



United Nations  
Educational, Scientific and  
Cultural Organization



Man and  
the Biosphere  
Programme

SC-20/Bureau 7  
Paris, 29 May 2020  
Original: English

## **UNITED NATIONS EDUCATIONAL, SCIENTIFIC AND CULTURAL ORGANIZATION**

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

#### **4<sup>th</sup> Skype meeting of the Bureau of the International Co-ordinating Council of the Man and the Biosphere (MAB) Programme Friday 29 May 2020, from 11:00 am to 12:30 pm**

#### **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

Mr Yangbo Kim

Ms Martha Vogel

Ms Sima Taheri-Gauter

Ms Patricia Ramé

Ms Sandrine Baron

#### **UNESCO Office in Abuja**

Mr Yao Ydo

Mr Simone Grego

Ms Priscilla Apochi

Ms Magdalene Anene-Maidoh

1. The fourth meeting of the Bureau of the International Coordinating Council of the Man and Biosphere Programme (MAB-ICC) was held through Skype for Business on 29 May 2020.

2. The six MAB Bureau Members attended the session: the Chair representative of Indonesia, representatives of Estonia, Honduras, Nigeria, Sudan and Sweden. Sixteen participants from

the UNESCO Secretariat attended the meeting including four colleagues 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 at UNESCO vis-à-vis of the COVID-19, the Secretary informed that the situation is improving in France and in Europe in general. UNESCO staff are waiting for more information from the administration regarding the coming back to the office, as the second phase of the deconfinement is planned for 2 June in Paris. Even though having not received any further instructions, it is probable that UNESCO staff start to come back gradually to the office in the month of June.

5. The meeting was chaired by Ms Enny Sudarmonowati who thanked the Bureau Members and the MAB Secretariat for the organization of this fourth meeting. She greeted Muslim participants and Bureau Members for the Eid celebrating the end of the holy month of Ramadan. Furthermore, she mentioned that at the occasion of the Mid-term evaluation of the MAB Programme, some of the Bureau Members were interviewed by IOS during these last days and on 14<sup>th</sup> May it was the Mid-term evaluation results meeting which provided so many recommendations that need to be prioritized. The Chair suggested that the prioritization of the recommendations needs to be discussed in Bureau meeting and the results of the Mid-term evaluation of the MAB Programme could be presented at the 50<sup>th</sup> MAB Anniversary.

### **Adoption of the Agenda**

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

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

8. The MAB Secretary started by thanking the Chair for the opening and the adoption of the agenda. He mentioned that the preparatory Executive Board meeting will be held at UNESCO on 8 and 9 June and the 209<sup>th</sup> Session of the Executive Board meeting from 29 June to 10 July. The fall session of the Executive Board will be held most probably in October. The Geopark Council will also be held in Jeju Island from 21 to 29 November. Taking into consideration these dates and also the fact that the figures of Covid-19 are decreasing largely in Europe and in Africa, the week of 16 to 20 November can be envisaged for the 32<sup>nd</sup> session of the MAB-ICC in Abuja. If the situation in Latin America and Caribbean countries is not getting better, representatives from delegations are invited to attend the meeting from Paris.

9. The Chair gave the floor to UNESCO Office in Abuja to give a clear situation on the preparation of the 32<sup>nd</sup> session of the MAB-ICC in Abuja. Mr Yao Ydo, Director of the UNESCO Office in Abuja provided concrete information about the number of Covid-19 cases highlighting that the total number of contamination cases are still increasing, and many people are infected by the Covid-19 but tests are not available everywhere. By July, Nigeria will have a clear idea about the situation but for now many activities are shut down in the country. However, UNESCO Office in Abuja can go ahead accordingly with the proposed dates by the MAB Secretary.

10. The Chair gave the floor to Nigeria who started by congratulating the Chair for the completion of Ramadan. Nigeria agreed with Mr Ydo about the situation in Nigeria. Furthermore, Nigeria agreed with the proposed dates in November and mentioned that November is the best time for the country. He also mentioned that the relevant documents will be signed and the funds will be transferred to UNESCO the soonest possible to avoid to be lost.

11. Honduras also agreed on the proposed dates and mentioned that Latin America is facing now a difficult situation with regards to the Covid-19 and every country has different recourse facing more and more cases which maintain the pandemic at a high level in the continent.

