

THE SEVILLE STRATEGY FOR BIOSPHERE RESERVES

1 VISION FOR BIOSPHERE RESERVES IN THE 21ST CENTURY

The international Seville Conference on Biosphere Reserves, organised by UNESCO, adopted a two-pronged approach, namely to:

- a) Examine past experience in implementing the innovative concept of the biosphere reserve.
- b) Look to the future to identify what emphasis should now be given to their three functions of conservation, development and logistical support.

The Seville Conference concluded that, in spite of the problems and limitations encountered with the establishment of biosphere reserves, the programme, as a whole, had been innovative and had much success. In particular, the three basic functions would be as valid as ever in the coming years.

2 FOUNDATIONS OF THE NEW SEVILLE STRATEGY

The Seville Conference identified the following **key directions**, which are basically the foundations of the new **Seville Strategy**.

- (a) Strengthen the contribution that biosphere reserves make to the implementation of international agreements promoting conservation and sustainable development, especially to the Convention on Biological Diversity and other agreements, such as those on climate change, desertification and forests.
- (b) Develop biosphere reserves that include a wide variety of environmental, biological, economic and cultural situations, going from largely undisturbed regions and spreading towards cities. There is a particular need and potential to apply the biosphere reserve concept in the coastal and marine environment.
- (c) Strengthen the emerging regional, inter-regional and thematic networks of biosphere reserves as components within the World Network of Biosphere Reserves.
- (d) Reinforce scientific research, monitoring, training and education in biosphere reserves, since conservation and the rational use of resources in these areas require a sound base in the natural and social sciences, as well as the humanities. This need is particularly acute in countries where biosphere reserves lack human and financial resources, and should receive priority attention.
- (e) Ensure that all zones of biosphere reserves contribute appropriately to conservation, sustainable development and scientific understanding.
- (f) Extend the transition zone to embrace large areas suitable for appropriate ecosystem management, in order to explore and demonstrate approaches to sustainable development at the regional scale. Appropriate attention should, therefore, be given to the transition area.

- (g) Reflect more fully the human dimensions of biosphere reserves. Connections should be made between cultural and biological diversity. Traditional knowledge and genetic resources should be conserved, and their role in sustainable development should be recognised and encouraged.
- (h) Promote the management of each biosphere reserve essentially as a 'pact' between the local community and society, as a whole. Management should be open, evolving and adaptive. Such an approach will help ensure that biosphere reserves - and their local communities - are better placed to respond to external political, economic and social pressures.
- (i) Bring together all interested groups and sectors in a partnership approach to biosphere reserves, both at site and network levels. Information should flow freely among all concerned.
- (j) Invest in the future. Biosphere reserves should be used to further our understanding of humanity's relationship with the natural world, through programmes of public awareness, information, formal and informal education, based on long-term, inter-generation perspectives.
- (k) In summary, biosphere reserves should preserve and generate natural and cultural values, through management that is scientifically correct, culturally creative and operationally sustainable. The World Network of Biosphere Reserves, as implemented through the Seville Strategy, is thus an integrating tool, which can help to create greater solidarity among peoples and nations of the world.

3 THE STRATEGY

The Seville Strategy provides recommendations for developing effective biosphere reserves and for setting out the conditions for the appropriate functioning of the World Network of Biosphere Reserves. It does not repeat the general principles of the Convention on Biological Diversity, nor Agenda 21, but instead, identifies the specific role of biosphere reserves in developing a new vision of the relationship between conservation and development. Thus, the document is deliberately focused on priorities.

The Strategy proposes different levels at which each recommendation will be most effective, namely the **international**, **national** and **individual biosphere reserve** level. However, given the large variety of different national and local management situations, these recommended levels of actions should be seen merely as guidelines and should be adapted to fit the situation at hand. Note, especially, that the 'national' level should be interpreted to include governmental levels higher than the individual reserve (e.g. district, provincial, state, etc.). In some countries, national or local NGOs may also be appropriate substitutes for this level. Similarly, the 'international' level often includes regional and inter-regional activities.

The Strategy also includes recommended 'implementation indicators', i.e. a check-list of actions that will enable all involved to follow and evaluate the implementation of the Strategy. Criteria used in developing the '*indicators*' include the following:

- a) **Availability** (can the information be gathered relatively easily?)
- b) **Simplicity** (are the data unambiguous?)
- c) **Usefulness** (will the information be useful to reserve managers, National Committees, and/or the Network at large?)

A primary role of the ‘implementation indicators’ is to assemble a database of successful implementation mechanisms and to exchange this information among all members of the Network.

3.1 GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

The primary goals and objectives of the Seville Strategy are summarised in the table below.

Table 1: Goals and objectives of the Seville Strategy.

Goal 1: Use biosphere reserves to conserve natural and cultural diversity.	
Supporting objective 1.1	Improve the coverage of natural and cultural biodiversity by means of the World Network of Biosphere Reserves.
Supporting objective 1.2	Integrate Biosphere Reserves into conservation planning.
Goal 2: Utilise biosphere reserves as models of land management and of approaches to sustainable development.	
Supporting objective 2.1	Secure the support and involvement of local people.
Supporting objective 2.2	Ensure better harmonisation and interaction among the different biosphere reserve zones.
Supporting objective 2.3	Integrate biosphere reserves into regional planning.
Goal 3: Use biosphere reserves for research, monitoring, education, and training.	
Supporting objective 3.1	Improve knowledge of the interactions between humans and the biosphere.
Supporting objective 3.2	Improve monitoring activities.
Supporting objective 3.3	Improve education, public awareness and involvement.
Supporting objective 3.4	Improve training for specialists and managers.
Goal 4: Implement the biosphere reserve concept.	
Supporting objective 4.1	Integrate the functions of biosphere reserves.
Supporting objective 4.2	Strengthen the World Biosphere Reserve Network.

