

**REPORT ON THE ATTENDANCE AND PARTICIPATION TO THE 21ST
SESSION OF THE UNESCO MAN AND THE BIOSPHERE PROGRAMME
INTERNATIONAL COORDINATING COUNCIL (MAB ICC)**

VIRGINIA S. CARIÑO
Philippine Representative to the MAB Programme

I. Introduction

1. The session was held on 25-29 May 2009 at the Jeju KAL Hotel, Jeju, Republic of Korea.
2. Participants numbering 101 included representatives from 26 ICC Members as elected by the UNESCO General Conference in its 33rd and 34th sessions and observers from 9 UNESCO Member States and international non-governmental and governmental organizations.

II. Opening Ceremonies

3. The Chair of the ICC, Mr. Henri Djombo, Minister of Forestry Economy of Congo could not be present. Mr. Chung-II Choi of the Republic of Korea, Vice Chair of the MAB-ICC for Asia Pacific was unanimously endorsed by the MAB-ICC Bureau to replace him as Chair of the Session. Mr Choi declared the session opened.
4. Mr. Natarajan Ishwaran, Secretary of the MAB Programme read the message of Mr. Koichiro Matsuura, Director-General of UNESCO. A representative of the Minister of Environment of the Republic of Korea welcomed the participants. A welcome address was delivered by the Governor of Jeju Special Self-Governing Province and he highlighted that Jeju has been a biosphere reserve since 2002, was inscribed as a national World Heritage site in 2007, and they are working to have it recognized as a Geopark in 2010.

III. Report of the Chair of the ICC

5. Mr. Germaine Kambo of Congo read the Chair's report on his contributions toward the implementation of the Madrid Action Plan (MAP) and other MAB activities. He reported on the organizing of the World Forum on Sustainable Development in Congo from 27-30 October 2008 and collaboration efforts with the African Development Bank and the Secretariat of the Congo Basin Forest Fund to increase the chances of obtaining funds for the UNESCO / MAB and the project on "Biosphere Reserves as Centers of Excellence and Learning Laboratories for Sustainable Development in the Congo Basin."

IV. Adoption of the Agenda and Time Table

6. The MAB-ICC adopted the proposed agenda and time table.

V. Report of the Secretary of the MAB Programme

7. The Secretary of the MAB Programme presented his report on activities implemented after the 20th MAB-ICC session in February 2008. It highlighted activities undertaken by the Secretariat and selected Member States to implement the MAP. MAB efforts to collaborate with other international scientific programmes like the Intergovernment Oceanographic Commission (IOC) and the significance of seeking the UNESCO Executive Board and General Conference endorsement to use the WNBR as a UNESCO-wide platform for intersectoral collaboration during the last five years of the UNDESD. Regarding future ICC sessions the secretariat proposed yearly meetings to make annual decisions on new biosphere reserves, also to keep in mind preparations for the 40th anniversary of the MAB Programme in 2011.

8. The Council called for action from the Secretariat to improve the visibility of MAB and WNBR to levels enjoyed by the World Heritage Inscription. They called attention to the **need for management committees at the individual biosphere reserve level while recognizing the important role of MAB National Committees.**

VI. Implementation of the Madrid Action Plan (MAP)

9. The Secretariat conducted a questionnaire survey on the assessment of the achievements of the Seville Strategy as required by MAP target 1 and action 1.1 **which was sent to all MAB Committees.**

10. A new deadline of 30 September 2009 was set for receipt of responses.

11. The survey had asked for information on the extent to which the biosphere reserve concept is included in national legislation frameworks, as in the case of Spain.

12. The Council endorsed the establishment of a formal ad-hoc Committee, the International Support Group (ISE), the meetings of which contribute to raising the awareness of Permanent Delegations to UNESCO on the MAB Programme, the WNBR, implementation of MAP and other related issues thereby enhancing their ability to support MAB and WNBR.

VII. Reports on actions by UNESCO Member States and by Regional Ecosystems Networks

13. The presentations focused on the implementation of the MAP. For example, **Spain described its National Committee** which is composed of around 50 people from all groups of civil society including Central and Regional Autonomous Governments, research institutions and NGOs. This Committee is advised by a scientific council and a BR-manager council.

