

## New Prospects for Biosphere Reserves

As previously announced and subsequently reported in *Environmental Conservation*, 21(3) Autumn 1994, p. 285, and 22(2) Summer 1995, pp. 186–7), an International Conference on Biosphere Reserves was organized by UNESCO in Seville, Spain, from 20 to 25 March 1995. The programme of the Conference included an evaluation of Biosphere Reserves over the last ten years and the presentation of some forty case-studies. The Conference adopted what is now called the 'Seville Strategy for Biosphere Reserves' and considered a draft 'Statutory Framework' for the World Network, made up of 329 existing sites in 83 countries, in all covering more than 200 million hectares.

The 13th session of the International Co-ordinating Council for the Man and the Biosphere (MAB) Programme, held in Paris from 12 to 16 June 1995, under the chairmanship of Peter Bridgewater, from Australia, endorsed the Seville Strategy and further elaborated the proposed Statutory Framework.

After a lively and enthusiastic debate, the 28th session of the General Conference of UNESCO, held last November, formally adopted both the Seville Strategy and the Statutory Framework of the World Network, which now constitute the basic texts governing Biosphere Reserves in all countries. These documents are of considerable importance for the conservation *inter alia* of biological diversity and so deserve to be widely disseminated. Copies of these texts, as well as the *Newsletter on Biosphere Reserves*, can be obtained from the Division of Ecological Sciences, UNESCO, 1 rue Miollis, 75732 Paris Cedex 15, France.

#### Strategy for Biosphere Reserves

The Seville Strategy represents a text of some fifteen pages which is fairly dense and carefully structured, and so cannot be easily summarized. After a brief evaluation of the steps taken in implementing the Biosphere Reserve programme since its beginning some twenty years ago, the document provides an up-to-date definition of the concept. Its three basic functions are meant, at least to some extent, to be combined in each site, namely: *conservation* of genetic resources, species, ecosystems, and landscapes; *development* fostering sustainable economic and human progress; and *logistic support* to research and monitoring, to demonstration projects, and to environmental education and training.

These three basic principles of the Biosphere Reserve concept have already been analysed in *Environmental Conservation* (see, for instance, Vol. 17, Nr 2, pp. 111–6 with 5 figs, 1990). This new document now offers a stimulating prospect entitled 'The Vision from Seville for the 21st Century', wherein it outlines ten key directives to be followed in the future, concluding that Biosphere Reserves should 'preserve and generate natural and cultural values through management that is scientifically correct, culturally creative, and operationally sustainable'. Fig. 1 is a schematic representation of a typical Biosphere Reserve.

The Strategy itself follows, providing recommendations for developing effective Biosphere Reserves and setting out the conditions for the proper functioning of the World Network. The Strategy is presented under eleven objectives which are to be pursued at the international, national, or individual site, levels. These objectives can be summarized as follows:

- (i) Improve the coverage by the Network of global biodiversity;

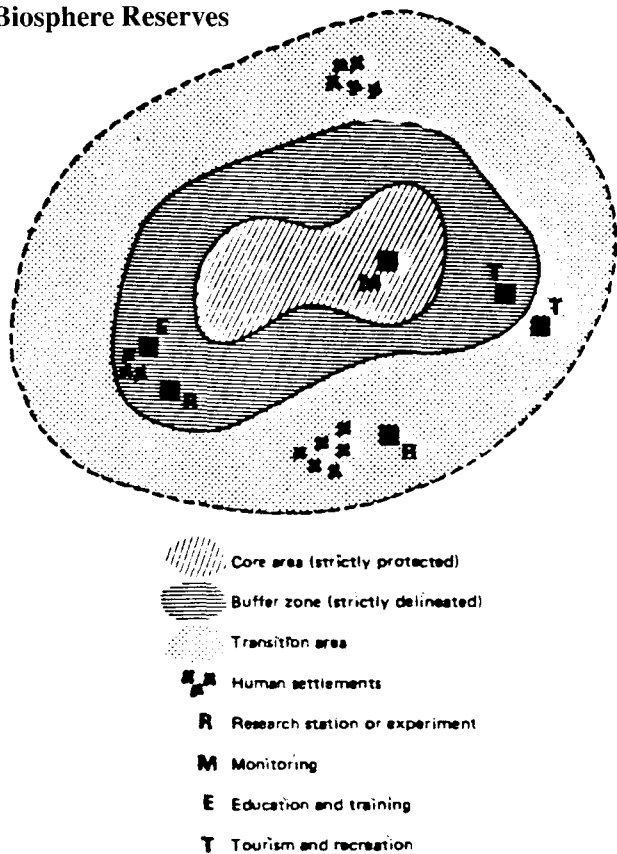


FIG. 1. A schematic representation of a typical Biosphere Reserve.

- (ii) Integrate Biosphere Reserves into conservation planning;
- (iii) Secure the support and involvement of local people;
- (iv) Ensure harmonization and interaction among the different Biosphere Reserve zones;
- (v) Integrate Biosphere Reserves into regional planning;
- (vi) Improve knowledge of interactions between humans and The Biosphere;
- (vii) Improve monitoring activities;
- (viii) Improve education, public awareness, and involvement;
- (ix) Improve training for specialists and managers;
- (x) Integrate the functions of Biosphere Reserves; and
- (xi) Strengthen the World Network, meanwhile maintaining standards with 10-yearly inspections.

Finally, the Strategy enumerates a long list of specific implementation indicators. Over time, these should provide a useful basis to evaluate progress made in carrying out the activities listed under each objective, whether at international, national, or individual site, levels. Thus, the document does not only represent a common, world-wide platform for action but also a yardstick against which the development of the programme can be measured.