4 STATUTORY FRAMEWORK OF THE WORLD NETWORK OF BIOSPHERE RESERVES

The present *Statutory Framework of the World Network of Biosphere Reserves* (1995) 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', which is included in the *Statutory Framework* 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.

4.1 ARTICLE 1: DEFINITION

As stated above, biosphere reserves are areas of terrestrial and coastal/marine ecosystems or a combination thereof, which are internationally recognised within the framework of UNESCO's MaB Programme, in accordance with the present *Statutory Framework*.

4.2 ARTICLE 2: WORLD NETWORK OF BIOSPHERE RESERVES

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.

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.

4.3 ARTICLE 3: FUNCTIONS

In combining their three functions, biosphere reserves should strive to be sites of excellence to explore and demonstrate approaches to conservation and sustainable development on a regional scale. As stated above, biosphere reserves have the following three functions:

- a) **Conservation** - contribute to the conservation of landscapes, ecosystems, species and genetic variation;
- b) **Development** - foster economic and human development which is socio-culturally and ecologically sustainable;
- c) **Logistical 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.

4.4 ARTICLE 4: CRITERIA

The general criteria for selecting a biosphere reserve include the following:

- (a) It should encompass a mosaic of ecological systems representative of major biogeographic regions, including a gradation of human interventions.
- (b) It should be of significance for biological diversity conservation.
- (c) It should provide an opportunity to explore and demonstrate approaches to sustainable development on a regional scale.
- (d) It should have an appropriate size to support the three functions of biosphere reserves, as set out in Article 3 above.
- (e) It should promote these functions, through appropriate zonation, recognising the following:
 - (i) Legally constituted core areas, or areas devoted to long-term protection, according to the conservation objectives of the biosphere reserve, and of sufficient size to meet these objectives.
 - (ii) Buffer zones clearly identified and surrounding or contiguous to the core area, where only activities compatible with the conservation objectives can take place.
 - (iii) Transition areas where sustainable resource management practices are promoted and developed.
- (f) Organizational arrangements should be made 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.
- (g) In addition, provisions should be made for:
 - (i) Mechanisms to manage human use and activities in the buffer zone.
 - (ii) A management policy and management plan for the area as a biosphere reserve.
 - (iii) A designated authority or mechanism to implement this policy and plan.
 - (iv) Programmes for research, monitoring, education and training.

4.5 ARTICLE 5: DESIGNATION PROCEDURE

- (a) Biosphere reserves are designated for inclusion in the *Network* by the International Co-ordinating Council (ICC) of the MAB Programme in accordance with the following procedure:
 - (i) States, through National MaB Committees where appropriate, forward nominations, together with supporting documentation, to the Secretariat (refer to Section F.2.5.10: Article 10 – Secretariat) after having reviewed potential sites, taking into account the criteria described in Article 4 above.
 - (ii) The Secretariat verifies the content and supporting documentation. In the case of incomplete nomination, the Secretariat requests the missing information from the nominating State.
 - (iii) Nominations will be considered by the Advisory Committee for Biosphere Reserves for recommendation to the ICC.

- (iv) The ICC takes a decision on nominations for designation. The Director-General of UNESCO notifies the State concerned of the decision of the ICC.
- (b) 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.
- (c) 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.

4.6 ARTICLE 6: PUBLICITY

- (a) 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.
- (b) Biosphere reserves within the *Network*, as well as the objectives, should be given appropriate and continuing promotion.

4.7 ARTICLE 7: PARTICIPATION IN THE NETWORK

- (a) States participate in, or facilitate co-operative activities of the *Network*, including scientific research and monitoring, at the global, regional and sub-regional levels.
- (b) 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 maximise the benefits from information exchanges.
- (c) 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*.

4.8 ARTICLE 8: REGIONAL AND THEMATIC SUB-NETWORKS

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

4.9 ARTICLE 9: PERIODIC REVIEW

- (a) The status of each biosphere reserve should be subject to a review every ten years, based on a report prepared by the concerned authority, on the basis of the criteria described in Article 4, and forwarded to the Secretariat by the State concerned.
- (b) The report will then be considered by the Advisory Committee for Biosphere Reserves for recommendation to the ICC.

- (c) The ICC will examine the periodic reports from States concerned.
- (d) If the ICC considers that the status or management of the biosphere reserve is satisfactory, or has improved since designation, or the last review, it will be formally recognised by the ICC.
- (e) If ICC considers that the biosphere reserve no longer satisfies the criteria described in Article 4, it may recommend that the State concerned take measures to ensure compliance with the provisions of Article 4, taking into account the cultural and socio-economic context of the State concerned. The ICC indicates to the Secretariat actions that it should take to assist the State concerned in the implementation of such measures.
- (f) Should the 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*.
- (g) The Director-General of UNESCO notifies the State concerned of the decision of the ICC.
- (h) 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 the ICC for information. The area will then no longer be referred to as a biosphere reserve, which is part of the *Network*.

4.10 ARTICLE 10: SECRETARIAT

- (a) 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.
- (b) In order to reinforce individual biosphere reserves and the functioning of the *Network* and sub-networks, UNESCO shall seek financial support from bilateral and multilateral sources.
- (c) 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.