

14 NEW SITES JOIN IN 2026

THE MAB WORLD NETWORK OF BIOSPHERE RESERVES

July 2026

On World Environment Day 2026, [UNESCO designates 14 new biosphere reserves across 14 countries](#), bringing the MAB World Network of Biosphere Reserves to 797 sites in 145 countries.

These new biosphere reserves have been designated in Albania, Algeria, Aruba, Azerbaijan, Cameroon, Canada, the Islamic Republic of Iran, Mongolia, Montenegro, Paraguay, the Philippines, Portugal, Timor-Leste, and Viet Nam. Territorial extensions were also approved for five existing biosphere reserves in China, Italy, and Spain.

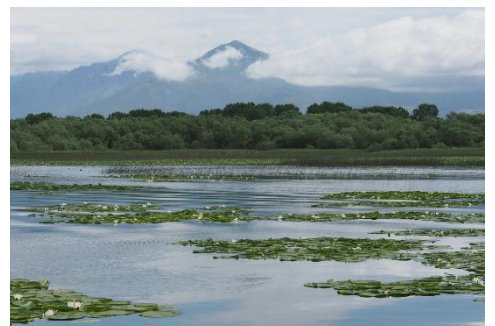
For the first time, a whole city has been designated as a biosphere reserve, Québec City. Three countries welcome their first biosphere reserves: Montenegro, Timor-Leste, and Aruba.

UNESCO biosphere reserves are territories of outstanding ecological value where people and nature thrive harmoniously alongside each other, conserving biological and cultural diversity, advancing sustainable development, and connecting communities across a global network.

Since 1971, biosphere reserves have played a central role in UNESCO's environmental mission. Alongside natural World Heritage sites and Global Geoparks, they contribute to protecting more than 13 million km² of terrestrial and marine ecosystems under UNESCO's umbrella, advancing the global Kunming-Montreal target of conserving 30% of land and sea by 2030.

The newly designated biosphere reserves are the following sites. Full descriptions of the sites are available on the website:

- Albania – Shkodër Lake
- Algeria – Theniet El Had
- Aruba – Aruba Island
- Azerbaijan – Great Caucasus
- Cameroon – Takamanda – Cross River Gorilla
- Canada – Québec City
- Islamic Republic of Iran – Dalankuh – Qamishlou
- Mongolia – Tost Toson Bumbiin Nuruu
- Montenegro – Skadar Lake Watershed
- Paraguay – Sur del Alto Paraná
- Philippines – Matibay na Bayan ng Sablayan



- Portugal – Serra da Estrela
- Timor-Leste – Nino Konis Santana
- Viet Nam – Phong Nha – Ke Bang

[With these new biosphere reserves, the MAB World Network now totals 797 sites in 145 countries](#), covering 7.5 million km². More than 5% of the Earth's terrestrial surface is covered by the network, and 90% of the sites overlap with Key Biodiversity Areas (KBAs).

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.

The World Network of Biosphere Reserves (WNBR) consists of a dynamic and interactive network of sites. It promotes North-South, South-South and South-North-South collaboration and represents a tool for international cooperation through the exchange of experiences and know-how, capacity-building and the promotion of best practices among Biosphere Reserves.

Marking World Environment Day 2026, UNESCO also launched the practical guide in English, [Reporting the Environment: A Practical Manual for Journalists](#) to report on the environment, drawing on case studies and offering safeguards journalists can use in their daily work. At a time when misinformation and disinformation increasingly affect many of today's most urgent global challenges, reliable reporting on nature, climate, and environmental issues has never been more important. Written by journalists for journalists and enriched by contributions from leading journalism organizations including Covering Climate Now, EIF, Fondation Hirondelle, NICHE, Pulitzer Center, and the Reuters Institute, the manual offers practical tools for covering environmental stories accurately and safely, from navigating climate misinformation and AI-generated content to investigating environmental harm and accountability.

From 22 to 25 September 2025 in Hangzhou, the 5th World Congress of Biosphere Reserves took place, organized by the [MAB Programme of UNESCO](#) and hosted by the Government of China. With more than 4,000 participants from over 150 UNESCO Member States, the event was addressed by eight government ministers, United Nations agencies and leading environmental organizations, representatives of Biosphere Reserves, as well as scientists, Indigenous peoples, and youth organizations. [The Congress endorsed and approved the Hangzhou Strategic Action Plan for the Man and the Biosphere Programme for the period 2026-2035](#). The Hangzhou Strategic Action Plan aims to conserve and sustainably use biodiversity, enhance ecosystem resilience, and contribute to a positive climate future while promoting just, equitable, and sustainable societies with Indigenous Peoples and Local Communities at the heart of implementation.

To know more

[News in UNESCO website](#)

[Full descriptions of the 2026 sites](#)



[Reporting the Environment: A Practical Manual for Journalists. New Publication](#)

[UNESCO Man and Biosphere Programme website](#)

[UNESCO Man and Biosphere Programme Key Projects](#)

[Hangzhou Strategic Action Plan](#)

[Summary Report 5th World Congress of Biosphere Reserves in enb.iisd.org](#)

[World Network of Biosphere Reserves](#)

[Designation for new Biosphere Reserves](#)

[MAB regional and thematic Networks](#)

[Technical Guidelines for Biosphere Reserves](#)

[New report shows UNESCO Biosphere Reserves advance biodiversity targets](#)

[Accelerating the Global Biodiversity Framework by Strengthening Biosphere Reserves. pdf](#)

