

## 20 NEW SITES JOIN THE WORLD NETWORK OF BIOSPHERE RESERVES IN 2021

The International Co-ordinating Council of UNESCO's Man and the Biosphere Programme (MAB-ICC) [added 20 new sites in 21 countries to the World Network of Biosphere Reserves](#) during its meeting held in Abuja from 13 and 17 September 2021. The Council approved these additions along with the extension or re-zoning of two existing biosphere reserves. New Reserves are designated every year by the MAB International Co-ordinating Council, a body with a rotating elected membership of 34 UNESCO Member States.

[Biosphere Reserves](#) are areas comprising terrestrial, marine and coastal ecosystems. Each reserve promotes solutions reconciling the conservation of biodiversity with its sustainable use. Their objective is to give rise to innovative sustainable development practices and combatting the loss of biodiversity by accompanying communities and Member States in their work to appreciate and safeguard the living environment

[In 2021 the World Network of Biosphere Reserves numbers 727 biosphere reserves in 131 countries, including 22 transboundary sites.](#) The 727 biosphere reserves are distributed as follows:

- [86 sites in 31 countries in Africa](#)
- [35 sites in 14 countries in the Arab States](#)
- [168 sites in 40 countries in Asia and the Pacific](#)
- [306 sites in 24 countries in Europe and North America](#)
- [132 sites in 22 countries in Latin America and the Caribbean.](#)

The 20 new Biosphere Reserves joining the MAB World Network in 2021 are located in Canada, France, Italy, Kazakhstan, Republic of Korea, Lesotho, Libya, Malaysia, Mongolia, Peru, Russian Federation, Saudi Arabia, Spain, Thailand, Uzbekistan, Viet Nam.

Lesotho, Libya and Saudi Arabia joined the MAB Network in 2021 with the designation of their first sites: Matšeng Biosphere Reserve, Ashaafean Biosphere Reserve, and Juzur Farasan Biosphere Reserve, respectively. In Europe, the Five-country Biosphere Reserve Mura-Drava-Danube became the first MAB site to be co-managed by as many countries (Austria, Croatia, Hungary, Serbia and Slovenia).

Established by UNESCO in the early 1970s, the [Man and the Biosphere](#) MAB Programme celebrates its 50th anniversary in 2021. It is a pioneering initiative at the origin of the notion of sustainable development, aiming to improve relations between people and their natural environment. Biosphere Reserves involve local communities and all interested stakeholders in planning and management. [They integrate three main functions:](#) Conservation of biodiversity and cultural diversity; Economic



development that is socio-culturally and environmentally sustainable; Logistic support, underpinning development through research, monitoring, education and training.

After the establishment of the [Agenda 2030 and the Sustainable Development Goals \(SDG\)](#) in 2015, the MAB Programme and the [World Network of Biosphere Reserves](#) has fully committed not only to pursue the achievement of the Goals within Biosphere Reserves, but also to give a meaningful contribution to the global efforts. In order to do so, the [International Co-ordinating Council of the MAB Programme](#) adopted the [MAB Strategy \(2015-2015\)](#) and the [Lima Action Plan \(2016-2025\)](#).

Spanning over 5% the world's surface and covering all ecosystems, both in urban and rural settings, in fact, Biosphere Reserves are natural 'learning places for sustainable development'. In their own contexts, they have been implementing projects that address each goal and target of the Agenda 2030 in a creative and innovative way. [The MAB Programme made a call for stories, projects and initiatives from Biosphere Reserves](#), hoping these good practices, experiences and lessons learned can inspire other members of the Network, as well as other actors.

The World Network of Biosphere Reserves promotes North-South and South-South collaboration and represents a tool for international co-operation through sharing knowledge, exchanging experiences, building capacity and promoting best practices.

For the communities and actors already engaged in the planning and management of sustainable development local practices in many countries, the UNESCO MAB Programme represents an important opportunity to become part of an international network that can support and enhance their results. The procedure requires an active role of the respective Governments in the proposal of the candidacy to the MAB International Co-ordinating Council and the MAB Programme website presents the process adopted to [designate new territories in the international list of Biosphere Reserves](#).

### To know more

[News in UNESCO website](#)

[World Network of Biosphere Reserves](#)

[Man and the Biosphere MAB Programme](#)

[Designation for new Biosphere Reserves](#)

[MAB Programme good practices](#)

[MAB Publication 2020 - Our Biosphere our future](#)

[MAB Publication 2021 - Technical Guidelines for Biosphere Reserves](#)

