



MANAGING CHALLENGES OF BIOSPHERE RESERVES IN AFRICA
International Experts Workshop
27th June - 2nd July 2011, Dresden & Rhön, Germany

WELCOME REMARKS - Dr. Paul Makenzi, Chair of AfriMAB

ICC Delegates and Workshop participants, Ladies and Gentlemen,

Good Morning.

On behalf of AfriMAB and its membership represented here and back in Africa, I would first like to congratulate MAB on its 40th anniversary which we are celebrating now.

As AfriMAB, we feel honoured and privileged to be part of the organization of this special event – The international Experts Workshop – whose theme is “Managing Challenges of Biosphere Reserves in Africa” which is a side event during the 23rd session of ICC. It is also part of the celebration of the UNESCO MAB’s 40 years of success in conservation of nature using Biosphere Reserves as an ecosystems management approach.

Ladies and Gentlemen, allow me, on behalf of AfriMAB, to thank the German Federal Agency for Nature Conservation (BfN) who, because of its concern for nature globally, initiated and provided practical leadership in the successful organization of this workshop. Further, BfN saw it fit to give the workshop an African theme and graciously decided to make AfriMAB one of the organizers. Please join me to appreciate BfN with a loud of a clap for this good gesture... thank you!

We are here to celebrate the UNESCO MAB’s 40 years of success of its human centred ecosystems approach to conservation through the Biosphere Reserve concept.

I have been a practical witness to MAB’s success in its operationalization of the Biosphere Reserve concept as a conservation tool since 2004 up to 2008, later as chair of Kenya and AfriMAB. I was appointed by the DG UNESCO to serve in the International Advisory Committee on Biosphere Reserves

(IACBR). Today under MAB, there are 564 Biosphere Reserves in 109 countries – this is not a mean achievement – please again join me in appreciating the office of the DG UNESCO for the 40years of support of the MAB Programme...

The MAB Secretariat in Paris has ensured the technical day to day running and implementation of the MAB Strategic Plans through its very committed and hard working team of professionals under the leadership of the likes of Dr. Natarajan Ishwaran. Again let's appreciate the MAB Secretariat in Paris with a clap...

We from Africa are delighted that, during the period we are going to be here in Dresden and later in the Rhön Biosphere Reserve, Africa's ecosystems management challenges are going to be the focus of most of the discussions. AfriMAB takes this as a very genuine global concern for nature conservation, because Africa's unique ecosystems are pristine and of global significance; as the president of BfN – Prof. Beate Jessel points out in one of BfN's bulletins – “Nature knows no regional political boundaries, nor should its conservation, because biodiversity is a global asset that provides the basis for human wellbeing and is vital for humanity's socio-economic development”.

One challenge in Africa, and which we are conscious of, is that in many cases our national boundaries, which were drawn during the colonial era, are not natural boundaries, either for people or for animals and ecosystems. This reality points to the need for countries to cooperate to manage jointly ecosystems that straddle their borders, working closely with the local populations in all fronts. The other major challenge is Africa's vulnerability to climate change; data provided by IPCC indicate that already 40-70 deaths per million arising from impacts of climate change in Africa are being reported.

We welcome genuine ideas from the participants, ideas that will go along in sorting out these challenges.

Thank you all.

Dr. Paul Makenzi
Chairman of AfriMAB