



Division of Ecological and Earth Sciences
Man and the Biosphere (MAB) Programme

United Nations
Educational, Scientific and
Cultural Organization

Organisation
des Nations Unies
pour l'éducation,
la science et la culture

Organización
de las Naciones Unidas
para la Educación,
la Ciencia y la Cultura

Организация
Объединенных Наций по
вопросам образования,
науки и культуры

منظمة الأمم المتحدة
للتربية والعلم والثقافة

联合国教育、
科学及文化组织

Mr Frederick Mussiwa Makamure Shava
President of the Economic and Social
Council (ECOSOC)
Department of Economic and Social Affairs
1 UN Plaza, Room DC1-1428
New York, NY 10017
USA

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Dear President,

I wish to thank you for your letter of 24 October 2016, inviting the Man and the Biosphere Programme of UNESCO, for which I serve as Chair for the MAB Council, to submit a report to the 2017 United High-level Political Forum on Sustainable Development (HLPF) which will be held in New York from 10 to 19 July 2017.

In March 2016 in Lima, during the 4th World Congress of Biosphere Reserves, we have adopted the Lima Action Plan for 2016-2025, which links our activities and actions in the World Network of biosphere Reserves (669 sites in 19 countries) to the SDG's and the implementation of the Agenda 2030. Please see <http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0024/002474/247418E.pdf>.

I have consulted the MAB Secretary, Mr Han Qunli, and we discussed the opportunity to provide an input during our latest MAB Bureau meeting held in March 2017. Unfortunately, we did not have the time neither the available data to provide you with a comprehensive report as requested. We do have some activities directly linked to the SDG's on "Eradicating poverty and promoting prosperity in a changing world" (see some examples in the annex attached).

However, I have seen that the 2018 HLPF theme will be "Transformation towards sustainable and resilient societies". This is closer to our mandate and we will be focusing on involving our communities and countries for this 2018 HLPF. I will make a specific Call for action at our next MAB Council session, which will be held in Paris from 12 to 15 June 2017 and we will report to you in a comprehensive way. I hope that this suits you and I remain available if you need more information.

I thank you for your cooperation and I wish you every success for the upcoming HLPF 2017 Forum.

Yours sincerely,

Didier Babin
Chair of the MAB Council

Cc: Mr Qunli Han, MAB Secretary, Director of the Division of Ecological and Earth sciences

Annex: examples of MAB activities and project contributing to SDG on Poverty eradication

1. GREEN ECONOMY IN BIOSPHERE RESERVES (GEBR): A MEANS TO POVERTY REDUCTION, BIODIVERSITY CONSERVATION AND SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT IN SUB-SAHARAN AFRICA (GEBR)

By diversifying local economies in and around biosphere reserves (BRs) this project aims at contributing to the conservation of biodiversity, poverty reduction and sustainable development in sub-Saharan Africa. UNESCO BRs are sites managed under national jurisdiction to promote biodiversity conservation, enhance the socio-economic well-being of local communities, and encourage learning and knowledge building on sustainable development practice. Communities in and around three biosphere reserves (Bia, Ghana); (Omo, Nigeria) and (East Usambara, Tanzania) have been targeted for this initiative. During the three years implementation of the project, training and capacity building on selected biodiversity businesses such as beekeeping, mushroom production, nail rearing; fish farming...) with over 600 beneficiaries, with an average of 30% of Women and 15% of Youth.

2. STRENGTHENING THE TROPICAL RAINFOREST HERITAGE OF SUMATRA, INDONESIA THROUGH ECOTOURISM

Covering 2,500,000 ha and composed by three National Parks (NP), the Tropical Rainforest Heritage of Sumatra was inscribed in the World Heritage list in [2004](#). One of its NPs, Gunung Leuser, is also part of the World Network of Biosphere Reserves since [1981](#). However, the TRHS was inscribed on the list of World Heritage in Danger in [2011](#), due to the long-standing threats to the integrity of this site.

In its efforts to implement a holistic approach to TRHS protection, UNESCO supports Indonesia's initiative to develop sustainable ecotourism at TRHS area. Ecotourism as one of the concepts of sustainable tourism tries to create a harmonious balance between nature protection, social resilience, and tourist satisfaction. It is expected to become a means to increase the local communities' income and improve their livelihoods, and therefore reduce their dependence on more extractive and damaging practices.

UNESCO Jakarta implemented a project, with the kind support from the Spanish Fund-in Trust, to develop an Ecotourism Master Plan for TRHS as a decision support tool for the development of sustainable ecotourism in the three NPs of TRHS, including Gunung Leuser BR, covering the identification of its natural and cultural resources for ecotourism, including potential and main tourism attractions, stakeholders, policies on tourism development and conservation, as well as strategic issues. The project included as well participatory workshops and meetings with the local stakeholders and capacity building trainings. A series of strategic tailor-made recommendations for each partner involved in the ecotourism sector aimed to be implemented in a coordinated and strategic manner and contribute to develop this sector sustainably. With this project, UNESCO supported the Government of Indonesia's initiative to develop sustainable ecotourism as a mean to increase the local communities' income and improve their livelihoods while at the same time ensuring the protection and preservation of the special designated sites.