

UNITED NATIONS EDUCATIONAL, SCIENTIFIC AND CULTURAL ORGANIZATION

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

Report of the 4th online meeting (in 2021) of the Bureau of the International Co-ordinating Council of the Man and the Biosphere (MAB) Programme
Thursday 2 December 2021, from 3 pm to 5 pm

Introduction

1. The fourth meeting of the Bureau of the International Coordinating Council of the Man and the Biosphere Programme (MAB-ICC) was held through the Teams platform, on 2nd of December 2021.
2. A total of 4 MAB Bureau Members attended the meeting; the Chair from Nigeria, representatives of Austria, Sudan and Peru. Six participants from the UNESCO Secretariat and field office attended the meeting.
3. The full list of participants and observers is given in Annex 1.

Item 1 of the Agenda: Opening by the Secretary of the MAB Programme

4. The meeting was opened by the acting MAB Secretary, Ms Noëline Raondry Rakotoarisoa who welcomed the members. She did a short report on the celebration of the 50th anniversary and thanked the Chair and the rapporteur for attending in presentia.

Item 2 of the Agenda: Opening by the Chair of the MAB-ICC Bureau

5. The meeting was chaired by Mr Adepoju Olatunde Adeshola who thanked the Bureau members for their presence and the MAB Secretariat for the organization of the 50th anniversary of the MAB Programme.

Item 3 of the Agenda: Adoption of the following items of the Agenda

6. The Bureau adopted the Agenda without modification. The approved agenda is in Annex 2 to this report.

Item 4 of the Agenda: Recommendation to include the UNESCO MAB programme and its World Network of Biosphere Reserves in the implementation of CBD's post-2020 global biodiversity framework

7. The MAB Secretariat introduced this item by emphasising 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). The 3rd meeting of the Open-ended Working Group 3, scheduled from 12 to 28 January 2022 in Geneva, is the last negotiation round before COP 15 in Kunming, China in April-May 2022.

8. The MAB Secretariat provided some background as regards the on-going discussion being held between some Members of the MAB Council and Observers. The discussion started with the publication of a letter in Nature advocating for recognition of biosphere reserves as OECMs. The definition of OECM has been adopted by CBD in November 2018. On-going negotiations of the post 2020 framework include a target 3 to ensure that at least 30% globally of land areas and sea areas are conserved through effectively and equitably managed system of protected areas and other effective area-based conservation measures.

9. At the IUCN Congress in September 2021, UNESCO Director-General, Madame Audrey Azoulay stated that UNESCO is already contributing to this target and will increase its commitment. She also stated that it will be futile to conserve 30% of the planet if we continue to destroy the rest. This statement illustrates the philosophy of the MAB programme as the reconciliation programme between conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity and the role of the WNBR as connected landscapes.

10. In this context, the Secretariat laid out the challenges ahead for the MAB Programme and UNESCO:

(1) how to ensure the MAB program is included in the Post-2020 Global Biodiversity Framework (GBF) framework and

(2) how to recognize the unique contribution of the WNBR as an implementation tool for Member states in implementing the Post-2020 GBF.

11. The MAB Secretariat provided support to a technical note describing how biosphere reserves are related to the OECM definition. It is up to Member States and biosphere reserves to decide if they wish to apply to have biosphere reserves recognized as OECMs and possibly benefit from some funding (process is being run by IUCN) as countries have expressed divergent views on whether biosphere reserves should be recognized as OECMs.

12. The Secretariat provided an update on these email exchanges that have been held after the sharing of the technical note. The consensus may be to recognize biosphere reserves as connected landscapes and seascapes which include protected areas PLUS sustainable use and thus not limit biosphere reserve to a category such as OECMs. But biosphere reserves need to be acknowledged as part of the commitment of Member States to the post 2020 framework and not only to meet Target 3 on 30% but as well other targets and that the overall goal is that 100 % of humans are reconciling with other living species.

13. To achieve this, the following actions were discussed by the Members of the Bureau with associated recommendations:

- o Participation of MAB experts at the IUCN Thematic Group on biosphere reserves to increase visibility within IUCN and in the post 2020 framework,

- o Organization of a side event in cooperation with the Global Youth Biodiversity Network (GYBN) at the Geneva negotiations of the 3rd Open-ended Working Group on the Post-2020 Global Biodiversity Framework in January 2022 to demonstrate the connected and reconciliation approach advocated by biosphere reserves with keynote speakers,

- o Advocacy by Member states at the 3rd OEWG to insert a reference in the Appendix of the post-2020 draft 1, to add UNESCO along with UNEP and FAO as implementation partners.

