 NETWORKS
The World Network of Biosphere Reserves is supported by different regional, sub-regional or thematic networks. These are as follows:

▶ The African Biosphere Reserves Network (AfriMAB) was created in 1996 and comprises 33 African countries.
▶ The ArabMAB Network was officially launched in 1997 and represents 18 Arab countries.
▶ The East Asian Biosphere Reserve Network was launched in 1994. Today, it consists of China, the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea, Japan, Kazakhstan, Mongolia, the Republic of Korea and the Russian Federation.
▶ EuroMAB is the network of biosphere reserves in Europe and North America. Created in 1987, it is the largest MAB Regional Network with 53 countries.
▶ The Ibero-American MAB Network (IberoMAB) was created in 1992. It comprises 22 countries from Latin American and the Caribbean, Spain and Portugal.
▶ The Pacific Mab and the Biosphere Network (PacificMAB) was created in 2006 and comprises the Federated States of Micronesia, Kiribati, Palau, Papua New Guinea, Samoa and Tonga.
▶ The South and Central Asia MAB Network (SACAM) was created in 2002 and comprises Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Iran, Kazakhstan, Maldives, Nepal, Pakistan and Sri Lanka.
▶ The Southeast Asian Biosphere Reserve Network (SeaBRNet) was created in 1996. Today, it comprises Cambodia, China, Indonesia, Japan, Laos, Thailand, Vietnam, Malaysia, Myanmar, Philippines, Thailand, and Viet Nam.
▶ The East Atlantic Biosphere Reserve Network (REDBIOS) was created in 1994. It comprises the Canary Islands (Spain), Cape Verde, Guinea Bissau, Madeira and Azores (Portugal), Mauritania, Morocco, Sao Tome and Principle, and Senegal.
▶ The World Network of Island and Coastal Biosphere Reserves was established in 2012 and comprises 22 countries. It aims to study, implement and disseminate island, marine and coastal strategies to preserve biodiversity and heritage, promote sustainable development, and adapt to and mitigate the effects of climate change.

PARTNERSHIPS
Meeting global challenges and creating sustainable and long term impacts is only possible through the collaborative work of a broad partnership. MAB works together with other UN agencies, international and national partners, different governments, NGOs, academia and the private sector, and promotes North-South and South-South cooperation. Examples of such partnership include the following:

UNESCO Category II International Centre on Mediterranean Biosphere Reserves, Two Coastlines United by their Culture and Nature. Funded by the Alberts Foundation, this first Category II Centre represents a collaboration between MAB Programme and the Spanish Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Environment and its Autonomous Organism for National Parks. It provides an excellent platform for cooperation on issues related to biosphere reserves for all countries concerned.

Great Apes Survival Project (GRASP) Partnership. This alliance brings together 95 partners, including United Nations agencies, great apes range states, non-range states, intergovernmental organizations, conservation organizations and private companies to lift the threat of imminent extinction faced by gorillas, chimpanzees, bonobos and orangutans. Several biosphere reserves are home to great apes.

Procter & Gamble supports the project ‘Strengthening of the Arganeraie Biosphere Reserve’ in Morocco.

CHIC Group (China) supports the Biosphere Integrated Rural Urbanization Programme in China. The programme promotes green economies based on integrated rural land consolidation with new agricultural projects, training of farmers and expansion of urbanized rural villages.

Biosphere Connections Partnership. In cooperation with the Global Airl ine coalition ‘Star Alliance’, this partnership works to support nature conservation and sustainable development.

Danone Waters/German Biosphere Reserves Partnership. This partnership provides financial support to selected projects that aim to improve or safeguard the quality of water and water bodies in Germany’s biosphere reserves.

EDUCATION AND CAPACITY-BUILDING
The MAB programme contributes to global efforts for education and capacity-building through workshops, training courses, educational programmes and partnerships with professional and educational institutions. Examples include the following:

Regional School on Integrated Management of Tropical Forests and Territories (ERAFT). Launched in 1999 at the University of Kinshasa (Democratic Republic of Congo), ERAFT trains some 30 specialists from francophone and lusophones countries in Africa each year.

Environmental management courses at the Technical University of Dresden (Germany). These courses are a collaborative initiative organized by UNESCO, the United Nations Environmental Programme and the German Federal Ministry for the Environment, Nature Conservation, Building and Nuclear Safety.

University Twinning and Networking Programme/UNESCO Chairs Programme. Nowadays, there are 47 UNESCO Chairs related to biosphere reserves and sustainable development.

The MAB Programme recognizes outstanding work in biosphere reserves through different awards:

MAB Young Scientists Award is granted annually to 10 young researchers in support of their research on ecosystems, natural resources and biodiversity.

UNESCO Sultan Qaboos Prize for Environmental Preservation recognizes outstanding contributions in the management or preservation of the environment, consistent with the policies, aims and objectives of UNESCO and in relation to the Organization’s programmes in this field.

