

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

**International Coordinating Council
of the Man and the Biosphere (MAB) Programme**

Seventeenth Session

UNESCO Headquarters, Paris,
Room XI (Fontenoy Building)
18-22 March 2002

FINAL REPORT

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Convening of the Session

1. The seventeenth session of the International Coordinating Council (ICC) for the Programme on Man and the Biosphere (MAB) was held at UNESCO Headquarters in Paris from 18-22 March 2002.

2. Participants included representatives of the following members of the ICC elected by the UNESCO General Conference: Angola, Argentina, Austria, Azerbaijan, Benin, Cameroon, China, Colombia, Costa Rica, Cuba, Czech Republic, Denmark, Dominican Republic, France, Hungary, Indonesia, Japan, Madagascar, Malaysia, Malawi, Mexico, Morocco, Nigeria, Norway, Oman, Portugal, Qatar, Slovakia, South Africa, Spain, Switzerland, Thailand, Tunisia.

3. In addition, observers from the following Member States were present: Australia, Brazil, Chile, Croatia, Ecuador, Egypt, Equatorial Guinea, Finland, Germany, Iceland, Italy, Kuwait, Nicaragua, Poland, Republic of Korea, Russian Federation, Saudi Arabia, Ukraine, United Kingdom, United Republic of Tanzania, Yemen. Representatives of Palestine and the United States of America were also present.

4. The Convention on Wetlands (Ramsar), the International Council for Science (ICSU), the International Social Science Council (ISSC), the International Union of Biological Sciences (IUBS), the World Conservation Union (IUCN) and the Mountain Research Initiative (MRI) were also present. The full list of participants is presented as Annex 1 to this report.

1.2 Opening of the Session

5. Mr Mohamed Ayyad of Egypt, the outgoing Chairperson of the MAB ICC, opened the Council session by inviting Mr Walter Erdelen, Assistant Director-General for Natural Sciences and representative of the UNESCO Director-General, to deliver his opening speech.

6. Mr Erdelen welcomed the delegates on behalf of the UNESCO Director-General, Mr Koïchiro Matsuura. He highlighted the importance of this MAB Council session just a few months before the

World Summit on Sustainable Development in Johannesburg (South Africa), which will be a forward-looking event by focusing on sustainable development in an action-oriented and integrated manner. Mr Erdelen felt that the MAB Programme was well placed for actively implementing the outcomes of the Summit as it is drawing together the natural and the social sciences, and as its World Network of Biosphere Reserves is a tool to develop mechanisms for the rational use and conservation of biodiversity, as key elements in managing the biosphere. He was proud to announce that 52 new biosphere reserves had been added to the World Network of Biosphere Reserves since the 16th session of the MAB Council bringing the total number of biosphere reserves to 411 in 94 countries. Increasing transboundary collaboration on biosphere reserves' management and the UNDP "Equator Initiative" which may award funding to particularly successful biosphere reserves in the field of poverty alleviation and biodiversity conservation were additional positive signs for the success of the World Network of Biosphere Reserves.

7. Mr Erdelen also informed the Council that the 31st session of the General Conference decided to orient UNESCO's programme activities during the medium-term period 2002-2007 around three strategic axes: the promotion of universality, the protection of diversity, and the sharing of knowledge, which were also inherent in the MAB Programme. As regards UNESCO's Science Sector, the General Conference had decided to give a principal priority to the topic "Water Resources and Supporting Ecosystems" in the current biennium (2002-2003). The MAB Programme is expected to play a key role in this respect, in close collaboration with the International Hydrological Programme, but also with UNESCO's other science programmes: the International Geological Correlation Programme, the Intergovernmental Oceanographic Commission and the programme Management of Social Transformations. With regard to forging partnerships with multilateral environmental agreements, Mr Erdelen noted that MAB had made good progress with the Convention on Biological Diversity, the Convention to Combat Desertification, the Ramsar Convention on wetlands, and the Convention on Migratory Species. He concluded his speech by reiterating the important role of the Council in providing guidance for the future development of MAB, in particular in the light of the implementation of the "Seville+5" Recommendations for biosphere reserves, and the major events that are occurring in 2002, such as the Johannesburg Summit, the International Year of Mountains, and the International Year of Ecotourism.

1.3 Report of the Chairperson of the Outgoing Bureau

8. Mr Mohamed Ayyad welcomed the Council members as well as the observers and representatives from international organizations. He was proud to announce that in 2001, the World Network of Biosphere Reserves had been awarded the prestigious Prince of Asturias Prize for Concord. This event coincided also with the 30th Anniversary of the MAB Programme, which was celebrated by a large number of MAB National Committees in all regions of the world, thus raising general awareness about the Programme. Mr Ayyad then reported on the results and recommendations of the Steering Group of the Five Chairpersons of UNESCO's scientific programmes, which he had attended in May and in October 2001 in his capacity as Chairperson of the MAB Bureau. The Steering Group had noted good progress in accomplishing interdisciplinary work among the five programmes and had recommended to the Director-General that UNESCO give particular importance to the theme "sustainability", in particular with regard to the World Summit on Sustainable Development, which will be of strategic importance for the five programmes as it will determine future international priorities for sustainable development.

9. Mr Ayyad further informed the Council on the two MAB Bureau meetings which had been held in March and in September 2001 respectively. The Bureau reviewed regional activities and discussed the forging of synergies with the biodiversity and desertification conventions and activities embedded in the International Year of Mountains, on which the Council would have the

opportunity to deliberate in the course of the current MAB Council session. The Bureau also paid attention to the follow-up actions to the decisions of the Council for the recommendations on the “Seville+5” meeting on biosphere reserves, and examined and approved 52 new biosphere reserve proposals and two substantial extensions to already existing sites. Moreover, the Bureau examined the periodic review reports of biosphere reserves designated over ten years ago. Given the success of the MAB Young Scientists Award Scheme, Mr Ayyad reported that the MAB Secretariat was currently establishing a special account to raise extra-budgetary funds for the Award Scheme. As jury of the Sultan Qaboos Prize for Environmental Preservation, the MAB Bureau had decided to award the 2001 Prize to the “Chad Association of Volunteers for the Protection of the Environment” in recognition of its reforestation and soil conservation activities. Finally, as Mr Ayyad retired from the Chair since his country was no longer member of the Council, he reported also on the ArabMAB network where several new biosphere reserve nominations were currently in preparation. The ArabMAB Council had decided to create a thematic programme devoted to the rehabilitation of degraded ecosystems in arid zones using biosphere reserves and similar sites for pilot projects. In concluding, the outgoing Chairperson of the MAB Council paid tribute to the two senior staff members, Uladzimir Sauchanka and Malcolm Hadley, who had retired in 2001 and expressed concern that the international MAB Secretariat now suffered from low levels of financial and human resources.

1.4 Election of the Bureau

10. The Council elected the following officers to constitute the Bureau of the MAB Council:

Chairperson:

Mr Driss Fassi (Morocco)

Vice-chairpersons:

Mr Olabiyi J. Yai (Benin)

Mr Jan Kvet (Czech Republic) (temporarily with Ms Eva Jelinkova as Rapporteur)

Mr Maximo Aquino (Dominican Republic, elected for 2002)

Mr Alfredo Reca (Argentina, elected for 2003)

Mr Robert Barbault (France)

Mr Kunio Iwatsuki (Japan)

1.5 Organization of the Council Session

11. The Council adopted its agenda as follows:

1. Opening of the session
2. Report of the outgoing Chairperson
3. Election of the Bureau of the MAB Council
4. Adoption of the agenda and timetable
5. Report of the Secretary on programmes and activities since MAB-ICC 16
6. Presentation of national reports
7. Cooperation with international partners
8. Presentation of regional networks
9. World Network of Biosphere Reserves
 - 9.1 Periodic review
 - 9.2 “Seville+5” recommendations
 - 9.3 New biosphere reserves
10. MAB and major events
 - 10.1 “Rio+10” in 2002

- 10.2 International Year of Mountains (2002)
- 10.3 International Year of Ecotourism (2002)
- 10.4 World Parks Congress in 2003
11. Water and ecosystems
12. Urban systems
13. MAB capacity-building and training
 - 13.1 CBD-UNESCO Global Initiative on Biodiversity Education and Public Awareness
 - 13.2 UNCCD-UNESCO environmental education on desertification
 - 13.3 Ecotechnie chairs
 - 13.4 Regional Post-Graduate Training School on Integrated Management of Tropical Forests (ERAIFT)
14. Information and communication policy
15. Evaluation of the MAB Programme
16. Date and venue of MAB-ICC 18
17. Other matters
18. Adoption of the report
19. Closure of the session

1.6 Report of the Secretary on Programmes and Activities since ICC-16

12. Mr Peter Bridgewater, Secretary of the MAB Council, presented his report to the Council about the activities implemented during the intersessional period (November 2000-February 2002). His oral report is appended as Annex 2 to this report.