14. After introduction of the item by the secretariat, members of the Bureau provided comments.

15. Mr Günter Köck expressed his full support for the proposal and technical note provided by the MAB Secretariat and emphasized the importance of the MAB presence at the 3rd OEWG meeting in Geneva in January.

16. The MAB Bureau Chair, Mr Adepoju Adeshola, also expressed his support for the three points proposed by the MAB Secretariat. He asked the MAB Secretariat to make sure a side event proposal is submitted to Geneva before the deadline. The Bureau asked the MAB Secretariat to clarify whether the event would happen given current Covid-related conditions.

17. Ms Rosario Barrera supported the three points and will invite countries of Latin America and the Caribbean to support point 3. She agreed on the need to give visibility to biosphere reserves and to submit a proposal of side-event to the Geneva meeting.

18. Mr Adil Mohamed Ali was in favour of presenting a side event at the Geneva meeting to gather support for the biosphere reserve concept and will ask colleagues to support the point 3 of MAB Secretariat's proposal.

19. The MAB Secretariat indicated during the meeting that it had received a notification that the OEWG event in Geneva would be postponed due to current Covid conditions to a date unknown at the moment.

20. The MAB Bureau Chair decided to convene another MAB Bureau meeting in January 2022 to allow to examine comments to be received by the MAB Council on this Bureau report and associated recommendations to finalize the recommendations on this item. The following decisions were made as requested:

a. Meeting with the IUCN Thematic Group on biosphere reserves

21. The potentials for synergies between IUCN's Commission on Ecosystem Management (CEM) and UNESCO's MAB Programme have led to the creation of the Thematic Group on biosphere reserves.

22. The group's purpose is to connect the work of the Commission regarding issues such as ecosystem-based assessment, ecosystem governance, and resilience to activities within biosphere reserves, and to enhance collaborations between UNESCO and IUCN.

23. In order to continue targeting conservation and ecosystem governance strategies from interdisciplinary and integral approaches, the Thematic Group on biosphere reserves is calling for CEM members to join the Core Group as well as a leader of the group. Activities include planning, discussion and collaboration to fulfil the group's workplan for the upcoming IUCN intersessional period.

24. The recommendation of the Bureau to the MAB Council is:

- 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.

- The Bureau recommends to Members of the Council to advocate in the group.

b. Side event at the 3rd meeting of the Open-ended Working Group on the Post-2020 Global Biodiversity Framework (Geneva, Switzerland, 12-28 January 2022 postponed to March 2022).

25. A side event will be organized by UNESCO MAB with support from the Global Youth Biodiversity Network on the role of biosphere reserves as connected landscapes at the resumed session of the 3rd meeting of the Open-ended Working Group on the Post-2020 Global Biodiversity Framework, together with the resumed sessions of Twenty-fourth meeting of the Subsidiary Body on Scientific, Technical and Technological Advice (SBSTTA 24) and Third meeting of the Subsidiary Body on Implementation (SBI 3), from 12 to 28 January 2022 in Geneva, Switzerland.

26. The objective of the side event is to demonstrate how biosphere reserves can be tools to contribute to the reconciliation of humans within the rest of the living. As biosphere reserves aim to combine effective conservation and sustainable use of multi-functional landscapes and seascapes, they provide frames to reach conservation and development goals and to connect protected areas and OECMs.

27. Biosphere reserves can therefore be sustainable models to maintain connectivity with other areas deprived of protection or under different tenure regimes. Since biosphere reserves contain a mandatory core area legally protected by national legislation and other parts (buffer zone and transition area) not necessarily legally considered as protected areas, the side event will demonstrate the role played by

biosphere reserves in the interconnection of protected areas and OECMs, and their role in the framework of the CBD post-2020 global biodiversity framework and beyond for the implementation of the SDGs.

28. Through biosphere reserves, governments can play a central role in planning ecologically representative networks of interconnected protected areas to conserve biodiversity while reaching societal objectives represented by diverse worldviews and multiple values of nature.

29. Recommendation of the Bureau is therefore:

- 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. Mention of UNESCO and its World Network of Biosphere Reserve in the draft of the post-2020 Global Biodiversity Framework (Appendix).

30. In the first draft of the post-2020 Global Biodiversity Framework¹, the Appendix (Draft elements of a possible decision operationalizing the post-2020 global biodiversity framework), mentions UNDP and FAO to facilitate activities designed at the country level to support the implementation of the Convention and the post-2020 global biodiversity framework (page 12, paragraph 12 in the English version); UNESCO and the World Network of Biosphere Reserves could be mentioned along UNDP and FAO as follows:

“The Conference of the Parties,

[...]