#### Statutory Framework of the World Network

Equally important is the second text mentioned, which was formally adopted by the UNESCO General Conference, namely the Statutory Framework of the World Network of Biosphere Reserves. For the first time, this document sets the rules of operation of this hitherto loosely-defined global network and specifies what it actually means and requires for a Biosphere Reserve to be included

in it. The Framework provides for the designation, support, and promotion, of individual Biosphere Reserves, while recalling that they remain under the sole sovereignty of the State in which they are situated. It is sufficiently flexible to take account of the diversity of national and local situations.

The designation procedure specifies that nominations by the States concerned are first considered by UNESCO's Advisory Committee on Biosphere Reserves, for recommendation to the International Co-ordinating Council for the MAB Programme, which decides on their designation. At the same time, States are encouraged to improve the adequacy of existing Biosphere Reserves, and UNESCO and other interested organizations are invited to assist in this process which should prove of great importance — especially as a number of the Biosphere Reserves which were designated in the earlier years of the Programme are not entirely fulfilling their different functions.

#### *Periodic Review Important*

In this respect, a most significant feature of the Statutory Framework is that it provides for the periodic review, every ten years, of each Biosphere Reserve appearing on the list. The carefully designed procedure for this review

will confer a quality label for the sites concerned. It may lead to the removal from the Network, within a reasonable period of time, of any Biosphere Reserves which still do not satisfy the necessary criteria. This should act as a stimulus leading to the improvement of most of the deficient sites and, in any case, will serve to strengthen the World Network as a whole.

In conclusion it can be said that, after the great success achieved by the Seville Conference, which was subsequently made official by having its major documents adopted by the UNESCO General Conference, Biosphere Reserves and the global network which they form are now taking a quantum leap forward. All those concerned with the conservation of biodiversity and ecologically sustainable development will welcome this progress\*.

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\* Of course and bravo! We salute herewith the Author of this note for his tireless promotion of Biosphere Reserves which, striking at the core of the Mankind-Biosphere problem, in turn promote the Environmental Movement more than almost anything else. — Ed.

### **Environmental Activities and Prospects in Uganda**

The Government of Uganda has latterly become very concerned with environmental conservation as a lot of environmental awareness campaigns (EACs) have been launched, by governmental and other bodies, to sensitize the public to the need for, benefit of, and efforts towards various aspects of, conservation. The whole subject is probably as popular as that of foreign aid, and as absorbing as that of AIDS. Thus there are now many environmental nongovernmental organizations coming into being as we multiply *ad hoc* associations, clubs, and research projects.

#### *Some of the Organizations and Efforts*

The Ugandan Ministry of Information's Radio and Television now have programmes in which they broadcast and telecast support for their environmental campaigns by means of songs, plays, proverbs, and poems. Meanwhile the National Environmental Action Plan (NEAP) is concerned with research findings, legislation policy, and institutional arrangements. Also valued is the national energy consumption by households assessment, which at present is being looked into in the belief that, for future progress, such aspects should be taken very seriously.

The Environment Observation and Company Development Organization (EOCDO), which advises groups and coordinates small community projects such as adult environmental literacy classes, tree-planting, and income-generating activities, is another useful development.

Also coming into being are organizations aimed at developing improved relations and understanding between environmentalists, conservationists, and lovers of Nature, who meet with challenging questions and discuss local community and construction issues with due stressing of the need for environmental awareness.

#### *Tourism Rehabilitation and Development Planning (TRDP)*

This ensures the survival of some wildlife habitats and natural ecosystems and wider ecocomplexes in Uganda, while minimizing, at least in chosen areas, the environmental degradation that results from rural poverty. It surely concurs with the World Bank's affirmation that 'alleviating

poverty is both morally imperative and essential for environmental sustainability'. With the same spirit and objectives, the World Wide Fund for Nature (WWF) has started a project inside the 'impenetrable forest' which covers 321 sq km and is home to more than half of the world's Mountain Gorillas (*Gorilla beringei*).

While this last project aims to protect and conserve an important forest habitat, WWF also has another project, called Development Through Conservation (DTC), which focuses on out-of-forest development activities — *e.g.* improving means of land-use, soil conservation, sustainable agriculture, agroforestry practices, and conservation education. DTC is financed primarily by the US Agency for International Development (AID).

#### *Uganda Women's Tree-Planting Association, Etc.*

Women also contribute towards the establishment of sustainable forestry, and a number of women's groups have now started planting nurseries of *Eucalyptus* trees, setting up *Eucalyptus* plantations, and thus contributing to protecting the environment. At the same time the Water Erosion Prediction Project (WEPP) checks soil erosion, creating farm job opportunities and hence alternate sources of income.

The Uganda Youth Voluntary Effort in Afforestation 'Lubya', of which the undersigned is a member, is pursuing activities towards conserving the environment, while the Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment organizes work seminars, shops, and conferences to educate, sensitize, and guide, people on environmental preservation — particularly on important causes and effects of, and solutions to, environmental degradation.

Leaders are asked to plant trees on ceremonial occasions, *e.g.* to mark certain events. Thus for example, King Ronald of Buganda leads a mass tree-planting in his kingdom every year when celebrating his coronation, and it is estimated that 3 million trees have been planted since he started this part of a struggle to conserve the environment. The oil company Shell Uganda Ltd is also actively involved in this struggle, emphasizing the advantages of planting fruit-trees such as Mangoes (*Mangifera indica*),