2. REPORTS ON NATIONAL ACTIVITIES

13. A large number of the Council Members as well as some observers presented written and/or oral reports on their major activities undertaken since the 16th session of the MAB Council: Angola, Argentina, Austria, Azerbaijan, China, Costa Rica, Cuba, Denmark, Egypt, France, Germany, Indonesia, Japan, Morocco, Oman, South Africa, Spain, Switzerland, Thailand, Tunisia. One council member suggested that in the future national reports be submitted in a written form and that only issues requiring discussions be dealt with verbally.

2.1 World Network of Biosphere Reserves

14. All speakers stressed the importance of biosphere reserves for MAB related activities. The Seville Strategy was often mentioned as the main tool for implementing the biosphere reserve concept. In this context, many countries expressed their wish to establish new biosphere reserves, and several projects for future proposals were presented. The delegate of Germany mentioned the size of biosphere reserves as a very important factor for proper functioning. He used the term of 'critical mass' that would enable the site management to dispose of all necessary financial and human resources for the sustainable management of biosphere reserves. The delegate of Spain developed further the idea of large-size biosphere reserves when presenting the future biosphere reserve of the "Cordillera Cantábrica", similar in conception to the large biosphere reserves in Brazil (such as Mata Atlântica Biosphere Reserve). He added that it was being implemented in a step-by-step manner and that it would include already designated biosphere reserves as well as new areas. The delegates of Austria, Denmark and Morocco also emphasized the aspect of large-scale biosphere reserves.

15. Several delegates gave special attention to transboundary biosphere reserves, as they were important in the field of peace-keeping and as motors for international cooperation between

neighbouring countries. Several delegates recognized the role of biosphere reserves as model sites for implementing interdisciplinary research projects including socio-economic aspects. These projects could help to better understand pressures, such as on ecosystems through human population growth, poverty or loss of biodiversity. Projects in these sites could successfully involve funding from the donor community such as from the Global Environment Facility (GEF), the European Union or bilateral cooperations. Some delegates highlighted the importance of links from rural to urban or peri-urban ecosystems that are reflected in some biosphere reserves. Many countries felt that biosphere reserves provided useful linkages to the conventions on biological diversity and desertification.

2.2 Regional and International Cooperation

16. In their country reports, several delegates expressed their strong support to regional networks, such as AfriMAB, ArabMAB, EABRN, EuroMAB, IberoMAB, and SeaBRNET, as well as to interregional networks, such as REDBIOS and the South-South Cooperation Programme. Some Members referred to the possibility of setting up a Caribbean Network. It was agreed that this issue would be discussed at the IberoMAB meeting in Rio de Janeiro in June 2002. Bilateral cooperation was mentioned in particular with regard to North-South cooperation. Many delegates were glad to announce a large number of publications, newsletters, posters, and videos, which they had produced through their MAB National Committees and some of which were exhibited at the MAB Council. Finally, many countries had established websites on individual biosphere reserves, on MAB National Committees or on regional activities.

2.3 Capacity-Building

17. The involvement of local people in capacity building activities was seen as crucial by many delegates, and they expressed the need to receive additional support for training workshops, seminars and other related courses. A particular highlight during the Council session was the presence of 20 school children from the Mont Ventoux Biosphere Reserve (France) who had prepared an exhibit and who made a presentation on the importance of this site in their region. The Council Chairperson felt that these children were the best ‘Ambassadors’ of the MAB Programme for future generations. The MAB Young Scientists Award Scheme received full support from most delegates who required an eventual increase of grants to be made available by UNESCO. In this vein, the Secretariat was invited to explore the securing of extrabudgetary resources to increase the number of awards accordingly.

2.4 MAB National Committees

18. Many delegates stressed the importance of MAB National Committees for the implementation of the MAB Programme in their countries. Some delegates were glad to report on their well functioning and multidisciplinary MAB National Committees, while others hoped to improve their committees so as to fully respond to the multidisciplinary aspects of the MAB Programme of today by addressing socio-economic and sustainable development issues at the same level as nature conservation and research aspects, thus influencing state and regional environmental policies. Several delegates reported on their national activities in celebrating the 30th Anniversary of the MAB Programme. The Council welcomed the many individual activities of MAB National Committees and encouraged future actions in order to consolidate their work.

3. COOPERATION WITH INTERNATIONAL PARTNERS

19. After the Chairman introduced this agenda item, he invited representatives of international partners to make interventions if they wished so. The representative of the Convention on Wetlands

(Ramsar, 1971) presented the Ramsar-MAB Programme of Joint Work 2002-2003, as elaborated by the Ramsar and MAB secretariats and agreed upon by Ramsar's Standing Committee in December 2001. He recalled the background to the elaboration of this programme, i.e. recommendations by the MAB ICC at its 16th session, illustrated the programme's objectives, structure and expected outputs, and concluded by inviting the Council to consider the programme for adoption. The representative of the International Union of Biological Sciences (IUBS) gave a presentation on the longstanding cooperation between MAB and IUBS, recalling its three-fold focus: sustainable development, global change and biodiversity. He concluded by stressing the importance that future collaboration continues concentrating on integrated biodiversity science, and education and public awareness. Finally, a presentation was made on the International Programme on Biosphere and Society, which is a joint venture of UNESCO-MAB and Columbia University in New York City (USA).

20. In the ensuing discussions, some Council Members called for continued and increased cooperation between MAB and UNEP, IGBP, Diversitas, Ramsar and others. One participant said it was extremely important to look at MAB's major trademarks in this context, two of which are the concept of biosphere reserves and MAB's capacity building, education and participatory approaches. The Secretary reiterated the importance of cooperation with international partners at a time of diminishing resources so as to produce better synergy effects. He invited delegates to consider the proposed programme of joint work with Ramsar as contained in their working documentation and to take a decision on whether it can be adopted as is or if it would need to be modified prior to its endorsement. He suggested that the Council deals with this particular decision under Agenda item 11, on water and ecosystems.

4. REGIONAL NETWORKS

21. The Council noted the progress reports on MAB Networks as presented by their representatives:

- **ArabMAB** by the Secretary of ArabMAB;
- **AfriMAB** by the representative of Angola;
- **EABRN (East Asian Biosphere Reserve Network), Southeast Asian Biosphere Reserve Net (SeaBRNET) and Southeast Asia Ecotones** by the Deputy Chairperson of MAB Thailand;
- **IberoMAB** by the Chairperson of MAB Spain;
- **EuroMAB** by the Deputy Chairperson of MAB Czech Republic;
- **REDBIOS** introduced by the Chairperson of MAB Morocco and presented by the MAB Secretariat.

22. More detailed information about the progress, achievements and plans of actions for these regional or subregional and thematic MAB networks are included in Annex 3 of this report. The Chairperson of the Council thanked the representatives for their informative reports and expressed his satisfaction at the variety and the dynamics which characterized these networks.

5. WORLD NETWORK OF BIOSPHERE RESERVES

5.1 Periodic Review of Biosphere Reserves

23. The Secretariat recalled that the principle of the periodic review had been adopted in Article 9 of the Statutory Framework and had been launched in 1997 with the dispatch by the Secretariat of a form designed to help the authorities concerned draft the periodic review report. The Council noted that to date 121 files had been examined by the Advisory Committee, whose recommendations had

been endorsed by the Council or its Bureau. Lastly, the Council also noted that another 17 files had been received since the last session of the Advisory Committee. Introducing document SC-02/CONF.201/3, the Secretariat recalled first of all the principles on which the process was based, namely that the periodic review rested on voluntary participation by Member States and did not aim at penalizing sites but at encouraging them to function better with regard to the criteria set out in Article 4 of the Statutory Framework.

