, voluntary term-limits of two consecutive mandates are recommended for IIBs which currently do not have term limitations for membership.

MAB supports this while recognizing that it is the General Conference that elects the members of the MAB ICC.

Composition: *The Council consists of 34 Member States. Their 4-year term of office extends from the end of the ordinary session of the General Conference during which they are elected until the end of its second subsequent ordinary session.*

(source: [http://www.unesco.org/eri/committees/committees_and_organs_gc.asp?code=Needs updating](http://www.unesco.org/eri/committees/committees_and_organs_gc.asp?code=Needs%20updating))

58. As a general rule, term-limits of two consecutive mandates for membership in all Bureaus are recommended.

MAB supports this while recognizing that is also a function of how members to the ICC are elected.

59. For cost-saving, coherence and harmonization, it is recommended that IIBs and the General Conference consider “right-sizing” the composition of the IIBs.

It is generally appreciated within the MAB Programme that with 34 Members (as amended by 28C/Res.22, in 1995 Group I 7 seats Group II 4 seats Group III 6 seats Group IV 6 seats Group V 11 seats Total 34 seats), the MAB ICC has the ‘right size’.

60. There is a need to reduce and manage politicization of nominations and decisions.

Until now, the general appreciation is that nominations and decisions related to MAB are not unduly political. This is likely largely a function of the fact that seats in the MAB ICC and its Bureau are typically occupied by experts and managers with solid intellectual and practical experiences of the MAB Programme and its World Network of Biosphere Reserves rather than solely by diplomats.

61. To enhance visibility and the effectiveness of the work of the IIBs, more effective information-dissemination is recommended through updating and enhancement of websites and outreach to all involved actors, including Member States and their National Commissions.

MAB’s International Support Group (see para 75 for details) provide an important interface for Member States to engage and share information with and within MAB. This Group is listed as a ‘best practice’ in Annex III to 39 C/20 under Information dissemination/ visibility. The MAB website is regularly updated, and it is subject for complete structural revision in 2019, in-line with general UNESCO web policies. Overall, MAB has a new communication strategy as adopted by the MAB ICC in 2018.

62. Earlier preparation and dissemination of draft agendas and preliminary timetables, mainly by using the same template containing hyper-links to documents to be adopted/discussed in sessions.

The MAB Secretariat would favorably consider using standardized templates if and when available.

63. The Secretariat is invited to promote a harmonized virtual working environment for all IIBs and to revisit UNESCO’s “Strategy on Knowledge Management and Information & Communication Technology”. Simple, more user-friendly documentation (i.e. less fragmented reporting and easier document tracking; annotated agenda with hyper-links to reports and draft decisions).

Supported by MAB.

64. Open-ended informal consultations on draft decisions to promote inclusive and effective decision-making.

MAB ICC documents are available on the web and MAB National Committees are typically composed with a membership that are open for both formal and informal consultations. This said, the MAB Secretariat will explore opportunities for engaging more actively with the public at large for better informed decisions.

65. It is recommended that the Rules of Procedure of the IIBs be amended, when relevant, to advance the deadline for submission of candidatures to their subsidiary bodies from 48 hours to seven days before elections.

This is being studied.

Harmonization (role of Bureaus, transparency)

66. The role, composition and procedures of Bureaus and their members should be clarified and harmonized through codification in rules of procedure/ statutes or development of general guidelines for all IIBs, in close cooperation with the Secretariat.

The MAB Secretariat and the ICC are satisfied with the role, composition and procedures of the MAB Bureau. This said, eventual harmonized rules of procedure/ statutes or development of general guidelines for all IIBs would be studied with interest.

67. It is suggested that Bureaus' composition be set, as much as compatible with individual IIBs' mandates, at a maximum of six members (Chair, Rapporteur, and four Vice-Presidents from the six Electoral Groups).

This is already the case with the MAB Bureau.

68. The intergovernmental nature of Bureaus should be reaffirmed while maintaining expert engagement. In this regard, the attached guidelines on responsibilities of Bureau members are recommended for dissemination to all Governing Bodies and IIBs (appendix 2).

The MAB Secretariat will draw the attention to these guidelines (appendix 2) whenever the composition of the ICC and its Bureau is renewed.

69. Documents related to Bureau meetings should appear online before meetings take place; outcomes, including reports of Bureau meetings, should be communicated to all members, and as appropriate, all Permanent Delegations, in a timely manner.

The MAB Secretariat will look into its procedures for this purpose.

70. Elections of Bureaus should be held, as much as possible, soon after elections for seats on the IIBs conducted at the General Conference, to avoid having Bureau members from Member States, which are no longer members of the IIBs concerned.

