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Man and the Biosphere
Programme

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Division of Ecological and Earth Sciences 10 October 2023
Man and the Biosphere Programme

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Dear Chair,

I am writing to inform you of the results of the deliberations of the 35th session of the International Coordinating Council of UNESCO's Man and the Biosphere (MAB) Programme, which was held at UNESCO Headquarters, from 12 to 15 June 2023, to consider proposals for new biosphere reserves and extensions/renaming to biosphere reserves, follow-up and periodic review reports.

Following the recommendations of the Advisory Committee and the Bureau's deliberations based on additional information received concerning the Berchtesgadener Land, the Schorfheide, the Spreewald, the Hamburg Wadden Sea, the Drömling, the Wadden Sea of Lower Saxony and the Wadden Sea and Hallig Islands of Schleswig-Holstein Biosphere Reserves, the MAB Council made the decisions found in annex to this letter.

[The full report of the 35th session of the MAB International Coordinating Council is available on the UNESCO-MAB webpage.](#)

In accordance with the wishes of the MAB Council, UNESCO provides each new biosphere reserve with a certificate signed by the Director-General of UNESCO, which the country may want to reproduce in the form of a plaque at the site concerned. It is available with the MAB Secretariat at UNESCO Headquarters. I should be grateful to be informed in due course on your plan regarding the inauguration ceremony or event to be organized for this Biosphere Reserve.

Thanking you for your continued support of the MAB Programme and its World Network of Biosphere Reserves that now consists of 748 biosphere reserves in 134 countries, I remain,

Yours sincerely,

António De Sousa Abreu
Director, Division of Ecological and Earth Sciences
Secretary, Man and the Biosphere (MAB) Programme

cc: Permanent Delegation of Germany to UNESCO
National Commission of Germany for UNESCO
UNESCO Bureau Office in Venice

Extract, Final report, Thirty-fifth session of the International Co-ordinating Council of the Man and the Biosphere (MAB) Programme

245. The MAB Council endorsed the Advisory Committee recommendations contained in document SC-23/CONF.235.11 (see Annex 7) without any modifications, for the countries and sites set out below:

Berchtesgardener Land Biosphere Reserve (Germany) The Advisory Committee welcomed the submission of the third periodic review report of the Berchtesgardener Land Biosphere Reserve, designated in 1990. The Committee noted with satisfaction that the site authority has addressed all previous recommendations of the MAB Council.

89. This mountain biosphere reserve is adjacent to the Austrian borders, located about 150 km southeast of Munich. The geologically diverse area of northern limestone Alps consists of various habitats including submontane, montane and subalpine forests, and alpine meadows. Part of the site comprises the Berchtesgaden National Park and Lake Königssee, a major tourist attraction. While the total area of 83 984 ha remained unchanged over the review period, there was a 2% shift in zonation in favour of the core areas. This change was linked to a change in zonation of the National Park, which functions as the core areas and buffer zones of the site. At present, the core areas cover 15 607 ha and the buffer zones 7 826 ha. In places where the buffer zones are not delineated, provisions stated in the current Alpine Plan provide buffering functions. The permanent population of 106 000 inhabitants resides solely in the transition area, and is increasing slightly. The Advisory Committee noted that site administration is separated from the national park administration, with separate budgets allocated for the region. Site administration operates in close cooperation with regional stakeholder groups, such as Trägerverein (the supporting association of the site), the Bavarian State Forests, community representatives, the National Park and the Land District Office.

90. The three functions are well balanced with conservation function provided by the National Park administration. Projects include, for example, initiative partners of the site and the labelling scheme "Biosphere Products". Both projects emphasize regional retail chains and highlight sustainable production in cooperation with relevant biosphere reserve stakeholder groups. Implementation of the logistical function is provided through a combination of awareness raising and education activities undertaken by staff with the support of relevant partners and exclusively nature conservation-oriented monitoring and research conducted by the National Park.

91. The Advisory Committee encouraged the site administration to place a stronger emphasis on communication and public relations and further improve the visibility of the biosphere reserve. In addition, it recommended that international cooperation be sustained within the WNBR. The Advisory Committee requested the German authorities to delineate formal buffer zones around all core areas wherever feasible.

92. The Advisory Committee concluded that the site meets the criteria of the Statutory Framework of the WNBR and recommended that the changes in zonation be approved.