24. The Council, at its sixteenth session, while noting that the process had had many positive effects, had requested the Bureau to examine certain issues in greater depth, in particular the issue of the future of sites that did not satisfy the criteria, or did so imperfectly.

25. The Bureau's recommendations concerned in particular:

- how to get Member States to better appreciate the importance, for the credibility of the Network as a whole, of respecting the biosphere reserve criteria for each site;
- the possibility of drawing up a 'red list' of sites that did not meet the criteria or had not complied with the periodic review requirement;
- the desirability and possible means of making the Statutory Framework more enforceable.

26. The members of the Council all agreed that the credibility of the World Network depended on the quality of its component biosphere reserves and that everything should be done to ensure that biosphere reserves were model sites fulfilling the three functions and meeting the criteria established at Seville. The question mainly concerned sites designated during the first few years, when the criteria were less clear-cut, particularly in regard to development and the participation of local communities. The Secretariat's efforts should therefore be continued, on a case by case basis, and stepped up to give the 'old' sites all the support that they might need, within the limits, however, of its diminishing human and budgetary reserves. On the other hand, sites deemed of particular interest for the application of the concept should be given all the necessary publicity to serve as examples to others.

27. The members of the Council did not retain the previous Bureau's suggestion to draw up a 'red list', which was not provided for in the Statutory Framework and which was considered to be contrary to the spirit of the process, since it had a very negative connotation related in particular to the lists of endangered species and reflected a coercive line of reasoning. On the other hand, the Council recommended that the MABNet site be used more systematically to show sites that had complied with the periodic review requirement.

28. The proposal to establish a category of Network-associated sites, that even though they did not fulfil all the functions, would be able to participate in research and monitoring activities in the context of regional networks, for example, was also not accepted by the Council. The general opinion was that the introduction of a new category would make messages confused, did not really meet a methodological need and in reality had no other purpose than to deal with the problem raised by 'old' sites that did not comply with the existing criteria.

29. Lastly, the Council rejected the proposal, also considered by the Bureau, to strengthen the powers of the Statutory Framework by drawing up a binding legal instrument. It was thought that such an instrument would run into many difficulties, including funding, its applicability on territories under national sovereignty or in federal states, etc. The Council considered above all that MAB would not necessarily gain in visibility, but would certainly lose some of its flexibility, one of its major assets. The Council therefore recommended that the provisions of the Statutory

Framework and the Seville Strategy be fully exploited and that guidelines be drafted to assist Member States in their implementation.

30. The observer for the United Kingdom informed the Council that, after a study covering all the biosphere reserves in her country, the decision had been taken to withdraw from the Network the following four biosphere reserves: St. Kilda, Claish Moss, Isle of Rhum and Caerlawaerock. That decision had been conveyed to the Secretariat. She added that the other biosphere reserves would be completely reorganized to meet the criteria. The Council took note of the decision and congratulated the United Kingdom on the positive results of its periodic review.

5.2 “Seville+5” Recommendations

31. The Secretariat recalled the background to the “Seville+5” process and the resulting recommendations, which corresponded to actions at the site level, at the level of MAB National Committees and at the regional level. These actions had been largely reported upon in national and regional reports submitted to the Council. The Secretariat then informed the Council about actions it had taken to follow up the implementation of the “Seville+5” recommendations.

32. *A.1 The MAB Secretariat should coordinate with the Secretariats of the relevant multilateral environmental agreements (e.g. the Convention on Biological Diversity) to promote biosphere reserves as instruments for their implementation at the national level, as possible through MAB National Committees. Guidelines should be prepared to harmonize research initiatives concerning the different conventions, for implementation at the national level.*

33. The MAB Council agreed that one of the most effective means of encouraging countries to use biosphere reserves to implement the multilateral agreements would be to prepare a short publication on “Biosphere reserves and their relation to the environmental conventions”. The Council agreed that this should be jointly prepared and published with UNEP-WCMC. The document would also serve to help countries streamline their work to implement these agreements and thereby fulfil UNEP’s mandate in promoting better environmental governance. The MAB Council encouraged the publication of this document in time for the World Summit on Sustainable Development to take place in Johannesburg (South Africa) in August-September 2002.

34. *A.2 The implementation of the BRIM programme should be accelerated, including explicit recognition of the need to integrate the social sciences in its activities. In this connection the BRIM meeting foreseen in Kiev (2001) should be used inter alia to generate inputs for the Conference of the European ministers of environment to be held in 2002.*

35. The Secretariat introduced the Secretary’s note on future developments of the Biosphere Reserve Integrated Monitoring (BRIM) programme and reported on progress made in relation to the implementation of BRIM since ICC 16; the latter included the organization of workshops, establishment of partnerships with relevant programmes and initiatives, preliminary work on methodologies and indicators and on information and data management, work on analytical and communication tools (namely GIS), and fund-raising. A Special Meeting on BRIM, which was preceded by a workshop on social monitoring in biosphere reserves, allowed for recommendations to be formulated on, *inter alia*: the incorporation of social sciences and social monitoring; priorities and modalities for key partnerships; the role of biosphere reserves and their World Network in relation to integrated monitoring; functions and expected outputs of BRIM; and a work plan for BRIM in 2002-2003. The Council was invited to consider endorsing the recommendations on future developments of BRIM and in particular to adopt the proposed work plan for its implementation. The Council was also invited to indicate possible priorities among the proposed activities and to call for the mobilization of the extra funding needed for the successful implementation of the work plan.

36. The work of the MAB Secretariat in providing both financial and technical support, in collaboration with the American Association for the Advancement of Science (AAAS), to the 1st regional consultation on BRIM taking place in West Africa (27-29 November 2001, Yaoundé, Cameroon) was acknowledged and taken as an example for stressing the importance of the implementation of other consultations at the regional level (e.g. Eastern and Southern Africa). In addition, the role of the various actors (the Secretariat, the National Committees, etc.) was further clarified in the implementation of such (i.e. regional-level) and other (i.e. national- and site-level) BRIM initiatives.

37. The integration of the human dimension in monitoring was seen as a highly positive issue, as stressed by the reporting of the outcomes of the workshop on social monitoring (2-3 September 2001, Rome, Italy) and by the encouragement for the proposed initiatives, especially pilot projects. The work plan received overall consensus and appreciation for the progress made, upon clarifications made on the selection criteria of sites – open, transparent and participatory – and by stressing the role of communication. The issue of the allocation of resources was also raised so as to prioritize practical, and not theoretical, initiatives.

38. The Secretariat remarked that regular reports would be made to the Bureau on the implementation of the work plan, specifically on the interaction with National Committees but also with the regional networks.

39. The Council formally endorsed the recommendations and the work plan of BRIM as contained in document SC-02/CONF.201/9. A final comment was made by the representative of Colombia on defining very clearly the kind of information that is needed within the World Network in order to be able to evaluate results of the work made, and in this sense it was recommended that a set of indicators for performing regional evaluations should be used. He formally invited the BRIM programme, for example, to take stock of the rich work on indicators conducted and related knowledge built in Latin America and the Caribbean. He also called for the need to harmonize indicators for the purpose of multiple reporting (to the Convention on Wetlands, MAB, etc.), and to this end MABNet could be used in a more practical fashion, in order to have a one-time picture of the state-of-the-art of the different MAB regions.

