

Biosphere Reserve Action Plan Approved

The Action Plan for Biosphere Reserves, (BRs), approved at the Eighth Annual Meeting of the International Coordinating Council for the Man and the Biosphere Program, provides a general framework for activities from 1985-89. The following set of actions was identified as crucial for the initial two-year period – 1985-86 – and was offered as a priority guideline for governments and international organizations:

1. Setting up baseline inventories of species of fauna and flora and their present local uses (to provide the basis for further research, monitoring, and information activities).

2. Establishment of procedure for monitoring key biological parameters.

3. Preparation of a history of research, which specifies what has been carried out and includes a complete bibliography of relevant publications plus an analysis of the relationship with other ongoing pilot projects, national, or international MAB projects.

4. Establishment of a training/education program appropriate for local needs and conditions.

5. Preparation of a management plan that specifies the steps required to address the above points and to implement the ideals of biosphere reserves.

Given these minimum requirements for an effective biosphere reserve, wherever it may be located, the UNESCO Secretariat went on to identify priority actions from the Action Plan that will facilitate appropriate action by governments and other relevant institutions. These priority actions for the 1985-86 term are:

a) Scientific Committee: Establish a scientific committee of experts with representatives of IUCN, ICSU, and the MAB Secretariat, with terms of reference defined in consultation with the Bureau of the MAB-ICC. The two main tasks of this committee will be to oversee the implementation of the BR Action Plan and the evaluation and recommendation of new BR nominations.

b) Management Handbook. Prepare and publish a handbook on BR management, to include criteria and guidelines for selection and establishment of BRs, managerial requirements for BRs, and institutional arrangements for administration and management of BRs.

c) Biological Inventories. Establish and demonstrate methodology for inventories of plant and animal resources and their local uses. This would involve development of methodology for inventories, two or three demonstration inventories in BRs in different parts of the world, compilation of data on species in BRs, and promotion of biological inventories to be carried out in each BR.

d) Monitoring. Workshop to identify parameters of global significance that can be easily and inexpensively monitored on a long-term basis and to develop standardized, sound, and widely applicable methods for collecting and comparing data; publication and wide dissemination of results from the workshop for adoption and implementation in all BRs. Would include monitoring of status of endangered species, ecosystems under threat, a survey of human impacts in BRs, and indicators of environmental trends.

e) Information Network. Feasibility study on BR Information Network, to include development of a protocol for histories of research, mechanism for information exchange on *in situ*/*ex situ* conservation; methods for collecting and disseminating information of facilities available in BRs, analysis of structures of decentralized systems to deal with collection, storage,

synthesis, evaluation, and dissemination of knowledge; definition of potential users of the system; definition of mechanisms for spreading knowledge within the BR network, and means for promoting continuing professional relationship and exchange of people among BRs.

f) Research. Guidelines for promoting research in BRs, specifying appropriate methodologies (to promote comparison of research findings and exchange of knowledge); types of research projects that are particularly appropriate in BRs; ways and means of developing collaborative and comparative programs of research; how to promote more MAB-related research in BRs, and how to establish a research program suitable for the local conditions and requirements for research information.

g) Training and Education. Preparation of guidelines for developing training and education programs at all levels for BRs.

h) Management Planning. Preparation of model management plans for four BRs in various parts of the world, involving guidelines for preparing management plans based on FAO and IUCN models already existing but modified for specific BR requirements; workshops to be held in the BR to enable involvement of local BR manager researchers, and staff plus those from other BRs in the same country; and publication and wide dissemination of the model arrangement plans.

i) Traditional Use. Development of a pilot project on how development may be based on local knowledge and sustainable use of living resources, applying the information obtained by other relevant MAB projects to real problems on the ground. The project proposal then would be promoted to development agencies for funding.

j) Degraded Ecosystems. Development of pilot project on recovery of degraded ecosystems in, for example, the Sahel, based on knowledge obtained under MAB work in arid lands being applied to a particular biosphere to be selected. The project proposal would then be promoted to development agencies for funding.

k) Conservation Science. Support for 1985 conservation biology conference including publication of state-of-the-art volume on conservation biology, development of project for subsequent period.

l) Publicity. Preparation and distribution of a pamphlet on BRs designed for the general public and for people living within or around BRs. Published in English, French, Spanish (plus other languages by national MAB Committees.)