Schorfheide-Chorin Biosphere Reserve (Germany). The Advisory Committee welcomed the submission of the third periodic review report of the Schorfheide-Chorin Biosphere Reserve, designated in 1990. It noted with satisfaction that the

authorities in cooperation with the German MAB National Committee had addressed the recommendation of the MAB Council.

94. The site is situated about 30 km northeast of Berlin. The main habitats in the reserve are dunes, freshwater habitats, grasslands and forests. These provide undisturbed habitats for many critically endangered species of flora and fauna. The Grumsin Beech Forest, which forms the largest core area of the reserve, has been designated as a World Heritage Site since 2011, as part of the Ancient and Primeval Beech Forests of the Carpathians and Other Regions of Europe. The total area of 129,161 ha and the zonation has not changed over the review period. The site consists of core areas covering 3,901 ha, buffer zones of 24 426 ha and a transition area of 100 834 ha. The population of 28,000 inhabitants, who live mostly in the transition area, has decreased slightly over the past ten years.

95. The site administration is a division of the Brandenburg State Office for Environment, which also provides funding for the biosphere reserve. Additional funding is provided through projects implemented with partners. Stakeholder participation in governance is ensured through cooperation with the Board of Trustees of the biosphere reserve. This multi-stakeholder board initiates actions, submits advice and comments, and offer support for the work of the site administration. In addition, the site receives support through cooperation with a diverse range of local stakeholders such as foundations, associations, clubs and municipalities.

96. Thematic projects implemented on the site cover all three functions of the biosphere reserve. These projects are coordinated by the site administration and/or in cooperation with partners. Coordination of conservation efforts is very advanced, especially in relation to forestry and agriculture. The site has also introduced a biosphere reserve label to award local, original and sustainable products and services and co-created with the Schorfheide-Chorin Biosphere Reserve's Partner Network of Tourism Providers to enhance sustainable tourism in the area. The biosphere reserve also connects various research institutions and projects, and has emphasized the need for specific research. Particularly close cooperation is maintained with the Eberswalde University for Sustainable Development.

97. The Advisory Committee noted the lack of formal buffer zones in some parts of the biosphere reserve. Even though buffering functions are provided by other means (e.g. agreements with land owners and land managers on specific forms of land management), the Advisory Committee encouraged the German authorities to continue efforts to create formal buffer zones around all core areas, wherever feasible.

98. The Advisory Committee concluded that the site meets the criteria of the Statutory Framework of the WNBR.

Spreewald Biosphere Reserve (Germany). The Advisory Committee welcomed the submission of the third periodic review report of the Spreewald Biosphere Reserve, designated in 1991. The site is located about 100 km southeast of Berlin, and consists of a vast inland delta around the River Spree with a unique mosaic of navigable channels and other watercourses, fens, meadows and forests. The Advisory Committee noted shifts in zonation following the previous recommendations to the German National MAB Committee: while the total area of 47,509 ha remained unchanged, the core area rose to 1,423 ha and the buffer zones now cover 8,885 ha. However, the population of 56 000 inhabitants remained stable over the review period.

100. The Advisory Committee noted that the site authority governance model, represented by the State of Brandenburg, enables the participation of stakeholders groups through cooperation with the Spreewald Biosphere Reserve's partner enterprises and the Board of Trustees, which drives regional development in accordance with nature conservation objectives. In addition, the site administration is a member of the Spreewald Association and the Spreewald Tourism Association, and works to incorporate the biosphere reserve philosophy and goals into key initiatives in the region. Overall cooperation also extends to other regional organizations.

101. The site has significant funding and adequate staff. This favourable situation complemented by the availability of external sources for projects with partners is reflected in numerous projects covering all three functions of the biosphere reserve. Also of note is the emphasis on 103 contractual nature conservation, promoted and managed by the biosphere reserve administration and supported by federal government funding.

102. The site management operates according to the Landscape Framework Plan for the Spreewald Biosphere Reserve, the agenda for which is well integrated into the management plans of respective authorities in the region. The Advisory Board commended the authorities' approach to working with the public and especially youth, particularly through the Strategy for Education for Sustainable Development in the Spreewald Biosphere Reserve.

103. The Advisory Committee encouraged the administration to continue strengthening cooperation with municipalities and the private sector.