40. *A.3 The Secretariat should advise and act as a broker for Member States and groups of Member States/regional networks to help them to identify and submit proposals to potential donors/financing agencies and investors for strengthening biosphere reserves and, as appropriate, national biosphere reserve networks and regional networks. Special attention should be given to developing project which serve to implement the recommendations of the periodic review.*

41. The MAB Council recalled that in March 2001, its Bureau had requested the Secretariat to formulate a ‘planned strategy’ on its role as an adviser and broker for projects on biosphere reserves consisting of a set of ‘guiding principles’ and a list of potential regional/inter-regional initiatives. The MAB Council examined the draft text for this planned strategy and made some comments, notably on: the need to ensure maximum information flow between countries and the Secretariat on plans for projects on biosphere reserves; the need to promote UNESCO’s role as a catalyst to build partnerships with, for example, the development banks and the private sector; and on the importance of ensuring that projects highlight the integrated MAB approach under UNESCO’s mandate in education, science and culture. The Council invited countries to contact the Secretariat to update and complete the list of projects by region. The Council requested the Secretariat to publish this text as amended as a small brochure and/or as a web page in the MABNet with hyperlinks to the funding agencies/organizations concerned.

42. *A.4 The MAB Secretariat should facilitate the establishment of a task force, including biosphere reserve managers, and local specialists, on developing quality economies at site level.*

43. In response to this recommendation, the Secretariat referred to document SC-02/Conf.201/INF.5, which contained a copy of MAB Circular Letter No. 2/2002, announcing the establishment of the Task Force and the organization of its first meeting in conjunction with the MAB-ICC on 21 March 2002. This document also outlined the draft agenda for this meeting, the composition of the Task Force, the draft Terms of Reference for the Task Force, as well as a background document providing an overview of some of the key issues related to the deliberations of the Task Force and a discussion paper on labelling.

44. The Chairperson stressed the importance of the issue of promoting the development of quality economies in biosphere reserves while suggesting that the in-depth discussion on the item could wait until the Task Force meeting on 21 March, which in addition to the Task Force Members would be open for all MAB Delegates, Observers and interested experts. Costa Rica welcomed the establishment of the Task Force as a highly timely initiative mentioning that the issue of labelling of biosphere reserve goods and services was indeed pertinent to biosphere reserves in her country where private land owners now could market their products using their labels. The Chairperson closed the discussion on this recommendation by inviting everybody to attend the Task Force meeting, the outcomes of which would be reported back to the Council on 22 March and subsequently be available on the new MABNet section dedicated to the Task Force (see Annex 4: Summary of the first meeting of the Task Force on the Development of Quality Economies in Biosphere Reserves).

45. *A.5 The regional networks should undertake, with the assistance of the Secretariat, a survey and critical analysis of existing biosphere reserve coordination structures in the coming months, with the objective of developing a set of guidelines on the creation, roles and functioning of such structures. The Secretariat should ensure that the Advisory Committee should pay particular attention to criterion 7(c) of Article 4 on coordination mechanisms when evaluating new biosphere reserve proposals.*

46. The Council noted that this question had been discussed by the previous Bureau, which had requested the Secretariat to undertake a survey and critical analysis of existing biosphere reserve structures, identify those of particular interest and, as a second step, organize a meeting to compare experiences and elaborate some guidelines on the issue. The Council also noted that the Secretariat had carried out a study of a number of sites on the basis of existing documentation on the subject, which is often far from complete; while the study had enabled the identification of the main issues to be clarified, it had produced only very preliminary results. As a result, it was proposed to send a circular letter to MAB Committees inviting them to encourage biosphere reserves to take part in the study and to identify experts in legal and institutional matters who might contribute to the work.

47. The Council considered that it was a complex, but essential issue, which required the strong mobilization of MAB National Committees and regional networks. In particular, the IberoMAB Network was planning to consider the issue at its forthcoming meeting in Brazil in June 2002, and would send the information gathered to the MAB Secretariat so that it could be made available to other regions. The MABNet site should facilitate the dissemination of information on existing experience.

48. Consequently, the Secretariat would proceed as proposed in document SC-02/CONF.201/4, and would also use work carried out within the various regional networks, whose participation would be systematically requested.

49. **A.6** *To improve follow-up of recommendations on the periodic review, the ICC and the Secretariat should ensure that information on measures taken should be provided in time for the following meeting of the Advisory Committee.*

50. The Council noted that this has been done systematically.

51. **B.1 (first part)** *The MAB Secretariat should develop a concise, user-friendly, practical guide to the Seville Strategy and the Statutory Framework to be translated into as many languages as possible with the assistance of the National Committees. The guide should highlight the importance of sustainable development and cross-link the different goals and objectives both within and between the Seville Strategy and the Statutory Framework. It should also clarify the added values of biosphere reserves and their products to social development and provide a clearer definition of MAB services, products and tools for sustainable development for national decision makers.*

52. The MAB Council noted that the Secretariat's response to this should be more ambitious. In fact, the Council noted that several needs had to be taken into account to fulfil this recommendation: one concerning the legal and policy aspects of the Seville Strategy and the Statutory Framework at different levels, another for the practical, technical methodologies for putting them into practice in the field; and also the need for simple, didactic material to explain the objectives and functions of biosphere reserves and the World Network. Material to meet these needs would have to be adapted as necessary to the different regions. One way of moving forward would be for the Secretariat to prepare draft materials which could then be reviewed and tested out by the MAB Bureau, and a number of Permanent Delegations and MAB National Committees. Due consideration would be made of the IUCN categories of protected areas according to management objectives.

53. The Council considered that the preparation of this material would be key components of the MAB communications strategy and wished to take up these and related "Seville+5" recommendations under the agenda item devoted to this topic (see paragraphs 100 to 106 below).

54. **B.1 (second part)** *In addition, the Secretariat should use the results of the survey on the implementation of the Seville Strategy indicators to create a web-accessible database of information about each biosphere reserve and encourage non-respondents to provide their information/reply.*

55. The Council noted that certain data obtained from the survey had been incorporated into the Biosphere Reserve Directory on the MABNet for each biosphere reserve concerned. Also, within the framework of the BRIM Programme, new research and monitoring categories had been created on abiotic, biodiversity, socio-economic and integrated monitoring, with a research engine to facilitate use by MABNet visitors.

56. **B.2** *The Secretariat should help Member States and/or regional networks to devise their own guidelines for identifying the stakeholders concerned for the three zones and the three functions of biosphere reserves. Such guidelines should be aimed at facilitating stakeholder participation in the practical management of biosphere reserves.*

57. The MAB Council considered that the work undertaken in response to Recommendation A.5 on biosphere reserve coordination structures could indeed also serve to fulfil this recommendation, but that emphasis should also been given here to the provision of extra-budgetary funding in order to help Member States to contact and involve all stakeholders in the planning and management of biosphere reserves.

58. **B.3 (first part)** *The MAB Secretariat should, in cooperation with biosphere reserve coordinators and MAB national committees, develop online and hard copy tutorials on the concept of biosphere reserves and the Seville Strategy and disseminate through appropriate processes such as workshops, favouring a participatory approach and integrating indigenous knowledge and appropriate communication technologies.*

59. The need for such ‘tutorial’ material for use by biosphere reserve managers had been highlighted at a number of regional meetings, for example the IberoMAB meeting in September 2001. The proposals for the “Practical Guide to MAB” were aimed at meeting this need.

60. The MAB Council considered that, in line with the discussion on B.1 above, the response to this recommendation should be debated under the Agenda item on the MAB information and communications strategy (see paragraphs 100 to 106 below).

61. **B.3 (second part)** *The MAB Secretariat should also help MAB National Committees to develop and implement integrated courses in biodiversity conservation and resource management particularly in biosphere reserves with emphasis on the ecosystem approach.*

62. The MAB Council noted the guidelines being prepared by the MAB Secretariat on the implementation of the Ecosystem Approach in biosphere reserves would be of particular relevance and utility in this context. In addition, the MAB Council recognized that the technical capacity building activities of MAB, such as the work of the Ecole régionale post-universitaire d’aménagement intégré des forêts tropicales (ERAIFT) (the regional graduate school on integrated forest management for French-speaking Africa), were of particular relevance to fulfilling this recommendation. The Council therefore asked that this recommendation be addressed under the Agenda item on capacity building.

63. **B.4** *The MAB Secretariat should provide support for the compilation, dissemination and critical analysis of national experiences of the review process, possibly through workshops. The MAB Secretariat, including UNESCO’s regional offices, should also provide support, when requested, for the preparation of reviews and implementation of recommendations.*

64. The MAB Council noted it had already discussed this question under the Agenda item on the periodic review (see paragraphs 23 to 30).

