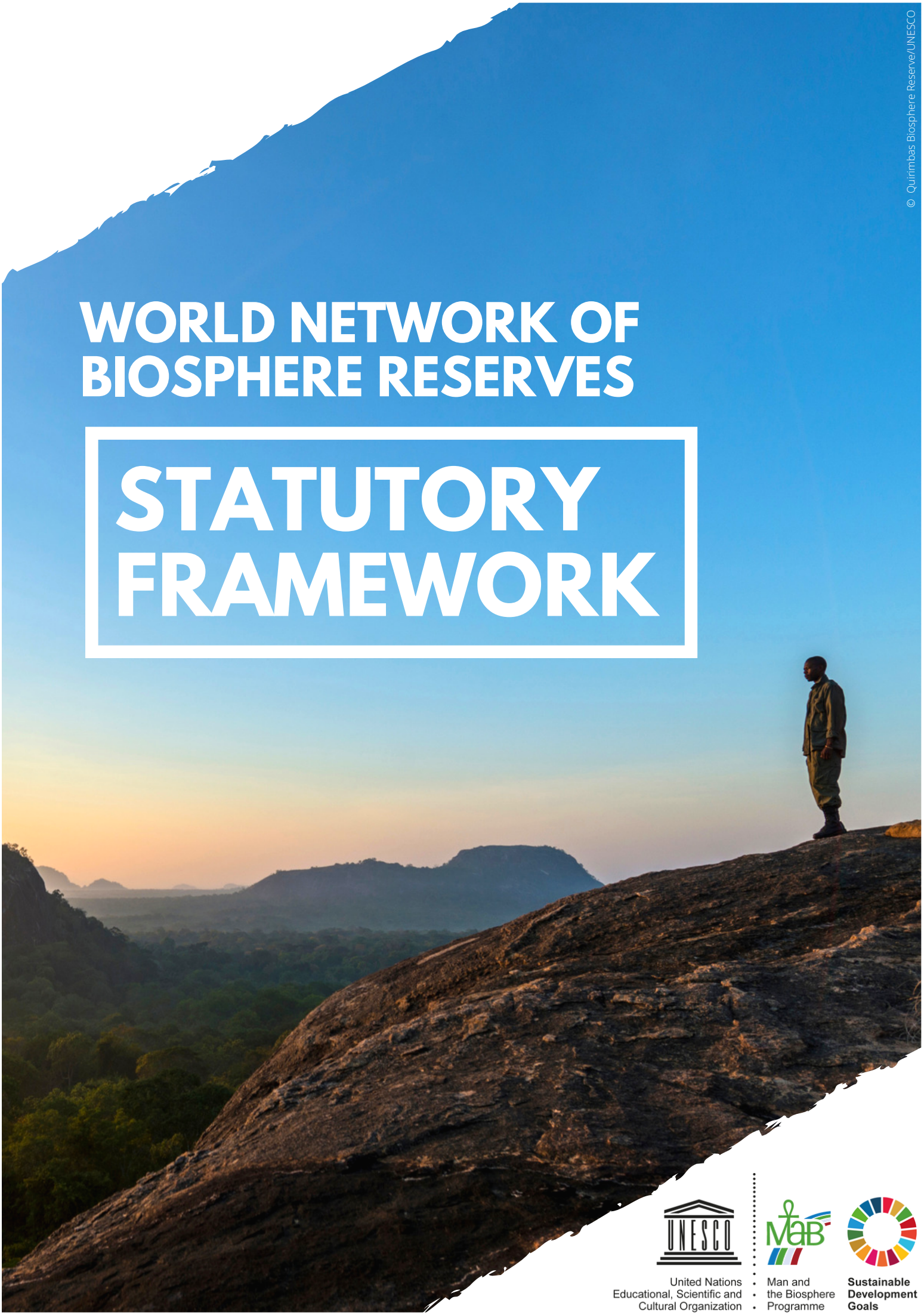
WORLD NETWORK OF BIOSPHERE RESERVES

STATUTORY FRAMEWORK



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United Nations
Educational, Scientific and
Cultural Organization

Man and
the Biosphere
Programme

Sustainable
Development
Goals

INTRODUCTION



Within UNESCO's Man and the Biosphere (MAB) Programme, biosphere reserves are established to promote and demonstrate a balanced relationship between humans and the biosphere. Biosphere Reserves are designated by the International Co-ordinating Council of the MAB Programme, at the request of the State concerned. Biosphere reserves, each of which remains under the sole sovereignty of the State where it is situated and thereby submitted to State legislation only, form a World Network in which participation by the States is voluntary.