As expressively so decided by the ICC, the elections of the MAB Bureau are always done by the ICC that meets following the General Conference. As the MAB ICC meets annually, typically in the first half of the year, the election of the Bureau is therefore done sooner rather than later after the General Conference.

71. As much as feasible, Bureau meetings should be open to observers and working methods made more transparent.

This is the case with the MAB Bureau.

72. Strengthen information-sharing, communication and collaboration between Bureaus, Intergovernmental Councils and Committees and Member States.

This is already satisfactory within MAB, but opportunities for further enhancements are studied.

73. Gender-neutral language be adopted throughout all UNESCO documents.

MAB is committed to a gender-neutral language. As concerns the name of the MAB Programme "Man and the Biosphere", it has been subject for discussion at several MAB ICC's in the past as it was not perceived to be gender-neutral by all Member States. However, the conclusion of those discussions was to keep the name based on the argument that "Man" here represented man/humankind, and that when translated into other languages, this was generally quite clear. Furthermore, in general communications, there is often a sub-line explaining that the programme deals with "people living in and caring for the biosphere". This said, it is possible that the MAB ICC will debate the issues at some future session. Although it is presently not foreseen.

Alignment with overarching priorities of UNESCO

74. All IIBs should have the opportunity to submit formal inputs to the mid-term strategy C/4 and the draft Programme and Budget C/5 documents of UNESCO.

This is done internally by the MAB Secretariat based on the provisions contained in the MAB Strategy (endorsed by the 38th session of the UNESCO General Conference as adopted by the 27th MAB ICC) and the associated Lima Action Plan for MAB and its WNRB 2016-2025 as agreed (adopted by the 28th MAB ICC on 19 March 2016, Lima, Peru, and approved by the 200th session of the Executive Board of UNESCO). Member States are typically also referring to these documents in their discussion at the General Conference / Executive Board related to the C/4 and C/5 documents. Overall, MAB is seen as a 'best practice' in this area (ref appendix 3).

75. A feedback mechanism can be envisaged for substantive dialogue between Member States and IIBs, beyond the limited reporting to the General Conference. This could be through information meetings or briefings. Reporting to the General Conference should be enhanced through a new more strategic and results-oriented reporting format to be followed by debate and General Conference resolutions to provide feedback to IIBs.

In addition to conducting traditional information sessions at UNESCO HQ, MAB has also elaborated a rather unique mechanism for engaging with Member States: the International Support Group (ISG) to the MAB Programme. The MAB ICC at its 21st session held in the Jeju Island Biosphere Reserve, Republic of Korea from 25 to 29 May 2009, decided to set up the ISG, open to the participation of all Member States who have their Delegations at UNESCO Headquarters, to advise the MAB Secretariat on the implementation of the Action Plans and other relevant aspects of the MAB Programme. This group meets regularly once or twice per year and the MAB Secretariat provides first-hand information to the Member States. In terms of reporting to the General Conference/ Executive Board, MAB would welcome a new more strategic and results-oriented reporting format.

76. Orientation sessions for new members of all IIBs, especially for Chairpersons and Bureau members, should be institutionalized and include introduction to the C/4 and C/5 frameworks. To that end, a short user-friendly guidebook including good practices and acronyms could be produced to familiarize members with working methods and C/4 and C/5 mechanisms.

MAB is presently operating a number of working groups on the topic of developing a series of technical guidelines related to MAB and the WNRB. The above recommended guidebook could be an addition that series.

Coherence, coordination and synergies

77. Balanced resource allocation is necessary to ensure the effectiveness of all IIBs.

While agreeing in principle, MAB is also of the opinion that with a too limited total budget, even the best balanced resource allocation will prove to be insufficient. Overall resource mobilization (regular programme and extrabudgetary) is therefore also called for.

78. Use of languages for inclusivity and effectiveness remains an important objective.

MAB fully shares and seeks to promote this objective throughout its operations and communications.

79. IIBs and their Secretariats are requested to enhance coordination in scheduling of meetings to avoid overlap.

MAB, the MAB ICC/Bureau, regional and thematic MAB and BR networks are doing their utmost to avoid scheduling conflicts.

Best practices

80. Best practices should be shared and replicated or, if necessary, adjusted to reflect specificities with the aim to promote governance mechanisms that facilitate strategies and action plans anchored on the C/4 and C/5. Attached, in this regard, is a non-exhaustive list of best practices identified by the Working Group (Appendix 3).

C. SPECIFIC RECOMMENDATIONS FOR THE INTERGOVERNMENTAL COUNCILS AND COMMITTEES

81. Explore the possibility of holding annual Council sessions for the bodies, which do not meet annually, taking into account cost implications.