65. **C.1** *The MAB Secretariat should use existing overviews of the different conventions of relevance to the MAB programme to prepare guidelines on their implementation in the framework of MAB. These should be translated in as many different languages as possible, with assistance from the MAB National Committees.*

66. The Council recognized that this recommendation was the mirror image of Recommendation A.1 and suggested it be taken up under the document on “Biosphere reserves and their relation to the environmental conventions”.

5.3 New Biosphere Reserves: Results of the Meeting of the MAB Bureau

67. The Council took note that its Bureau had met on several occasions during its 17th session and had approved two new biosphere reserves. The text of the recommendations of the MAB Bureau on these is presented in the following paragraphs.

68. Recommendations of the MAB Bureau on the biosphere reserve proposals from Poland and Ukraine: The Bureau recalled that the biosphere reserve proposals from Poland and Ukraine had

been re-submitted with additional information and documentation in response to the recommendations of the MAB Bureau at its meeting in September 2001. For this, as had been requested, the Secretariat had provided support to joint meetings to refine these two proposals as a first step in the process of creating a West Polesie Transboundary Biosphere Reserve, to which an area in neighbouring Belarus could be added at a later date. The Bureau noted that at this juncture, the Polish and the Ukraine MAB National Committees were requesting approval of their respective sites as biosphere reserves in their own right, and would request transboundary biosphere reserve status for the combined sites once an agreement had been signed to this effect by the Ministers of the Environment of the two countries, expected later in 2002.

69. The Bureau welcomed this phased approach to creating a transboundary biosphere reserve (TBR), which was consistent with the recommendations for the establishment and management of TBRs adopted by the MAB Council in 2000. The Bureau requested the Secretariat to continue to provide support for and monitor the progress in developing this potential TBR following these recommendations. It suggested that the experience, including the difficulties, in setting up this TBR be documented and shared with other countries interested in creating TBRs.

70. The Bureau therefore examined the two proposals in their own right as part of the process in establishing a future TBR. The Bureau's decisions and recommendations on these were as follows:

71. **West Polesie Biosphere Reserve, Poland:** The Bureau approved this site as a biosphere reserve. It recommended the Polish authorities to:

- further develop the coordination mechanism for the site;
- consider extending the transition area to encompass the town of Wlodawa, in which several centres involved in the coordination of the biosphere reserve were located;
- provide the Secretariat with any new information regarding the protected status of territories forming the core areas and buffer zones within the context of the ongoing revision of protected areas in the region;
- continue work towards the establishment of the potential West Polesie TBR with Ukraine and Belarus, in line with the recommendations for TBRs adopted by the MAB Council.

72. **Shatskyi Biosphere Reserve, Ukraine:** The Bureau approved this site as a biosphere reserve. It recommended the Ukraine authorities to:

- consider extending the transition area to the South-West to the international border with Poland and to the north to the international border with Belarus in order to form a more complete unit for future transboundary cooperation within the framework of the planned action to extend the limits of the Shatskyi National Nature Park and the revision of its management plan to improve zoning as a biosphere reserve;
- continue work towards the establishment of the potential West Polesie TBR with Poland and Belarus, in line with the recommendations for TBRs adopted by the MAB Council.

73. The Council noted that with the addition of these two sites and the withdrawal of four sites by the United Kingdom in response to the periodic review, the World Network of Biosphere Reserves was made up of 409 sites in 94 countries.

6. MAB AND MAJOR EVENTS

74. With reference to document SC-02/CONF.201/INF.3, the MAB Secretariat informed the Council about several world events of direct relevance to the MAB Programme due to take place in 2002 and 2003.

6.1 “Rio+10” in 2002

75. The Council recalled that the “Rio+10” meeting, entitled the World Summit on Sustainable Development (WSSD), would take place in Johannesburg (South Africa) from 26 August-4 September 2002. The representative of South Africa briefly described some of the broad principles of his country in approaching this Summit, for example: the overarching theme on poverty eradication; the fact that the Summit offered a unique and real opportunity to mobilize political commitment to meet the challenges of achieving higher levels of prosperity while sustaining the resources of the planet; that the Rio Declaration on Environment and Development and Agenda 21 remained clear and valid; and that the outcomes of the Summit should be underpinned by an enhanced integration of the ‘three pillars’ of sustainable development, i.e. economic development, social development and environmental management.

76. The Council noted that UNESCO had created a special Task Force consisting of the Assistant Directors-General of the various UNESCO sectors to prepare input to the WSSD. It welcomed the presentation by the Task Force Coordinator, Mr A. Szöllösi-Nagy, Deputy Assistant Director of the Natural Sciences Sector, on this issue. He recalled that UNESCO’s input had been described to the Permanent Delegations to UNESCO at a meeting on 7 March 2002 chaired by the Director-General. In sum, UNESCO’s input would consist of a position paper indicating how UNESCO was addressing the topics identified by the Chair of the second preparatory committee meeting, and also the organization of a number of side events and products.

77. The Council fully recognized that only the governments themselves could actually influence the preparations and the outcomes of the WSSD. However, there was a general expression of concern that UNESCO, and particularly the MAB Programme with biosphere reserves as its operational tool, were not receiving the visibility and recognition they deserved in this major international debate on sustainable development. Many Council members indicated their surprise and disappointment that the MAB Programme’s thirty years of experience in reflecting upon, testing out and demonstrating concrete approaches to sustainable development had not even been mentioned in the proposals for UNESCO’s input to the WSSD. This disappointment was all the more acute in that the timing of events made it difficult to change the situation. Council members indicated that they would bring this expression of concern to the attention of the Executive Board in May 2002.

78. In seeking a means to positively provide better visibility for the MAB Programme and biosphere reserves, the Council recommended that the Secretariat should undertake the following tasks to the best of its ability:

- organize a side event at the third meeting of the WSSD Preparatory Committee taking place in New York at the end of March 2002 on how the MAB Programme can practically contribute to attaining sustainable development;
- draft a paper in close consultation with the MAB Bureau outlining some concrete proposals which Member States could then use in their interventions at the meetings of the Preparatory Committee and the World Summit itself. Topics could include the way in which biosphere reserves offer suitable instruments for addressing many of the

objectives of Agenda 21, their role in poverty eradication, their contribution to the debate on water and ecosystems, etc.;

- work in cooperation with the South African authorities to organize a field trip for WSSD delegates to a biosphere reserve in the vicinity of Johannesburg.

6.2 International Year of Mountains

79. The Council took note of the United Nations General Assembly resolution A/RES/53/24, which proclaimed the year 2002 as the International Year of Mountains and whose aim is to promote sustainable mountain development. UNESCO-MAB had produced a CD-ROM entitled “UNESCO in the Mountains of the World” with UNEP’s World Conservation Monitoring Centre informing *inter alia* on mountain biosphere reserves, as well as an educational mountain calendar which was produced in collaboration with the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation and the UNESCO Associated Schools Project Network. The Council also took note of the joint UNESCO-IUCN initiative on the “importance of natural sacred sites (mountains) for biodiversity conservation” and a planned expert workshop on this topic which will be held at the Xishuangbanna Tropical Botany Garden of the Chinese Academy of Sciences in Kunming (China) during the current biennium. Moreover, the Council took note of UNESCO-MAB’s inputs to the Bishkek Global Mountain Summit which will take place in Bishkek (Kyrgyzstan) from 29 October-1 November 2002 as the main event of the Year. Finally, the Council welcomed the “Mountain Research Initiative”, a joint endeavour of the International Geosphere-Biosphere Programme (IGBP), the International Human Dimension Programme on Global Change (IHDP) and the Global Terrestrial Observing System (GTOS), which will be carried out jointly with UNESCO-MAB to study the impact of global change on mountain environments and mountain communities using biosphere reserves in mountains. Colombia suggested that its mountain biosphere reserves be included in the study.

