

**Madrid Declaration
on the UNESCO Man and the Biosphere (MAB) Programme
and the World Network of Biosphere Reserves (WNBR)**

We the representatives of UNESCO Member States, biosphere reserves, and co-operating public and private sector institutions and civil society organizations gathered at the 3rd World Congress of Biosphere Reserves and the 20th session of the International Co-ordinating Council (ICC) of the MAB Programme during 4-8 February 2008 in Madrid, Spain,

Concerned by the increasing loss of biodiversity, the effects of climate change and demographic changes and convinced of the urgent need to maintain a balance between nature conservation, environmental protection and the social, economic, technical and scientific developments that constitute globalization,

Recalling that the sixteenth session of the General Conference of UNESCO (1970) launched the programme on Man and the Biosphere (MAB) as a long-term intergovernmental and interdisciplinary programme and that since its inception MAB has focused its research, training, monitoring, education and pilot projects on the search for trade-offs and balance between, on the one hand, the human responsibility to maintain nature and conserve biodiversity and, on the other hand, the human need to use natural resources for enhancing social and economic well-being of peoples,

Recognizing that the concept of biosphere reserves developed within the framework of the MAB programme has resulted, since 1976, in the designation of biosphere reserves, currently numbering 531 sites in 105 countries, that are dedicated to address and learn from efforts to achieve and maintain a balance between the conservation of nature and biodiversity and the socio-economic development of places and peoples,

Appreciating the participatory and good management approaches that allow multiple stakeholders and partners to be an integral part of biosphere reserves,

Acknowledging that the WNBR created under MAB constitutes a global network of places that Member States of UNESCO can prioritize as locations for testing the applications of sustainable development principles and practices dedicated to establishing and maintaining context-specific and mutually beneficial relationships between nature and biodiversity conservation and socio-economic well-being of people,

Cognizant of the fact that the biosphere reserve concept and its applications have, thanks to global reviews and exchange of experience and lessons learned as communicated during the first (Minsk, 1983) and the second (Seville, 1995) Congresses of Biosphere Reserves, been refined and consolidated with respect to its significance to sustainable development at local and regional levels within UNESCO Member States,

Referring to the Statutory Framework of the Seville Strategy that outlines the importance of legally constituted core areas devoted to long-term protection according to the conservation objectives of the biosphere reserves, and of sufficient size to meet these objectives,

Expressing gratitude to the Ministry of Environment of the Government of Spain for its continuous support to biosphere reserves under the framework of the UNESCO Man and the Biosphere Programme, including by hosting the 20th session of the MAB ICC and the 3rd

World Congress of Biosphere Reserves (February 2008) convened in Madrid, Spain, with the purpose to reflect upon the experience of implementing the Seville Strategy and the Statutory Framework for the World Network of Biosphere Reserves adopted by UNESCO in 1995,

Convinced of the need to strengthen and support the contributions of MAB and biosphere reserve networks to sustainable development in the context of new and emerging challenges and to document, disseminate and share lessons learned in the context of the UN Decade of Education for Sustainable Development (UNDESD; 2005-2014):

- *Urge* UNESCO, its Member States and Secretariat, to make optimum use of biosphere reserves for the promotion of sustainable development and the WNBR and associated regional, sub-regional and national networks as forums for exchange of experience and lessons learned during the UNDESD;
 - Encourage UNESCO Member States to establish MAB National Committees where they do not yet exist;
 - *Commit* the Secretariat to review the implementation of the Seville Strategy and make recommendations to improve the working practices of the MAB Programme at the global, regional, national and local levels in order to enhance its relevance to sustainable development policies, planning and implementation at all levels;
 - *Call upon* UNESCO to actively pursue coherent approaches and strengthen cooperation within the UN system, particularly with UNDP and UNEP with the aim to enable Member States to use biosphere reserves as places to demonstrate and promote the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and other UN targets, such as the commitment of Parties to the Conventions dealing with biological diversity, combating desertification and climate change;
 - *Call upon* UNESCO and international funds for the creation of an innovative mechanism for sustainable funding aimed at reinforcing biosphere reserves, the MAB Programme as well as the regional networks and promote the implementation of the Madrid Action Plan;
 - *Capitalize upon* the potential for action of biosphere reserves to address new challenges such as the loss of traditional knowledge and cultural diversity, demography, loss of arable land, climate change, biodiversity and sustainable development; and, in particular, as places for investments and innovation to mitigate and adapt to climate change, to promote the greater use of renewable energy in sustainable futures of rural and urban areas and to enhance and capitalize upon ecosystem services and products in sustainable development for human well-being;
 - *Build* effective partnerships in biosphere reserves through cooperation among all governmental levels, private sector, mass media, civil society organizations, indigenous and local communities, research, monitoring and education centers and other such institutions for the implementation of the Madrid Action Plan during 2008-2013;
 - *Encourage* cooperation between the MAB Programme and the other Intergovernmental Scientific Programmes of UNESCO, the World Heritage Convention and the One UN pilots;
 - *Promote* MAB and WNBR as global, regional and national fora for involving people and generating new ideas to solve local problems and targeted actions to seek a dynamic and mutually beneficial relationship between People and the Biosphere.
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