The present Statutory Framework of the World Network of Biosphere Reserves has been formulated with the objectives of enhancing the effectiveness of individual biosphere reserves and strengthening common understanding, communication and co-operation at regional and international levels.

This Statutory Framework is intended to contribute to the widespread recognition of biosphere reserves and to encourage and promote good working examples. The delisting procedure foreseen should be considered as an exception to this basically positive approach, and should be applied only after careful examination, paying due respect to the cultural and socio-economic situation of the country, and after consulting the government concerned.

The text provides for the designation, support and promotion of biosphere reserves, while taking account of the diversity of national and local situations. States are encouraged to elaborate and implement national criteria for biosphere reserves which take into account the special conditions of the State concerned.

ABOUT THE MAB PROGRAMME



Biosphere reserves are designed to deal with one of the most important questions the world faces today: How can we reconcile the conservation of biodiversity, the quest for economic and social development and the maintenance of associated cultural values?

Created in 1971, the Man and the Biosphere Programme develops the basis within the natural and social sciences for the rational and sustainable use and conservation of the resources of the biosphere and for the improvement of the overall relationship between people and their environment.

Its World Network of Biosphere Reserves features **701 sites of excellence in 124 countries, including 21 transboundary sites**.

Art. 1 **Definition**

Biosphere reserves are areas of terrestrial and coastal/marine ecosystems or a combination thereof, which are internationally recognized within the framework of UNESCO's programme on Man and the Biosphere (MAB), in accordance with the present Statutory Framework.

Art. 2 **World Network of Biosphere Reserves**

1. Biosphere reserves form a worldwide network, known as the World Network of Biosphere Reserves, hereafter called the Network.

2. The Network constitutes a tool for the conservation of biological diversity and the sustainable use of its components, thus contributing to the objectives of the Convention on Biological Diversity and other pertinent conventions and instruments.

3. Individual biosphere reserves remain under the sovereign jurisdiction of the States where they are situated. Under the present Statutory Framework, States take the measures which they deem necessary according to their national legislation.



Art. 3 **Functions**

In combining the three functions below, biosphere reserves should strive to be sites of excellence to explore and demonstrate approaches to conservation and sustainable development on a regional scale:

Conservation

Contribute to the conservation of landscapes, ecosystems, species and genetic variation;


Flora


Fauna

Development

Foster economic and human development which is socio-culturally and ecologically sustainable;


Economic development


Human development

Logistic Support

Support for demonstration projects, environmental education and training, research and monitoring related to local, regional, national and global issues of conservation and sustainable development.


Research


Monitoring



Human settlement
Research
Education
Tourism

Core Area
Buffer zones
Transition area

Art. 4 **Criteria**

General criteria for an area to be qualified for designation as a biosphere reserve:

1. It should encompass a mosaic of ecological systems representative of major biogeographic regions, including a gradation of human interventions.

2. It should be of significance for biological diversity conservation.

3. It should provide an opportunity to explore and demonstrate approaches to sustainable development on a regional scale.

4. It should have an appropriate size to serve the three functions of biosphere reserves, as set out in Article 3.

5. It should include these functions, through appropriate zonation, recognizing:
   (a) a legally constituted **core area or areas** devoted to long-term protection, according to the conservation objectives of the biosphere reserve, and of sufficient size to meet these objectives;
   (b) a **buffer zone or zones** clearly identified and surrounding or contiguous to the core area or areas, where only activities compatible with the conservation objectives can take place;
   (c) an outer **transition area** where sustainable resource management practices are promoted and developed.

6. Organizational arrangements should be provided for the involvement and participation of a suitable range of inter alia public authorities, local communities and private interests in the design and carrying out the functions of a biosphere reserve.

7. In addition, provisions should be made for:
   (a) mechanisms to manage human use and activities in the buffer zone or zones;
   (b) a management policy or plan for the area as a biosphere reserve;
   (c) a designated authority or mechanism to implement this policy or plan;
   (d) programmes for research, monitoring, education and training.

Art. 5 **Designation procedure**

1. Biosphere reserves are designated for inclusion in the Network by the International Coordinating Council (ICC) of the MAB programme in accordance with the following procedure:

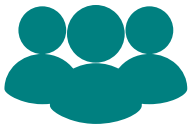


1

States, through National MAB Committees where appropriate, forward nominations with supporting documentation to the secretariat after having reviewed potential sites, taking into account the criteria as defined in Article 4;

2

The **Secretariat** verifies the content and supporting documentation: in the case of incomplete nomination, the secretariat requests the missing information from the nominating State;



3

Nominations will be considered by the **Advisory Committee** for Biosphere Reserves for recommendation to ICC;



4

The **ICC** of the MAB programme takes a decision on nominations for designation. The Director General of UNESCO notifies the State concerned of the decision of ICC.

