



RHÖN COMMUNIQUÉ OF THE INTERNATIONAL EXPERT WORKSHOP ON “MANAGING CHALLENGES OF BIOSPHERE RESERVES IN AFRICA”

Adopted in Bad Neustadt an der Saale/Germany, 2nd July 2011

We, participants of the International Expert Workshop on “Managing Challenges of Biosphere Reserves in Africa” held in Dresden and the Rhön Biosphere Reserve (Germany) from 27th June to 2nd July 2011, issue the following communiqué:

Acknowledging the German Federal Agency for Nature Conservation (BfN) for conceptualizing, initiating and organizing this workshop for managers of Biosphere Reserves in Africa with financing from the German Federal Ministry for the Environment, Nature Conservation and Nuclear Safety (BMU);

Recognizing the role of the German National Commission for UNESCO, AfriMAB and the support of the UNESCO-MAB Secretariat in facilitating and organizing the workshop;

Acknowledging the efforts being made by African Governments in establishing and managing Biosphere Reserves in their respective countries;

We note with appreciation the important role played by the Rhön Biosphere Reserve in hosting the participants during their study trip and facilitating the field exposure of participants and sharing practical experience of a well managed and a functioning Biosphere Reserve;

We are convinced that Biosphere Reserves, as model units for sustainable development, can play an important role in facilitating both socio-economic development and the conservation of ecosystems in Africa;

To date, under the UNESCO MAB programme there are 75 Biosphere Reserves located in 33 countries in Africa, two of which were approved during the 23rd session of the International Coordination Council (ICC) of the MAB Programme meeting held in Dresden from 28th June to 1st July 2011;

Further, we are convinced that the experience acquired from the workshop and the field exposure in the Rhön Biosphere Reserve will give impetus to managers of African Biosphere Reserves to tackle some of the challenges facing those Reserves in Africa.

With reference to the goals of the Seville Strategy, the Madrid Action Plan, and the Dresden Declaration we, the workshop participants, call upon the UNESCO MAB membership to give special attention to the following:

1. We note that some UNESCO member states in Africa have not established MAB National Committees and urge them to expedite the process of establishing MAB National Committees and for those with existing MAB National Committees to facilitate their effective functioning.
2. We urge those African states with Biosphere Reserves designated before the set up of the Seville Strategy in 1995 to review the zoning and functioning as well as effective participation of local communities as per the Strategy. In that respect, we request the UNESCO-MAB Secretariat to support that process so that such Reserves are not de-registered from the World Network of Biosphere Reserves.
3. We urge the UNESCO member states to facilitate and expedite the nomination process of proposed transboundary Biosphere Reserves in Africa.
4. Having noted how in the Rhön, partnership with private enterprises can enhance the functioning of Biosphere Reserves, we urge the Biosphere Reserve managers in Africa to explore ways of engaging in public/private partnerships within their Biosphere Reserves.
5. We request the UNESCO member states to mobilize and establish sustainable financing mechanisms for the sustainable management of Biosphere Reserves in Africa.
6. We observed the need for capacity building in all sectors of Biosphere Reserve management in Africa and urge for concerted effort from all concerned to ensure enhanced capacities in the management of Biosphere Reserves.
7. We note the important role AfriMAB plays in fostering cooperation and communication among Biosphere Reserves in Africa and request that the network be supported to play that role more effectively.
8. We note with appreciation the participation of Egypt in this workshop and urge for partnerships and networking not only with ArabMAB countries in Africa but also with countries in other regions.
9. We note our concern about the impacts of climate change in Africa and appeal to the international community to partner with AfriMAB in developing a system of monitoring the effects of climate change on Biosphere Reserves and implementing a concrete program of action in mitigation of these effects.

Communiqué to be addressed to:

- 1) **UNESCO MAB Secretariat**
- 2) **UNESCO MAB-ICC**
- 3) **AfriMAB**
- 4) **ArabMAB**
- 5) **Regional AfriMAB Coordinators**
- 6) **African Ambassadors to UNESCO**
- 7) **MAB National Committee Germany**
- 8) **MAB National Committees of African Countries**
- 9) **German Federal Agency for Nature Conservation**
- 10) **Rhön Biosphere Reserve Administration**
- 11) **African Union Commission**
- 12) **European Union Commission**
- 13) **Ministries responsible for the UNESCO MAB Programme on the national level in African countries**

CC:

- a) **African Ministerial Conference on Environment
c/o UNEP/Regional Office for Africa**
- b) **NEPAD Planning and Coordination Agency (Midrand/ South Africa)**
- c) **African Development Bank**
- d) **UN Economic Commission for Africa (Addis Ababa/ Ethiopia)**

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