Michel Batisse Award This award is presented at each MAB International Coordinating Council in memory of Dr Michel Batisse. It recognizes excellence in the management of biosphere reserves.

MAN AND THE BIOSPHERE PROGRAMME
Launched in 1971, UNESCO’s Man and the Biosphere Programme (MAB) is an Intergovernmental Scientific Programme that aims to establish a scientific basis for the improvement of relationships between people and their environments.

MAB’s work engages with the international development agenda and addresses challenges linked to scientific, environmental, societal and development issues in diverse ecosystems, from mountain regions to marine, coastal and island areas; from tropical forests to drylands and urban areas.

MAB combines the natural and social sciences, economics and education to improve human livelihoods and the equitable sharing of benefits, and to safeguard natural and managed ecosystems, thus promoting innovative approaches to economic development that are socially and culturally appropriate, and environmentally sustainable.

The MAB programme provides a unique platform for cooperation on research and development, capacity-building and networking to share information, knowledge and experience on three interlinked issues: biodiversity loss, climate change and sustainable development. It contributes not only to better understanding of the environment, but also promotes the involvement of science and scientists in policy development concerning the wise use of biological diversity.
UNESCO’s intergovernmental structure provides MAB with a framework to help national governments support the planning and implementation of research and training programmes with technical assistance and scientific advice.

Participating countries establish MAB National Committees that ensure maximum national participation in the international programme, defining and implementing each country’s activities. MAB currently operates through 138 National Committees established among the 195 Member States and nine Associate Members States of UNESCO.

The agenda of the MAB Programme is defined by its main governing body, the International Coordinating Council. The MAB Council consists of 34 Member States elected by UNESCO’s General Conference. The Council elects a chair and five vice-chairpersons from each of UNESCO’s geopolitical regions, one of which functions as a rapporteur. These constitute the MAB Bureau.

The MAB Secretariat is based at UNESCO’s Division of Ecological and Earth Sciences, and works closely with the different field offices around the world. Its staff members draw on expertise in many and varied disciplines.

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HOW DOES MAB WORK?

DOES MAB WORK?

THE WORLD NETWORK OF BIOSPHERE RESERVES

The World Network of Biosphere Reserves (WNBR) of the MAB Programme consists of a dynamic and interactive network of sites of excellence. It works to foster the harmonious integration of people and nature for sustainable development through participatory dialogue, knowledge sharing, poverty reduction, human well-being improvements, respect for cultural values and by improving society’s ability to cope with climate change. It promotes North–South and South–South collaboration and represents a unique tool for international cooperation through the exchange of experiences and know-how, capacity-building and the promotion of best practices.

The WNBR is a network of natural environments dedicated to interdisciplinary research, capacity-building, and management and experimentation with innovative combinations of economic, environmental and energy alternatives for sustainable development.


WHAT ARE BIOSPHERE RESERVES?

Biosphere reserves are areas comprising terrestrial, marine and coastal ecosystems. Each reserve promotes solutions reconciling the conservation of biodiversity with its sustainable use.

Biosphere reserves are nominated by national governments and remain under the sovereign jurisdiction of the states where they are located. Their status is internationally recognized.* Biosphere reserves are ‘Science for Sustainability support sites’ – special places for testing interdisciplinary approaches to understanding and managing changes and interactions between social and ecological systems, including conflict prevention and management of biodiversity.

Biosphere reserves have three interrelated zones that aim to fulfil three complementary and mutually reinforcing functions:

► The core area(s) comprises a strictly protected ecosystem that contributes to the conservation of landscapes, ecosystems, species and genetic variation.

► The buffer zone surrounds or adjoins the core area, and is used for activities compatible with sound ecological practices that can reinforce scientific research, monitoring, training and education.

► The transition area is the part of the reserve where the greatest activity is allowed, fostering economic and human development that can reinforce scientific research, monitoring, training and education.

The Madrid Action Plan (MAP) aimed to promote the three interrelated zones of a biosphere reserve, and to foster the harmonious integration of people and nature for sustainable development through participatory dialogue, knowledge sharing, poverty reduction, human well-being improvements, respect for cultural values and by improving society’s ability to cope with climate change.

ARE BIOSPHERE RESERVES?

SOME STATISTICS*

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ARE BIOSPHERE RESERVES?

SOME STATISTICS*

The total area covered by biosphere reserves around the world amounts to over 170,000,000 hectares.

* as of February 2014

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* For more information on the criteria necessary to qualify for designation as a biosphere reserve, please consult Article 4 of the Statutory Framework for the World Network of Biosphere Reserves.

There are 621 biosphere reserves in 117 countries, including 12 transboundary sites.

64
in 28 countries
in Africa

27
in 11 countries
in the Arab States

124
in 33 countries
in Asia and the Pacific

289
in 34 countries
in Europe and North America

117
in 21 countries
in Latin America and the Caribbean.

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