The MAB ICC meets annually.

Man and the Biosphere International Coordinating Council (MAB-ICC)

83. a. Strengthen role of ICC vis-à-vis Bureau in terms of decision-making.

The MAB ICC already takes all important decisions. No further strengthening of the ICC is therefore called for.

b. Enhance dialogue between ICC and International Advisory Committee (IAC) to strengthen implementation of decisions at national level.

The Chair of the ICC is invited to IAC meetings and the Chair of the IAC is invited to ICC meetings. The IAC is following all relevant recommendations and decisions in terms of criteria for assessing biosphere reserve nominations and periodic reviews established by the ICC.

c. Decisions be better highlighted in reports and preparation of separate draft decisions in advance for each item on agenda.

This has usually always been the case, and it will be ensured consistently before and after future ICC sessions.

d. Need to enhance visibility of the MAB programme and the UNESCO MAB website.

The MAB ICC adopted a new communication strategy in 2018 and a new UNESCO MAB web site is rolled-out in 2019.

Management of Social Transformations Programme Intergovernmental Council (MOST IGC)

84. Enhance cooperation with IFAP and MAB.

This is under study by the MAB Secretariat.

F. SPECIFIC RECOMMENDATIONS FOR INTERNATIONAL FUND, INTERNATIONAL PROGRAMMES, AND INTERNATIONAL EXPERT BODIES

International Geoscience and Geoparks Programme (IGGP)

113. a. Enhance and update website.

b. Strengthen reporting to General Conference and Executive Board.

c. Intensify synergies and cooperation with MAB and WHC.

Work to intensify synergies and cooperation are ongoing, notably in relation to work on biodiversity, climate change, sustainable tourism and renewable energy.

d. Continue to expand avenues for North-South and South-South cooperation.

Through the expanding WNBR (as of July 2019: 701 biosphere reserves in 124 countries, including 21 transboundary sites, disturbed as follows: 79 sites in 29 countries in Africa; 33 sites in 12 countries in the Arab States; 157 sites in 24 countries in Asia and the Pacific; 302 sites in 38 countries in Europe and North America; 130 sites in 21 countries in Latin America and the Caribbean), a number of regional and thematic networks, and two Category II Centres (ERAIFT, Kinshasa, Democratic Republic of Congo, and the Centre on Mediterranean Biosphere Reserves, Castellet, Spain), MAB is well endowed with excellent opportunities for North-South and South-South cooperation. Efforts to mobilize additional financial resources within and for MAB are typically targeting initiatives to ensure that these opportunities are fully realized.

PART 3. FOLLOW-UP MECHANISMS

129. The General Conference is invited to consider an appropriate follow-up mechanism to promote implementation of the Working Group's recommendations (from both Sub-Groups 1 and 2), such as production of a compendium or guidebook of best practices.

130. Governing Bodies and IIBs can be requested to continue to take up the matter of governance reform in their respective agendas and to submit reports in this regard to the 40th session of the General Conference.

The recommendations of the Working Group (39 C/20 ANNEX I) were outlined to the 38th MAB ICC in 2018 in the opening report of the MAB Secretary and the ICC was invited to comment thereon. Any outstanding issues related to 39 C/20 ANNEX I will be included in the reports by the MAB ICC Chair and by the MAB Secretary to the 31st MAB ICC in 2019 and the overall subsequent discussions reported on to the 40th General Conference as part of MAB's general reporting.

APPENDIX 2

GUIDELINES

Responsibilities of Representatives of Electoral Groups in Bureaus

Background

Member States elected to a governing or subsidiary body of a UNESCO intergovernmental Programme or Convention, the Executive Board, as well as statutory meetings of State Parties, delegate certain tasks to a smaller representative body, namely the Bureau.

In principle, the Bureau consists of Member States or individuals from Member States elected to represent Electoral Groups. Chairpersons and Rapporteurs, on the other hand, are understood to also serve in their personal capacities. Election to a Bureau as a representative of an Electoral Group should be seen as an honor and therefore carries with it important duties. The scope and tasks of Bureaus vary depending on different Rules of Procedure, but the responsibilities of Bureau Members vis-à-vis their mandates as Electoral Group representatives have not been clearly defined.

In accordance with the recommendations of the Working Group on Governance to enhance transparency, inclusiveness and efficiency of the Governing Bodies of UNESCO, these Guidelines aim to promote good governance, common ownership, and shared responsibility of Member States in a holistic manner.

Guiding principles

- Bureau members should act in good faith and actively engage with respective Electoral Groups and their members.
- They should promote UNESCO's values and ideals, and work in a spirit of dialogue, cooperation, inclusiveness and trust-building.
- They should abide by highest standards of equity, fairness, transparency and accountability.