6.3 International Year of Ecotourism

80. In introducing this item, the MAB Secretariat referred to document SC-02/CONF.201/INF.3 and presented some of the key features of the International Year of Ecotourism (IYE), the World Ecotourism Summit in Quebec, Canada, and the International Guidelines for Sustainable Tourism developed under the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD). It was recalled that MAB Circular Letter No. 6/2001 had covered these items in some detail. The Council underlined the importance of ecotourism, and more broadly, sustainable tourism as a potential element in promoting the development of quality economies in biosphere reserves. However, it cautioned that ecotourism, as practised, at times did not meet sustainability criteria or provided net benefits to local communities. The importance of the IYE and the Summit was therefore highlighted as an occasion to take stock of, and analyze more critically, the effects of ecotourism and the tools for promoting sustainable tourism.

81. The Council welcomed that a UNESCO-MAB delegation would attend the Summit in Quebec and charged its Bureau with preparing a MAB Council statement for the attention of the Summit. This statement would strongly emphasize the role of biosphere reserves as pilot sites for developing sound ecotourism practices, and refer to the International Guidelines for Sustainable Development drafted under the CBD. On the issue of preparing specific MAB ecotourism guidelines for biosphere reserves, the Council stressed that it would be useful to analyze existing tourism guidelines, before taking a decision on the matter. This could be on issues that the Task Force on the Development of Quality Economies in Biosphere Reserves eventually could look into.

6.4 World Parks Congress

82. The Council noted that this Congress, organized by IUCN, would be taking place in 2003 in Durban, South Africa, with the theme “Benefits beyond boundaries”. It welcomed the presentation by the representative of the World Conservation Union, describing the objectives, content and expected outcomes of this ten-year event, and the way in which the MAB Programme and the World Network of Biosphere Reserves could contribute. The Council welcomed that the MAB Secretary had been requested to organize one of the seven workshop streams on the topic of “Linkages in the Landscape/Seascape” and encouraged the Secretariat to ensure a suitable contribution of MAB and biosphere reserves not only under this workshop theme but also for other parts of the Congress programme.

7. WATER AND ECOSYSTEMS

83. The MAB Secretariat introduced document SC-02/CONF.201/6 on water and ecosystems, which informed on joint collaboration of the MAB Programme and the International Hydrological Programme (IHP) on the topic “Land-water interactions: towards sustainable development” following a decision of the UNESCO General Conference at its 31st session that the Science Sector focus on the principal priority “Freshwater and Supporting Ecosystems” during the biennium 2002-2003. The MAB Secretariat also informed the Council on MAB’s collaboration with its other sister programmes, the International Geological Correlation Programme (IGCP), the Intergovernmental Oceanographic Commission (IOC), and the programme Management of Social Transformation (MOST), on the same issue. The Secretary of the IHP Council made a statement expressing his programme’s keen wish to forge close collaboration with MAB in this vein. He explained that for administrative and budgetary reasons, \$0.7 million of funding from the MAB Programme had been included under the “Main Line of Action: II.2.1.3. ‘Land-water interactions: towards sustainable management’” of the IHP budget, but that these funds were clearly the responsibility of and remained under the control of MAB. Delegations welcomed the clarification.

84. Many Council members including the representative of ArabMAB strongly welcomed collaboration among UNESCO’s science programmes on water and ecosystems, and insisted that such integrated and inter-disciplinary approaches were needed to resolve water conflicts. The Council felt that biosphere reserves were particularly useful laboratory and pilot sites in this respect and that concrete projects and actions should be implemented in wetlands, drylands and mountain environments. The Council endorsed further cooperation with the Ramsar Convention and invited the MAB Secretariat to start the implementation of the Programme of Joint Work.

8. URBAN SYSTEMS

85. In introducing this item, the Secretariat draw the Council’s attention to document SC-02/CONF.201/10 entitled Urban Systems, which highlights the operations of the MAB Ad Hoc Working Group to Explore the Application of the Biosphere Reserve Concept to Urban Areas and their Hinterlands (the MAB Urban Group). The mandate of this group was outlined together with some of its activities and partnerships developed with other organizations and institutions active on urban issues, such as UNU/IAS, ICSU-SCOPE, WHO and Columbia University in New York City. In accordance with its terms of reference, the MAB Urban Group had been established for an initial two-year period, and the Council was subsequently asked to consider extending the Group for another two years (October 2002-September 2004).

86. The Chairperson stressed that there had been an interesting development in the issue of linking the biosphere reserve concept and urban issues within the programme reflecting the global trends of urbanization and associated sustainability challenges. In connection with agreeing to

extending the MAB Urban Group up to September 2004, the Council stressed that the Group should focus on priority research and policy issues, such as water issues, and conduct its business in a transdisciplinary fashion in close partnership with relevant UNESCO programmes, in particular MOST, as well as other organizations. The Council also welcomed the initiative of the São Paulo City Green Belt Biosphere Reserve to undertake a case study on the interactions between the biosphere reserve and the ‘mega’ city, as its lessons learned could be useful to a large number of cities and biosphere reserves around the world.

9. MAB CAPACITY-BUILDING AND TRAINING

9.1 MAB Young Scientists Awards

87. The Council supported the proposal by the Secretariat as outlined in document SC-02/CONF.201/7 to seek to establish a “MAB Young Scientists Award Endowment Fund” with the purpose of raising additional financial resources for the Awards and charged its Bureau to collaborate with the Secretariat for this purpose. The Council wished that the initiative would be successful.

9.2 CBD-UNESCO Global Initiative on Biodiversity Education and Public Awareness

88. The representative of the Secretariat informed the Council that in 2000 the Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) (the Convention’s governing body) had formally asked UNESCO to assist the CBD to develop a Global Initiative on Biodiversity Communication, Education and Public Awareness (CEPA). As a result of this collaboration between the Convention and UNESCO’s Division of Ecological Sciences and the MAB Secretariat, a strategy on biodiversity CEPA and a draft work plan were developed, both of which will be formally considered by the Convention’s governing body at its sixth meeting in The Hague in April 2002. He said that this was an example of how the expertise and experience of UNESCO-MAB can be used for policy applications and for the benefit of other constituencies in addition to the MAB constituency itself. He concluded by informing the Council that the Secretary of MAB will be representing UNESCO at the above-mentioned meeting and that, should Council Members have comments on the proposed strategy and work plan, the Secretary of MAB stood ready to transmit those comments to the governing body of the Convention.

89. While the Council had no particular comment on this sub-item of the agenda, one delegate stated that while the CBD has been world-wide welcomed, including its CEPA dimension, it is important to ensure an increasingly complete and high quality documentation of the biodiversity that is to be found within biosphere reserves, which will prove particularly useful in the context of demonstration projects on biodiversity CEPA.

9.3 UNCCD-UNESCO Environmental Education on Desertification

90. The Council welcomed past collaboration between UNESCO-MAB and the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (CCD), such as on the preparation of environmental education material on desertification, and requested that such collaboration also be continued in the future. The Council also welcomed the organization of the “International UNESCO-MAB Workshop on Desertification: Rehabilitation of Degraded Drylands and Biosphere Reserves”, which will be held in Aleppo (Syria) from 2-3 May 2002, and which could serve as a springboard for collaborative MAB research on dryland rehabilitation. The Council further endorsed a proposed workshop on traditional knowledge and environmental education to combat desertification which will be held in the Republic of Kalmykia (Russian Federation) in 2003. It also endorsed the thematic network on the rehabilitation of degraded ecosystems under the umbrella of ArabMAB, as

well as the preparation of a new project on the “Sustainable Management of Marginal Drylands” which is currently elaborated by UNESCO-MAB, the United Nations University (UNU) and the International Center for Agricultural Research in the Dry Areas (ICARDA). Finally, the Council welcomed the proposal that one focus of MAB Young Scientists Awards should be in the fields of desertification and biodiversity in the drylands, and noted that due consideration be given also to drylands and combating desertification activities in southern Africa as well as in other desertification-affected areas of the world.

9.4 Ecotechnie Chairs, Biosphere Reserve Management and Eco-Job Training Centres

91. The Council took note with satisfaction of the development of the UNESCO-Cousteau Ecotechnie Programme and the fact that ten Ecotechnie Chairs had been established at universities around the World. The Council proposed that the Workshop organized with all the Ecotechnie Chairs at UNESCO on 22-25 March 2002 would provide a valuable opportunity to mobilize the Chairs and their networks in favour of MAB, and invited the Secretariat to provide it with a report from the Workshop outlining concrete proposals in this regard.