12. Sweden, Estonia and Sudan also agreed on the proposed dates in November.

13. The Chair concluded that the decision on the date of the upcoming MAB-ICC cannot be taken yet and we have to wait until the end of July to make a final decision.

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

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

16. Mr Simone Grego from UNESCO Office in Abuja mentioned that there is no advancement on logistics and they already received all the quotations. They only need a final date to go further and confirm the reservation of the hotel and travels. The administrative aspects have also been cleared: vendor, appropriation letter, draft contracts. The office is waiting for the transfer of funds and well placed for the activities.

17. Ms Noëline Raondry Rakotoarisoa added that given the fact that hotels in Abuja will be overbooked in November, it is wise to make a pre-reservation with the hotel providing them the date of 16 to 21 November, as we need to secure the venue with the hotel.

18. Nigeria mentioned that the contract with the hotel is signed and the transfer of funds will be done when the lockdown will be over.

19. UNESCO office in Abuja mentioned that they will contact the hotel in order to pre-book with the date of 16 to 21 November. The Chair underlined hotels preference in having one option for reservation than two option dates.

20. The Bureau Members took note without comments on the item 5 of the agenda.

21. Item 6 of the agenda was about the update on status of TGBR.

22. Ms Noëline Raondry Rakotoarisoa mentioned that the first draft of TGBR as well as the text on the nomination process have been prepared and shared with MAB colleagues. There were also bilateral meetings within each technical sub groups. Today the comprehensive document will be ready and will be reviewed on 2<sup>nd</sup> June by the TGBR Chair and the sub groups. The working groups will work together on the document and the consolidated document will be sent to the Advisory Committee on the 2<sup>nd</sup> week of June. The Bureau Members will receive the final version of the consolidated document in July.

23. Sudan congratulated the Secretariat for the good progress of the work and mentioned that she has some comments and will wait to receive the documents to provide her comments.

24. The Chair thanked and congratulated for the good progress of the TGBR work.

25. On item 7, the Bureau Members agreed that the next Skype meeting to be held on 29 July at the same time i.e. 11 am Paris time. A skype invitation will be sent at a later stage. The MAB Secretary specified that by this time we should be able to fix the date of the 32<sup>nd</sup> Session of MAB-ICC as we will have a concrete view on the situation.

26. Nigeria mentioned that the budget will be reviewed and a ministerial meeting will be held to discuss the financial aspect before 29 July.

27. Item 8 of the agenda was about the events held for the Biodiversity day on 22 May and those planned for the Environment day on 5 June.

28. The Chair mentioned that she sent a one-minute video message for the commemoration of the Biodiversity day.

29. The MAB Secretary made a brief report on the events the Secretariat prepared for the Biodiversity day and mentioned that Cultural Biodiversity was also part of the programme which is still available on the MAB webpage at the following address:

<https://en.unesco.org/commemorations/biodiversityday>

30. Ms Meriem Bouamrane specified that the Environment day will be dedicated to Biodiversity again and we will have special events with a webinar addressed to Member States chaired by ADG/SC, Ms Shamila Nair-Bedouelle, on Friday 5 June. The Programme is available on the MAB webpage at the following address:

<https://en.unesco.org/commemorations/environmentday>

31. The Chair congratulated the MAB Secretariat for the good work and mentioned it would be interesting to have the data about the connections to the UNESCO webpages for these two celebrations once we receive them from DPI.

32. Item 9 of the agenda was about events related to the 50th Anniversary of the MAB Programme.

33. The MAB Secretary made a comment on the longevity of the MAB Programme born in 1971, a year before the World Heritage Programme within the Culture sector of UNESCO. This 50th Anniversary of the MAB Programme will be the occasion to mention and recall the achievements of the MAB Programme. We would like to use this year to show where we are and what we did, specially recently facing the Covid-19 and taking into consideration SDGs. Questions regarding the future will also be addressed throughout the year of 2021 with different events which will be organized in the Biosphere Reserves. However, the most important event should be at UNESCO HQs during the 33th MAB-ICC and through our Field Offices and the MAB-ICC Bureau Members. The MAB Secretary mentioned that a working group has been created within the MAB Secretariat to monitor all the activities under the leadership of Ms Noëline Raondry Rakotoarisoa and composed of Ms Martha Vogel, Ms Maria Rosa Cardenas Tomazic and Mr Manoel Giffoni. The MAB Programme can take this occasion to fix realistic

targets to be achieved through the coming decade in terms of new countries on board, more Transboundary Biosphere Reserves, and therefore an increase of the number of Biosphere Reserves worldwide. The working group will start its work as of June this year and you can find in the attached table a draft programme of activities throughout the year 2020 and 2021.