12. Invites the United Nations Environment Programme, in particular its regional offices, as well as the United Nations Development Programme, the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, and the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization through its World Network of Biosphere Reserves, working at the country level, to facilitate activities designed to support the implementation of the Convention and the post-2020 global biodiversity framework, in cooperation with other relevant implementation agencies;”

31. The recommendation of the Bureau is:

- The Bureau recommends proposing an amendment in the Appendix of the draft post-2020 global biodiversity framework to include UNESCO and the World Network, which can support the reference of the WNBR in the post-2020 GBF.

¹ <https://www.cbd.int/doc/c/abb5/591f/2e46096d3f0330b08ce87a45/wg2020-03-03-en.pdf>

- 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 OEEM.

Item 5 of the Agenda: Re-launch of the World Network of Mountain Biosphere Reserves call for applications for the function of Technical Secretariat of the Network

32. The MAB Secretariat introduced item V. As stipulated in the proposal for the establishment of the World Network of Mountain Biosphere Reserves (WNMBR), the coordination of this Network will be carried out by the MAB Secretariat with the support of one or two Technical Secretariats, which would be nominated by Member States and should be hosted in a mountain biosphere reserves or universities and research institutes working in close collaboration with mountain biosphere reserves.

33. The MAB Secretariat recalled the nomination process to the MAB Bureau, which had already been presented during the last session of the MAB-ICC. The Secretary mentioned that a call for nominations was open from June to October 2021. The most thorough applications received by the MAB Secretariat were put forward by the People's Republic of China (Research Centre for Eco-Environmental Sciences, Chinese Academy of Sciences) and Spain (Valles de Omaña y Luna Biosphere Reserve). All applications were provided to the MAB Bureau for examination and were discussed during a MAB Bureau meeting.

34. During the discussion on this item, Austria proposed to support the establishment of both Technical Secretariats in the People's Republic of China and Spain, as permitted by the terms of the Network's proposal, because these could provide combined support to the MAB Secretariat in managing the Network and their line of work would be complementary. The MAB Secretariat explained that this was possible and that this model was being used successfully by the World Network of Island and Coastal Biosphere Reserves. In addition, the two proposed Technical Secretariats would together encompass a greater variety of working languages (Chinese, English and Spanish), different mountain chains in different Regional Groups (Asia-Pacific, Europe, and Latin America and the Caribbean) and open collaboration with several existing MAB Regional Networks (EABRN, EuroMAB, IberoMAB, PacMAB, SACAM and SeaBRnet). Finally, the two proposed Technical Secretariats would respectively represent academia and biosphere reserves, two mainstays of the MAB community.

35. The MAB Bureau voted unanimously to establish both the Research Center for Eco-Environmental Sciences, Chinese Academy of Sciences (People's Republic of China) and Valles de Omaña y Luna Biosphere Reserve (Spain) as Technical Secretariats for the WNMBR.

Item 6 of the Agenda: Any Other Matters

36. The MAB Secretary also expressed the need for strong support to Africa, as its mountains were the main water towers for the countries.

Item 7 of the Agenda: Closure of the Meeting

37. The Chair thanked the Bureau members and the MAB Secretariat for the efforts made for the organization of this Bureau meeting and closed the meeting.

LIST OF PARTICIPANTS / LISTE DES PARTICIPANTS

BUREAU MEMBERS / MEMBRES DU BUREAU

Chairperson/Président

Mr Adepoju Olatunde Adeshola
Executive Director
Forestry Research Institute of Nigeria
Ibadan
Nigeria

Vice-Chairpersons/Vice-présidents

Austria (Group I): serving also as the Rapporteur: Mr Günter Köck
Russian Federation (Group II): Mr Valery M. Neronov (absent)
Peru (Group III): Ms Rosario Barrera
Kazakhstan (Group IV): Ms Viktoriya Ilina (absent)
Sudan (Group V B): Mr Adil Mohamed Ali

UNESCO

MAB Secretariat (UNESCO Division of Ecological and Earth Sciences, SC/EES)

Director/Directeur a.i. :
Ms Noëline Raondry Rakotoarisoa

Secretariat/Secrétariat:
Ms Meriem Bouamrane
Ms Marie Prchalova
Ms Maria-Rosa Cardenas
Mr Bandiougou Diawara
Ms Serena Heckler
Mr Maximilien Guèze

ANNEX 2:

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

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

Thursday 2 December 2021, from 3 pm to 5

PROVISIONAL AGENDA

1. Opening by the Secretary of the MAB Programme
2. Opening by the Chair of the MAB Bureau
3. Adoption of the following items of the Agenda
4. Recommendation to include the UNESCO MAB programme and its World Network of Biosphere Reserves in the implementation of CBD's post-2020 global biodiversity framework
5. Re-launch of the World Network of Mountain Biosphere Reserves call for applications for the function of Technical Secretariat of the Network
6. Any Other Matters
7. Closure of the Meeting