92. As regards Biosphere Reserve Management and Eco-Job Training Centres, the Council welcomed the proposal as outlined in document SC-02/CONF.201/7 that a feasibility study be undertaken on the issue of Biosphere Reserve Management Training Centres. However, the Council stressed that this was largely a financial issue. Also, the Council noted that a number of existing training opportunities could benefit biosphere reserve managers etc. and that it may not therefore be necessary to establish separate structures for this purpose. This being said, if additional financial resources could be raised, the Council considered that dedicated Biosphere Reserve Management Centres might be quite useful if carefully designed to meet national and possibly regional needs. There was full agreement that biosphere reserve managers do require access to sufficient training in a number of relevant disciplines.

93. On the topic of Eco-Job Training Centres, the Council expressed general support for the concept and stressed that it could be an important tool for promoting quality economies and employment in biosphere reserves, as exemplified in the São Paulo City Green Belt Biosphere Reserve where six Eco-Job Training Centres were in operation, partly financed through a United Nations Foundation (UNF) grant.

9.5 Regional Post-Graduate Training School on Integrated Management of Tropical Forests (ERAIFT)

94. The Council endorsed the document presented by the Secretariat concerning the status of the regional project ERAIFT and the progress achieved since the establishment of the School at the University of Kinshasa (Democratic Republic of the Congo) in April 1999 with UNDP support. The Council welcomed the results obtained by ERAIFT in such a short time: the graduation of the first group of Master’s degree (DESS) students in 2001, and the recognition by the African Madagascar Council for Higher Education (CAMES) of the DESS (Master’s) diploma of ERAIFT in December 2001.

95. The Council made the following recommendations to the Secretariat and the International Steering Committee of ERAIFT with a view to strengthening the project: (a) to foster cooperation between ERAIFT and other UNESCO capacity-building programmes, in particular the UNITWIN/UNESCO Chairs network and the UNESCO-Cousteau Ecotechnics network, and the International Biosphere and Society Programme (IBSP) managed jointly by MAB and Columbia University (United States of America); (b) to facilitate the establishment of partnerships and university exchange networks and/or co-sponsorship involving ERAIFT with universities and

research centres in Africa and world-wide; (c) to pursue the study aimed at endowing ERAIFT with a sustainable long-term financial basis; (d) to prepare an information and awareness-building kit on ERAIFT for transmission to the African Ministerial Conference on the Environment (AMCEN) and the Conference of Ministers of Research and Development in West Africa and Central Africa (COMRED/AOC) .

96. The Council voiced sincere thanks to UNDP, France, Belgium, the Netherlands, Canada, the USAID/CARPE project (USA) and the European Union for their support to ERAIFT, and expressed the wish that other donors might join UNESCO in its efforts to continue that MAB training initiative, which had got off the ground so successfully in Africa.

9.6 Capacity-building and Extra-budgetary Projects

97. A member of the Secretariat presented the project on “Asia Pacific Co-operation for the Sustainable Use of Renewable Resources in Biosphere Reserves and Similarly Managed Areas” (ASPACO). The project, which lasts from 2001 to 2003, aims at increasing local capabilities for research, training and management of sustainable use of renewable resources, and the conservation of mangrove ecosystems and environmental awareness-raising among local populations. The project is financed under a funds-in-trust agreement by Japan and is implemented in co-operation with MAB-Japan, the United Nations University and ISME. The MAB Secretariat at HQs has the overall co-ordination of project’s activities. UNESCO’s Regional Offices in Apia, Beijing, Jakarta, and Montevideo are implementing the individual projects.

98. Another example of a project with a strong building capacity component and with MAB as the executing agency is the UNESCO-MAB/UNEP-GEF regional project on “Building Scientific and Technical capacity for Effective Management and Sustainable Use of Biodiversity in Dryland Biosphere Reserves in West Africa”. This project concerns six biosphere reserves in the following countries: Benin (Pendjari); Burkina Faso (Mare aux Hippopotames); Côte d’Ivoire (Comoé); Mali (Boucle de Baoulé); Niger ‘W’ Region) and Senegal (Niokola Koba). The full project phase should start in January 2003 for a period of four years with a budget totalling US \$4 million. The Global Environment Facility (GEF) is the main funding source, with UNEP (United Nations Environment Programme) as the implementing agency and UNESCO-MAB as the executing agency. The project aims at building scientific and technical capacity for conserving and sustainably using the biodiversity of six West African biosphere reserves consisting mainly of savannah ecosystems. Emphasis will be laid on involving the different stakeholders in the management of these biosphere reserves and on using the AfriMAB regional network for exchanging scientific and technical information and strengthening local and national capacities.

99. The Council welcomed these projects very much and encouraged the Secretariat to establish more projects of this kind in order to enable Member States to improve living conditions for local populations in coastal zones and arid lands.

10. INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION POLICY

100. The Council took note of the contents of document SC-02/CONF.201/8, in which stress was laid on the difficulty the Secretariat had in pursuing a true information and communication policy in view of its increasingly limited resources, and in particular the retirement of the Professional staff member in charge of publications in the Division of Ecological Sciences. In that connection, it was proposed that the focus should be on the exchange of experience and technical information, whereas information activities, in particular those aimed at the broad public, should take place as a matter of priority with regard to biosphere reserves, under the guidance of MAB National Committees.

101. The Secretariat also made a brief presentation of the MABNet site (www.unesco.org/mab) in order to familiarize the members of the Council with its use. The Secretariat stressed the importance of appealing for contributions from biosphere reserves and MAB Committees in order to enrich the site, and of enhancing the contents of the *Biosphere Reserves Bulletin* in order to make it a genuine tool for information exchange within the network.

102. The Council congratulated the Secretariat on the quality and richness of the MABNet site. It agreed that the Internet was a powerful communication tool, but stressed that not all countries had access to the Internet, and that in any case, the Internet could not replace print publications, which should continue. In that connection, the use of recycled paper should be encouraged.

103. With respect to publications, as had been suggested during the debate on the “Seville+5” recommendations, the Secretariat would prepare a ‘methodology handbook’ to be used as a set of guidelines for the implementation of the Statutory Framework of the Seville Strategy, the text of which would be submitted to the MAB National Committees for their comments, in order to ensure that the document addressed the needs expressed in appropriate fashion. In addition, and also in line with the “Seville+5” recommendations, a very short brochure or set of ‘practical guidelines’ would be produced for decision-makers in order to explain the concept of biosphere reserves. MAB should also improve its links with scientific publications and journals.

104. Concerning public information, attention was drawn to the need to get through to local inhabitants, who were often very isolated and did not have access to written materials, in order to help them to understand what biosphere reserves were all about, either by enlisting the help of local communicators or by using local radio.

105. Finally, suggestions were made on how to communicate with young people, and reference was made in that connection to the Northern Vosges du Nord/Pfälzerwald Internet site on Little MAB (<http://www.biosphere-vosges-pfaelzerwald.org/>). The idea of a mascot for all MAB Committees was put forward.

106. A unanimous tribute was paid to the work of Malcolm Hadley, who had devoted a large part of his career to the MAB Programme, the dissemination of scientific information, and the MAB publications programme. The Council was also unanimous in regretting the fact that his post had been abolished, and stressed the need to find an alternative solution. Similarly, an appeal was launched for new sources of funding for the temporary post of the member of the Division in charge of the MABNet site, which had just expired. The Council expressly asked its Chairperson to convey to the Director-General of UNESCO its grave concern regarding the decrease in the number of posts within the Secretariat.

11. EVALUATION OF THE MAB PROGRAMME

107. The Secretariat introduced document SC-02/CONF.201/5, which presented the main conclusions of the external evaluation of the MAB Programme carried out during the biennium. The document also contained the recommendations of the evaluators. The Council noted that the evaluation would then be transmitted, along with the Council’s own comments, to the forthcoming session of the Executive Board. The Council took note of the contents of the document and of the fact that it constituted more a general overview of the MAB Programme than a genuine evaluation. The objective in particular was to make maximum use of the results of the survey carried out in preparation for “Seville+5”, and to examine the contribution of biosphere reserves to conservation, sustainable development, research and monitoring.