34. Ms Noëline Raondry Rakotoarisoa stated that she is happy to lead this working group to celebrate the 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the MAB Programme and invites the Bureau Members to send their ideas so the MAB Secretariat will implement as best as it can.

35. Ms Maria Rosa Cardenas Tomazic provided an overview on the document attached, showing the status of the planning of different activities starting as of June 2020 until June 2021. This document will also serve as a basis for the fundraising process with potential donors, the implementation of the dedicated webpage, and the communication material. In September 2020 we will launch the webpage dedicated to the 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the MAB Programme and also a competition will start for the logo of the 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary. All Biosphere Reserves are invited to participate to this competition by providing ideas and making it a participatory process. The selection of the final logo can be done by the MAB-ICC Bureau in November 2020. A video message from the Director-General will also be prepared to open the year celebrating the 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary. A comprehensive database collecting BRs information is also under preparation and will be launched at this occasion. Key persons will be identified for interviews with a special accent put on the MAB Youth. Interviews with the MAB Young Scientist Awardees are also under preparation. Other communication material are also being prepared such as the MAB 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary leaflet which will be ready for January 2021. Each region will also celebrate this anniversary through a big meeting.

36. The Chair congratulated the work and offered the floor to Bureau Members to discuss. She mentioned that this is a very active programme not only for UNESCO Headquarters but also for its Field Offices with celebrations in all countries where there is a Biosphere Reserve. She suggested that the MAB Secretariat prepare a letter to be sent to MAB Committees for a better communication and also post this communication on the dedicated webpage.

37. The MAB Secretary specified that the first step of the preparation of the 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary is to set up a working team and the official announcement can be done from the Chair of the MAB-ICC and not from the Secretariat as the MAB Programme is an intergovernmental body. If the MAB Secretariat writes to the Member States, this will take time and we have only seven months for the preparation before the official launch in January, which will be done through the video message of UNESCO Director-General and the MAB website. However, this is not visible enough and we should have a press campaign involving UNESCO DPI. The raising of funds will be difficult as donors are reluctant. The question asked by the Chair was how much the MAB network can communicate about it in the countries and make this communication public.

38. The Chair welcomed these initiatives and highlighted the fact that the issue of fund raising is very delicate. She mentioned that the competition on the logo is a good idea and the participatory aspect is very welcomed. She also agreed on the participatory of the Bureau Members on the selection of the logo and gave them the floor to express themselves.

39. Estonia welcomed all these good ideas and initiatives and emphasized on the fact that the new generation should be more involved and its role enhanced in this process.

40. The Chair agreed on the involvement of the Bureau Members and specified that the strength of the MAB Programme is its Youth.

41. Ms Marie Prchalova highlighted that the MAB Young Scientist Award scheme will be an important contribution through the brochure and leaflet under preparation to summarize the good practices of the Young Scientist Awardees through interviews.

42. Sudan welcomed this initiative and thanked the MAB Secretariat for the presentation. She also mentioned that UNESCO Cairo office held two meetings in the Arab region and next Tuesday will be the 3<sup>rd</sup> meeting. We can use this kind of meetings to see how we will celebrate the 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary in the countries. The Youth Forum in Arab region will also discuss about this topic.

43. Ms Marie Prchalova mentioned that many countries set up a national Young Scientist Award and the results can be mentioned on the report of activities of the 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary.

44. The Chair enquired about the award for the winner of the logo competition. The MAB Secretary mentioned that this cannot be a monetary prize as it will be too complicated to manage. Ms Noëline Raondry Rakotoarisoa suggested that we can think about an in-kind prize which can be envisaged as a visit of a Biosphere Reserve with a total taking in charge of the costs by the host country.

45. Item 10 of the agenda was about any other matters.

46. The Chair mentioned the Mid-term Evaluation of the MAB programme conducted by IOS and she suggested that we can discuss about the recommendations and its prioritization. She mentioned that the Bureau Members had a good discussion with IOS colleagues and the MAB Secretariat and provided their inputs to be added to the survey. The MAB Secretary suggested that this item be added to the agenda of the next meeting so the MAB Secretariat will prepare a presentation with a more in-depth reflection of Bureau Members.

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