104. The Advisory Committee concluded that the site meets the criteria of the Statutory Framework of the WNBR and recommended that the changes in zonation be approved.

Hamburg Wadden Sea Biosphere Reserve (Germany). The Advisory Committee welcomed the submission of the third periodic review report of the Hamburg Wadden Sea Biosphere Reserve, designated in 1992. It acknowledged the intensive efforts of the German authorities to address the previous recommendations of the MAB Council made during the review period, related to cooperation between the three German biosphere reserves located in the Wadden Sea region.

106. The Wadden Sea of Hamburg is located on the North Sea coast about 40 km north of the city of Bremerhaven. The site is situated close to the mouth of the Elbe River, and the whole area is characterized by sand and tidal flats, islands and salt marshes. These habitats host numerous species of fish, sea and shore birds, as well as grey seal and harbour seal. For its biodiversity, the site has been designated a National Park, a Ramsar site, an EU Special Protection Area for birds and designated as a World Heritage Site.

107. The Advisory Committee is aware of recent changes in the zonation of the site. While the total area of 11,700 ha remained unchanged, the terrestrial core area increased to 347 ha, the terrestrial buffer zone decreased to 200 ha and new zones have been added including 12 ha of terrestrial transition area. The marine core area decreased to 10,188 ha and 953 ha have been added to the marine buffer zone. The low permanent population of 24 is the result mainly of the marine character of the site and has decreased by 50% since the last periodic review report.

108. The site management has adopted the authority governance model. Despite a low population stakeholder, participation is provided by the biosphere reserve staff with an emphasis on cooperation and coordination with other relevant authorities. The site has stable funding provided by the Free and Hanseatic City of Hamburg, enabling the implementation of projects conducted by the National Park as well as other partners. These projects address all three functions and include, for example, the International Wadden Sea School, the Trilateral Monitoring and Assessment Programme and the project Protect and Prosper: Benefits through linking sustainable growth with nature protection. Also of note is cooperation with partners in the fields of tourism, education and renewable energy.

109. The biosphere reserve administration is adhering to a joint management plan – the Wadden Sea Plan and a Single Integrated Management Plan – currently being drawn up for the World Heritage Site. 104

110. The Advisory Committee encourages the site administration to continue strengthening cooperation with other Wadden Sea biosphere reserves located in Germany as well as along the coasts of Denmark and the Netherlands.

111. The Advisory Committee concluded that the site meets the criteria of the Statutory Framework of the WNBR and recommended that the changes in zonation be approved.

Taking into account the recommendations of the Advisory Committee for Biosphere Reserves, as contained in document SC-23/CONF.235/12 (see Annex 8) and the Bureau's further deliberations, the MAB-ICC took the following decisions:

New nominations

Drömling Biosphere Reserve (Germany). The MAB Council welcomed this new proposal and endorsed all the recommendations of the Advisory Committee as contained in document SC-22/CONF.235/12 without any change. The MAB Council approved the site.

290. Germany took the floor to express gratitude and appreciation for the nomination of this 17th biosphere reserve in Germany and confirm their commitment to conserving their natural heritage. This designation highlights the value of the site and of the dedication of many stakeholders that contribute to its protection. An important responsibility comes with the recognition: to engage in sustainable development practices, securing a balance between human activities and preservation, and promoting harmony. This new BR will be a platform to foster scientific research, environmental education and community engagement, while embracing all opportunities to cooperate to and implement strategies for long term conservation. Germany expressed its gratitude to the IACBR and to all those involved in the process. The Head of the BR administration was then given the floor to express his appreciation for this successful conclusion of a participatory process which was initiated 30 years ago for the reunification of landscape units, in close collaboration with the local communities.

Extensions, re-zoning, renaming

Wadden Sea of Lower Saxony Biosphere Reserve (Germany). The MAB Council welcomed this extension of the Wadden Sea of Lower Saxony Biosphere

Reserve and endorsed all the recommendations of the Advisory Committee as contained in document SC-23/CONF.235/12 without any change. The MAB Council approved the extension.

Wadden Sea and Hallig Islands of Schleswig-Holstein (Germany). The MAB Council welcomed this extension of the Wadden Sea of Lower Saxony Biosphere Reserve and endorsed all the recommendations of the Advisory Committee as contained in document SC-23/CONF.235/12 without any change. The MAB Council approved the extension.