108. The Council considered that, in view of the number of recommendations and of the resources needed to complement many of them, it would be desirable to set priorities for the follow-up to such recommendations.

109. More specifically, the Council discussed the need for closer links between the MAB Programme and other international research programmes, such as that on global change, and the possibility of doing this by harnessing the potential of biosphere reserves for field trials. The recommendation of the evaluators concerning the establishment of ‘a flexible advisory panel to reinforce linkages with the scientific community’ did not achieve consensus in the Council, which was of the view that more flexible ways of involving scientists in programme execution should be found. The Council suggested instead that with the aid of MAB National Committees, a register be drawn up of experts in the various disciplines concerned, who could be called on an *ad hoc* basis when needed. In this connection, special emphasis should be laid on the social sciences. Comments were also made on the question of the dissemination of scientific information: the main purpose of the programme should be the production of know-how and expertise, which would take precedence over the dissemination of such knowledge.

12. DATE AND VENUE OF ICC-18

110. The Secretary recalled that the interval between ICC 16 and 17 was quite short in order to bring in synchrony the meetings of the UNESCO General Conference and ICC 17. He suggested that the Council meet in March 2004, with the precise dates to be identified by the Bureau and circulated to Members of Council far in advance. According to normal practice, the Council decided that ICC 18 would take place in Paris.

13. ANY OTHER MATTERS

Working languages of ICC sessions

111. The representative of Qatar expressed his wish that future meetings of ICC include interpretation into the Arabic language, which is recognized as a UN language. He also mentioned the importance of discussing in detail the issue of funds and resources of MAB. As pointed out by the Secretariat on several occasions during ICC 17, while there is much work to be done, resources are limited. In light of this, he wondered if the Secretariat had a plan to overcome this particular problem and how the Secretariat intended to evaluate the needs of the regional networks in order to establish priority for implementation. He suggested that priority be given to those projects that are self-funding.

112. As regards the issue of languages, the Secretary of MAB suggested that the Bureau examine the costs of expanding interpretation to include Arabic and all other UNESCO languages that are presently not represented. On the question of financial reporting, he informed the Council that the financial decision on the budget for MAB were made by the General Conference and that, at the risk of providing duplication of documents on financial aspects of MAB that are made available at meetings of the UNESCO General Conference and relevant meetings of the Executive Board, the MAB Secretariat would also make available this information at subsequent meetings of the MAB Council.

113. One member of the Council observed that, in addition to the explanations provided by the Secretary on the budgetary allocations for MAB, it would be valuable for the Council to have a discussion on budgetary priorities for the biennium 2004-2005. To this observation, the Secretary reiterated the need for continued communication between country delegations attending the MAB

Council sessions and those attending the UNESCO General Conference and Executive Board sessions.

Quality Economies

114. The Chairperson invited Mr Engelbert Ruoss, Switzerland to present a short report of the results of the first meeting of the Task Force on the Development of Quality Economies in Biosphere Reserves held on 21 March, during which he had been elected Task Force Chair. In his intervention Mr Ruoss acknowledged with thanks the contributions of all the meeting participants and the Secretariat's efforts in preparing the meeting. The summary report of the Chair can be found in Annex 4.

Meeting of the ICC chairman with the Director-General of UNESCO

115. The Chair of the MAB Council, Mr Driss Fassi, reported on his meeting with the Director-General on 21 March 2002. He indicated that Member States were highly supportive of the MAB Programme and in particular the work of the World Network of Biosphere Reserves. He reported on the Council's concern on the reduction in human and financial resources, and the identified need for an information officer. Above all, he brought attention to the fact that the MAB Council had indicated its surprise and disappointment that MAB, the very UNESCO Programme which had 30 years of experience in reflecting upon, testing out and demonstrating approaches to sustainable development, had not even been mentioned in UNESCO's input to the WSSD. Mr Fassi then informed the Director-General that he intended to address a letter to the delegates of the Third Preparatory Committee of the WSSD drawing their attention to the work of the MAB Programme and the World Network of Biosphere Reserves, illustrated by the recent publication *Biosphere Reserves: Special Places for People and Nature*.

116. The Council agreed that this letter would indeed be a more effective means of raising visibility at the Preparatory Committee III than the side-event it had proposed earlier. It thanked Mr Fassi for this effort and encouraged him to proceed with this letter.

14. ADOPTION OF THE REPORT

117. Upon agreement on the amendments that were proposed by some Members of the Council, the Council adopted the report of its 17th meeting.

15. CLOSURE OF THE SESSION

118. The representative of Cuba -- whom in this was joined by several Members of the Council -- expressed her satisfaction for the way in which the meeting was organized and conducted, and thanked the Secretariat, the Chairperson and all Council Members for their contribution.

119. In his concluding remarks, the Chairperson stressed the important intellectual and programmatic progress made by this Council Session, the unique character and important applications of future work on, in particular, urban and quality economy-related issues, and the overall contribution of MAB in its whole life up to now. After thanking the outgoing Chair and Bureau, all Members of the Council, the Secretariat and the interpreters for the efforts made to ensure a successful Council meeting, the Chairperson closed the 17th MAB Council on 22 March 2002 at 13:00.

List of acronyms

AAAS: American Association for the Advancement of Science
AMCEN: African Ministerial Conference on the Environment
ASPACO: Asia Pacific Co-operation for the Sustainable Use of Renewable Resources in Biosphere Reserves and Similar Managed Areas
BRIM: Biosphere Reserve Integrated Monitoring
CAMES: *Conseil africain et malgache pour l'enseignement supérieur* (African Madagascar Council for Higher Education)
CARPE: Central African Regional Programme for the Environment
CBD: Convention on Biological Diversity
CCD: Convention to Combat Desertification
CEPA: Communication, Education and Public Awareness
COMRED: Conference of Ministers of Research and Development
COMRED/AOC: *Conférence des Ministres de la Recherche et du Développement en Afrique de l'Ouest et Centrale* (Conference of Ministers of Research and Development in West and Central Africa)
DESS: *Diplôme d'études supérieures spécialisées* (Diploma of Specialized Higher Education Studies)
EABRN: East Asian Biosphere Reserve Network
ERAIFT: *Ecole régionale post-universitaire d'aménagement intégré des forêts tropicales* (Regional Post-Graduate Training School on Integrated Management of Tropical Forests)
GEF: Global Environment Facility
GIS: Geographical Information System
GTOS: Global Terrestrial Observing System
HQ(s): Headquarters
IBSP: International Biosphere and Society Programme
ICARDA: International Center for Agricultural Research in the Dry Areas
ICC: International Coordinating Council
ICSU: International Council for Science
IGBP: International Geosphere-Biosphere Programme
IGCP: International Geological Correlation Programme
IHDP: International Human Dimension Programme on Global Change
IHP: International Hydrological Programme
IOC: Intergovernmental Oceanographic Commission
ISME: International Society for Mangrove Ecosystems
ISSC: International Social Science Council
IUBS: International Union of Biological Sciences
IUCN: World Conservation Union
IYE: International Year of Ecotourism
IYM: International Year of Mountains
MAB: Man and the Biosphere (Programme)
MAB ICC: International Coordinating Council of the Man and the Biosphere Programme
MOST: Management of Social Transformation
MRI: Mountain Research Initiative
REDBIOS: *Red del Atlántico Este de Reservas de la Biosfera* (Network of the East Atlantic Biosphere Reserves)
SCOPE: Scientific Committee on Problems of the Environment
SeaBRNET: Southeast Asian Biosphere Reserve Net
TBR: Transboundary Biosphere Reserve
UCEP: UNESCO Cousteau Ecotechnie Programme

UNCCD: United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification

UNDP: United Nations Development Programme

UNEP: United Nations Environment Programme

UNF: United Nations Foundation

UNITWIN: UNiversity TWINning (UNESCO Programme for university twinning and networking)

UNU/IAS: United Nations University/Institute for Advanced Studies

USAID: United States Agency for International Development

WHO: World Health Organization (UN)

WCMC: World Conservation Monitoring Centre

WSSD: World Summit on Sustainable Development

