

## Man And the Biosphere (MAB) Programme



Man and the Biosphere (MAB) Programme was launched in 1971 by UNESCO to promote an interdisciplinary approach within the natural and social sciences; for the rational and sustainable use and conservation of the resources of the biosphere; and for the improvement of overall relationship between people and their environment. It predicts the consequences of today's action on tomorrow's world and thereby increases people's ability to efficiently manage natural resources for the well-being of both human population and the environment.

The programme's primary output comes in the form of establishment of the World's Network of Biosphere Reserves (WNBR) – a listing of local conservation units known as Biosphere Reserves, found in different countries across all the regions of the world. The biosphere reserves are the protected areas that are meant to demonstrate a balanced relationship between man and nature, in which genetic resources could be protected and research and monitoring could be carried out in a sustainable way. Today, MAB programme is a set of related scientific research projects which focuses on:

- Minimizing the loss of biological diversity;
- Making people aware of how cultural diversity and biological diversity affects each other; and
- Promoting environmental sustainability through the World Network of Biosphere Reserves.

Man and the Biosphere (MAB) Programme launched in 1971, initiated work on 14 project areas covering different ecosystem types from mountain to sea, from rural to urban systems, as well as more social aspects such as environment perception. MAB currently operates through 158 National Committees established among the 195 Members States and nine Associate Members States of UNESCO. The governing body of Man and the Biosphere Programme is the International Co-ordinating Council usually referred to as the MAB Council or ICC, consists of 34 Member States (countries) elected by UNESCO's biennial General Conference. The ICC normally meets once every two years. Among other things the Council decides upon establishment of new biosphere reserves and takes note of the recommendation on periodic review reports of the existing biosphere reserves. There are also MAB National Committees that oversee MAB programme in their countries and report to the MAB Council.

The role of the ICC is to:

- Guide and supervise the MAB programme;

- Review the progress made in the implementation of the programme (cf. Secretariat report and reports of National MAB Committees);
- Recommend research projects to countries and to make proposals on the organization of regional or international cooperation;
- Assess priorities among projects and MAB activities in general;
- Co-ordinate the international cooperation of Member States participating in the MAB Programme;
- Co-ordinate activities with other international scientific programmes; and
- Consult with international non-governmental organizations on scientific or technical questions.

At present, there are 701 sites in 124 countries listed in the World Network of Biosphere Reserves.