2. States are encouraged to examine and improve the adequacy of any existing biosphere reserve, and to propose extension as appropriate, to enable it to function fully within the Network. Proposals for extension follow the same procedure as described above for new designations.

3. Biosphere reserves which have been designated before the adoption of the present Statutory Framework are considered to be already part of the Network. The provisions of the Statutory Framework therefore apply to them.

Art. 6 **Publicity**

1. The designation of an area as a biosphere reserve should be given appropriate publicity by the State and authorities concerned, including commemorative plaques and dissemination of information material.

2. Biosphere reserves within the Network, as well as the objectives, should be given appropriate and continuing promotion.

Art. 7 **Participation in the network**

1. States participate in or facilitate co-operative activities of the Network, including scientific research and monitoring, at the global, regional and subregional levels.

2. The appropriate authorities should make available the results of research, associated publications and other data, taking into account intellectual property rights, in order to ensure the proper functioning of the Network and maximize the benefits from information exchanges.

3. States and appropriate authorities should promote environmental education and training, as well as the development of human resources, in co-operation with other biosphere reserves in the Network.

Art. 8 **Regional & Thematic subnetworks**

States should encourage the constitution and co-operative operation of regional and/or thematic subnetworks of biosphere reserves, and promote development of information exchanges, including electronic information, within the framework of these subnetworks.



REGIONAL NETWORKS

- Africa
- Arab States
- Asia & the Pacific
- Europe & North America
- Latin America & the Caribbean, Portugal and Spain



THEMATIC NETWORKS

- Drylands
- Mangroves
- Marine, Coastal & Islands
- Mountains
- Savannahs
- Tropical Forests
- Wetlands

Art. 9 **Periodic Reviews**

1. **The status of each biosphere reserve should be subject to a periodic review every ten years**, based on a report prepared by the concerned authority, on the basis of the criteria of Article 4, and forwarded to the secretariat by the State concerned.

2. The report will be considered by the Advisory Committee for Biosphere Reserves for recommendation to ICC.

3. ICC will examine the periodic reports from States concerned.

4. If ICC considers that the status or management of the biosphere reserve is satisfactory, or has improved since designation or the last review, this will be formally recognized by ICC.

5. If ICC considers that the biosphere reserve no longer satisfies the criteria contained in Article 4, it may recommend that the State concerned take measures to ensure conformity with the provisions of Article 4, taking into account the cultural and socio-economic context of the State concerned. ICC indicates to the secretariat actions that it should take to assist the State concerned in the implementation of such measures.

6. Should ICC find that the biosphere reserve in question still does not satisfy the criteria contained in Article 4, within a reasonable period, the area will no longer be referred to as a biosphere reserve which is part of the Network.

7. The Director-General of UNESCO notifies the State concerned of the decision of ICC.

8. Should a State wish to remove a biosphere reserve under its jurisdiction from the Network, it notifies the secretariat. This notification shall be transmitted to ICC for information. The area will then no longer be referred to as a biosphere reserve which is part of the Network.



Art. 10 **Secretariat**

1. **UNESCO shall act as the secretariat of the Network and be responsible for its functioning and promotion.** The secretariat shall facilitate communication and interaction among individual biosphere reserves and among experts. UNESCO shall also develop and maintain a worldwide accessible information system on biosphere reserves, to be linked to other relevant initiatives.

2. In order to reinforce individual biosphere reserves and the functioning of the Network and subnetworks, UNESCO shall seek financial support from bilateral and multilateral sources.

3. The list of biosphere reserves forming part of the Network, their objectives and descriptive details, shall be updated, published and distributed by the secretariat periodically.

THE EVOLUTION OF THE MAB PROGRAMME



The **MAB Programme and its World Network of Biosphere Reserves** has evolved through consensuses reached at several meetings, beginning with those of a MAB Task Force in 1974 and continuing with the First International Biosphere Reserve Congress in Minsk, Belarus in 1984.

A second international conference held in Spain in 1995, consolidated the concept of biosphere reserves with the so-called Seville Strategy and the present framework. **Both documents set out the conditions for the functioning of the World Network of Biosphere Reserves** and were adopted in the UNESCO General Conference in November 1995.

In 2016, the **Lima Action Plan (2016-2025)** approved in Fourth World Congress of Biosphere Reserves held in Peru, updated the MAB Programme in the context of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and its Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

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