



Dresden Declaration on Biosphere Reserves and Climate Change

28 June 2011

We, the participants of the international conference "For life, for the future: Biosphere reserves and climate change", held in Dresden on 27 and 28 June 2011, issue the following declaration:

Climate change mitigation, adaptation to climate change and the conservation of biological diversity are among today's key environmental challenges. Rising to these challenges requires strong political commitment and decisive action worldwide. In many cases we already have the knowledge and technology to change our development path. We now have to mobilise our resources and creativity in order to further intensify action towards sustainable development - including changes in our behaviour.

The International Coordinating Council of the UNESCO "Man and the Biosphere" (MAB) Programme convened for the first time in 1971 and laid the foundations for a new type of conservation area - biosphere reserves. It declared the harmonious development of man and nature to be its key goal. The idea of biosphere reserves has met with growing approval worldwide and over the past four decades has become a great success. Biosphere reserves represent a global network of model regions in which sustainable forms of use and options for adaptation to changing ecological, economic and social conditions can be tested, involving all stakeholders.

The world network of over 560 biosphere reserves in more than 100 countries, established in the framework of the UNESCO MAB Programme, adds the wealth of experience gathered over 40 years in and with model regions for sustainable development to climate change mitigation and adaptation, and aims to make a substantial contribution to these processes as well as to the conservation of biological diversity. We expect current global climate protection measures to also satisfy the urgent necessities of biodiversity conservation and its sustainable use.

Since its establishment the MAB Programme has pursued innovative approaches in research, monitoring, education and capacity building, management and in implementing model projects. These approaches go far beyond nature conservation and are suitable as models for a sustainable way of life. Biosphere reserves are thus an important element of safeguarding a liveable earth for the future of generations to come.

Biosphere reserves are an effective instrument for mitigating climate change and serve as models for adaptation to the impacts of this change. This applies particularly in the domains of sustainable land use, green economies, safeguarding ecosystem services, energy efficiency and the use of renewable energies. Biosphere reserves are learning sites for sustainable development.



With reference to the goals of the Seville Strategy (1995) and the Madrid Action Plan (2008), the conference participants call on the States represented in the MAB Programme to give greater weight to biosphere reserves in their strategies on climate change mitigation and adaptation, and to transfer approaches developed in biosphere reserves to other regions.

On this basis we consider the following measures to be required:

At policy level in the Member States

- (1) Place greater focus on the capacities of the MAB Programme and biosphere reserves for mitigating and adapting to the impacts of climate change, and improve integrating their contributions into national and international climate strategies and policies,
- (2) Incorporate the idea of biosphere reserves into development cooperation to a greater degree, and support corresponding projects that link poverty eradication, biodiversity conservation and climate protection in developing countries,
- (3) Establish adequate legislative, administrative and institutional frameworks at national and/or local level for biosphere reserves, equip these with appropriate competences, and provide adequate funding and staff for the administration of biosphere reserves and their functions,
- (4) Further develop biosphere reserves as model regions for sustainable development, and deploy good practices and experience gained as widely as possible,
- (5) Support problem-oriented, interdisciplinary and applied research, monitoring and evaluation, including traditional knowledge, in relation to climate change and its impacts on biosphere reserves, and incorporate the outcomes of these activities into national and international research programmes and projects,
- (6) Support innovative economic instruments and activities that combine climate change mitigation and adaptation, with maintenance of the integrity of ecosystems and biodiversity as well as social development, including the needs of local and indigenous communities, in particular in the context of extraction of natural resources and the generation of energy,
- (7) Promote the role of land use in carbon sequestration, in particular in forests through implementing and assessing the voluntary carbon programme REDD+ in biosphere reserves, to improve learning about impacts, markets, and practices, as well as to develop improved methodologies and disseminate the lessons learned,
- (8) Promote more understandable communication of the concept of biosphere reserves and the processes required to that end.



At practical level in the biosphere reserves

- (9) Intensify efforts to develop innovative approaches for climate change mitigation and adaptation (including financing models), implement these approaches, adapt management plans accordingly and integrate these with existing sustainable development approaches, and use these to strengthen the regions,
- (10) Draw up and implement management plans to adapt to a changing climate, based on a vulnerability analysis, taking into account the conservation and sustainable use of biological diversity and involving the local population,
- (11) Integrate traditional, indigenous and local knowledge and modern scientific findings to strengthen climate change research,
- (12) Intensify efforts to use biosphere reserves as learning sites for sustainable development, that communicate how biodiversity conservation sustains the flow of ecosystem services and supports the creation of economic opportunities,
- (13) Further develop and reinforce international cooperation on sharing experience, effective methods, and joint projects - including in the framework of partnerships,
- (14) Develop and strengthen partnerships with the private sector in order to identify, develop and promote local, national and international markets for sustainably produced products and services, and to advance climate-friendly economic practices in these areas.

At UNESCO level

- (15) Comprehensively support and use the MAB Programme and biosphere reserves in line with the UNESCO Strategy for Action on Climate Change and the UNESCO Climate Change Initiative, not only as reference sites for a better understanding of the impacts of climate change, in particular in regions specifically targeted by UNESCO, priority Africa and SIDS,
- (16) Further develop the World Network of Biosphere Reserves as one of UNESCO's key assets: as reference regions for a better understanding of the impacts of climate change on human societies, cultural and biological diversity, ecosystem services and the world's natural and cultural heritage, and consider including biosphere reserves into global, coordinated interdisciplinary research programmes on climate change,
- (17) Foster international exchange on best practices and promote South-South and North-South-South partnerships on technology sharing and best practice through twinning,



- (18) Cooperate with other UNESCO and UN intergovernmental programmes and conventions, in particular the three Rio conventions, the UN Decade of Education for Sustainable Development, the UN Conference on Sustainable Development Rio+20, and other relevant international and national organisations and agencies so that they make greater use of these biosphere reserves as research, learning and pilot regions for sustainability processes,
- (19) Support Member States, politically and financially, in the designation and successful management of new biosphere reserves, particularly transboundary reserves.

Conclusion

The conference participants call for the provision of adequate financial, organisational and staff capacities to implement the recommendations contained in this Declaration.

The conference participants invite the International Coordinating Council of the MAB Programme to endorse this Declaration at its 23rd session and to present it to the 36th session of the UNESCO General Conference in autumn 2011.