VIII. Proposals for new biosphere reserves and extensions or modifications to designated biosphere reserves

14. The MAB Council added 22 biosphere reserves to the WNBR which now consists of 553 biosphere reserves in 107 countries (with Malaysia and Syria as new countries).

15. The MAB Council approved extensions, changes in zonation and renaming of 4 biosphere reserves.

IX. Periodic review of biosphere reserves

16. The Council called on the Secretariat to prepare a list of pre-Seville (1995) sites and an assessment of sites which are unlikely to be re-designed to meet the Seville and MAP expectations for consideration of the next Council session.

X. Biosphere reserves as learning platforms and places for sustainable development – a progress report and a proposed draft resolution for the 35th session of the UNESCO General Conference

17. The ICC expressed support for the proposal as a potential for establishing MAB as a priority platform for DESD during 2010 – 2014 as well as the legacy with DESD beyond 2014.

XI. Michel Batisse Award for Biosphere Reserve Management

18. The 2009 winners presented their accomplishments: Ms. Boshra Salem spoke of her work in the Omayed Biosphere Reserve in Egypt and Mr. Yuriy Gorshkov from the Russian Federation showed a movie about his work in the Raifa Forest Biosphere Reserve. The Chairman awarded them certificates.

XII. Progress report on the review and updating of statutory documents of MAB and the WNBR

19. The Council gave general comments related to principles and policy and did not attempt detail re-drafting to the texts.

20. The Council requested the Secretariat to prepare up-to-date versions of the three documents for the 22nd Council session / Revisions of the Statutory Framework of the WNBR as well as a document on the implementation of MAB and WNBR activities at the national level, including guidelines for establishing MAB National Committees.

XIII. Future Directions for MAB ecosystem-related and other cross-cutting activities

21. Council members and one Observer Delegate suggested modifications to the draft text prepared by the Secretariat. The final text of the statement intended to serve as a mission statement for the MAB Programme is in Annex 1.

XIV. Capacity Building

A. ERAIET (Regional Post-graduate Training School on Integrated Management of Tropical Forests and Lands)

22. The Council expressed support for ERAIFT noting the significant progress since its launch ten years ago at the University of Kinshasa.

23. The French version of the “World Atlas of Great Apes and their conservation” by Dr. Sabrina Krief was officially launched. This is regarded as a contribution to promote the “International Year of Gorillas (2009).”

B. MAB Young Scientists Award Scheme

24. The Council discussed modifications to the criteria adopted by the 14th session of the MAB-ICC in 1996.

25. The MAB-ICC decided the following:

- The age limit is fixed at 40 years of age from 35 before
- The proposed research projects have to be undertaken in a designated biosphere reserve or a potential biosphere reserve
- Each MAB National Committee can submit two candidates (reduced from three)

26. In countries where MAB National Committees do not exist or are not fully functional, the selection will be done by the Commission for UNESCO of the country.

27. The MAB-ICC also recommended that the selection process ensure a gender balance.

C. Other opportunities

28. The Council requested the Secretariat to look into other collaborative programmes for capacity building in sustainable development research and development in biosphere reserve that would generate case study materials for the last five years of the DESD like South – South networks and training of universities.

XV. MAB and WNBR contributions to the UNESCO Strategy for Action on Climate Change

29. The Chair invited the Delegate of the UK to show a ten minute BBC documentary, “Rising Tides” featuring current and potential climate change impacts in the North Devon (UK) and Malindi (Kenya) Biosphere Reserves.

30. The Council then discussed the document entitled “Proposal for the creation of a global network of island and coastal biosphere reserve contributing to action on climate change and sustainable development.

31. The opportunity to position biosphere reserves as partners and learning platforms in the implementation of national climate change strategies as well as the UNESCO Strategy for Action in Climate Change was emphasized.

XVI. Date and Venue of the 22nd session of the MAB-ICC

32. The Council expressed support for the need to convene its sessions annually; that during a UNESCO biennium at least one of the sessions be at UNESCO headquarters in Paris.

33. The 22nd session of the Council will be in 2010 and the Secretariat will propose before 1 December 2009 the dates.

34. The Secretariat will explore with interested Member States the possibility of convening the 23th session of ICC in 2011 at a suitable venue away from UNESCO Headquarters in Paris and linking that Session to potential activities to commemorate the 40th anniversary of the MAB Programme in 1971.

XVII. Closure of the Session

35. The Chair closed the session at 15:00 Friday May 29.