General responsibilities

- Bureau members should be mindful that they represent their respective Electoral Groups.
- They should communicate with the members of their respective Electoral Groups in timely, transparent and effective manner, through correspondence by electronic means or by organizing coordination meetings, to promote efficient information-sharing and dissemination.
- They are called upon to consult with their respective Electoral Group members on the items on the agenda of the Bureau, soon after they are announced.
- If possible, they shall seek to consolidate the position(s) of their respective Electoral Groups on items to be discussed at Bureau meetings.
- They shall also present positions of concerned Member States of their respective Electoral Groups on relevant agenda items, when requested, at Bureau meetings.
- They shall inform promptly about the outcomes of Bureau meetings, complementing the summary of Bureau meetings when distributed.
- They shall update their respective Electoral Groups regarding all Agenda items and emerging issues after and in-between Bureau meetings.

MAB: The above guidelines have been shared with Members of the MAB Bureau, and made available on the MAB web page.

APPENDIX 3

Non-exhaustive List of Best Practices of IIBs

Bureaus

- Minutes of Bureau meetings posted online (IHP)
- Participation of observers in Bureau meetings (MOST-IGC, IFAP, 1954 Convention)
- Close work between Bureau and Council (MOST-IGC)
- Working meetings of Bureau with civil society (2005 Convention)
- Election of Bureau at end of session (2005 Convention)

Documentation

- Action Paper which outlines key issues and expectations (IOC)
- Annotated agenda (IOC)

Decision-making

- Informal consultations prior to meetings facilitate decision-making (IHP)
- Mechanism for introduction of draft resolutions through Drafting Committee (IHP)
- Development of criteria for selection of projects (IFAP)
- Sharing of draft amendments in advance (2005 Convention)
- Open Working Group during Committee sessions allowing for inclusive and transparent discussions on major issues (1972 Convention)

Efficient working methods

- Management of agenda to allow for ample discussions (IGBC)
- Good use of consultations among members between sessions (CIGEPS)
- Terms of reference for working groups (IFAP)
- Transparency between Member States and Secretariat (HQ Committee)
- Responsiveness to requests from Member States (HQ Committee)
- Ad Hoc Working Group (1972 Convention)
- Periodic reporting (1972 Convention, 2005 Convention)
- Organization of Exchange Day which provided opportunity for thematic discussions (2001 Convention)
- Regular reporting to Executive Board (UIS)
- Minutes of Steering Committee distributed (UIS)
- Making use of silent procedure as appropriate (IPDC)
- Continued monitoring of the state of conservation throughout the year (1972 Convention)
- Implementation of IOS' recommendations (2005 Convention)
- Satisfaction survey (2005 Convention)

Composition

- Re-election possible only once on IGGP Council

IT

- Use of social media and IT, i.e. video on IHP;
- Use of information technology; i.e. all resolutions and amendments are immediately placed online (IOC)
- Online training programmes of International Institute for Education Planning (IIEP)
- A web page with a whole set of knowledge management tools for all stakeholders (1972 Convention)

C/4 and C/5 alignment

- Efforts to align with C/4 and C/5 (MAB ICC)
- Comprehensive MOST Strategy;
- Strategic planning (MAB Lima Action Plan),
- Results framework being developed for the Convention streamlined into reporting (2003 Convention) against C/5 Expected Results (2005 Convention);
- Priority-setting exercise (IOC, 2005 Convention)
- Consultations on exit strategy, upon fulfillment of objectives when National Museum in Cairo becomes fully operational (Nubia Executive Committee)

Synergies

- Good use of regional networks (MAB-ICC)
- Joint meetings that build synergies and reduce costs (IGBC, IBC, COMEST)
- Joint meetings of Chairs (IGBC, IBC, COMEST, Cultural Conventions)
- Multi-stakeholder approach promoted through UN Plan of Action on Safety of Journalists and Issue of Impunity (IPDC)
- Extensive cooperation with other international organizations (IOC)
- Merging of Geosciences and Geoparks programme (IGGP)
- Involvement of local communities and international scope of activities (IGGP)
- Extensive support of Global Geoparks Network (IGGP)
- Cooperation of IICBA with Headquarters and Field Offices

Information dissemination/ visibility

- International Support Group meetings (MAB-ICC)
- Information meetings to communicate regularly with Member States (IOC, 1970 Convention)
- Region-specific meetings to promote awareness-raising and ratification (2001 Convention)
- Periodic reporting (1972 and 2005 Convention)
- Fund mobilization strategy (UIS)