

Report on the 1st virtual meeting of the World Network of Islands and Coastal Biosphere Reserves

‘Mitigating the Impact of the COVID-19 Pandemic on Island and Coastal Biosphere Reserves’

16 September 2020, 9-11 pm Paris - English
17 September 2020, 15-17 pm Paris - Castellano

Opening remarks

by the Secretariat of the MAB programme. M. Clusener, M. Cardenas
by Jeju Secretariat. Dr. Jeong
by Menorca Secretariat. Irene Estaún
by OAPN. Virginia Estévez

Updates from WNICBR Secretariats in Jeju and Spain

* State of the Network:

The Network counts with 93 coastal and island BR in our contact list (they correspond to participants of one or more of our activities), of which 65 have signed the membership agreement. Every BR is invited to sign the membership letter to formally join the Network.

We've had 6 new incorporations in the last year, they come from Canada, USA, Vietnam, Colombia and Australia. The updated map of the Network can be seen at <http://islandbiosphere.org/mapa2.aspx>. The selected experiences gathered from our partners are also visible in this map, in order to foster the exchange of knowledge and expertise. Participants are encouraged to share with us the most remarkable projects or best practices that are going on in their BR to feed this catalogue.

Moreover, any new, document or event related with our Network can be consulted at:

<http://islandbiosphere.org/> (EN-ES)

<http://www.jeju.go.kr/wnicbr/eng/index.htm> (EN-KO)

Any ideas to improve communication and exchange platforms are welcome.

* Report on the role of island and coastal BR as carbon sinks:

The ongoing project of the Value of Island and Coastal Biosphere Reserves as a Source of Carbon Sink is being carried out by Prof. Jeong (Jeju secretariat) with the collaboration of Menorca, Mauritius and Principe biosphere reserves. The interim report is available at: <http://www.jeju.go.kr/files/convert/201909/d9bdf35f-6e9c-48d2-a9a0-e7e30f319f17.pdf.htm>

* Report on the study of indicators of 4 islands:

There is another cross-sectional study in progress consisting in the comparison by means of indicators of the Spanish islands of Menorca, Lanzarote, Fuerteventura and Eivissa (the last one, not declared BR); this study is being lead by the Socio-Environmental Observatory of Menorca (<https://www.obsam.cat/>) and may serve as a basis to extend the comparison to other islands in the Network.

Some questions arise on the importance of indicators for management and assessment, and since some participants are interested in deepen in the indicators topic, it is proposed to hold a specific meeting or webinar on this issue.

* Presentation of the launch of call for project proposals 2020:

This call aims to financially support projects aimed at mitigating the impact of the pandemic on island&coastal BR territories: 4 projects of 15.000 USD maximum are to be granted, to be

implemented by the end of 2021. Guidelines and application form will be available at the WNICBR websites (<http://islandbiosphere.org/Contingut.aspx?IdPub=1444>)

There are some doubts and questions exposed by participants, and they are clarified by the coordinating team: there is no need to set a financing counterpart; the call is addressed preferentially to declared BR; the call is open to collaborations between BR, and in this case at least one of them should be coastal or island BR. An email will be sent to all the WNICBR member list when the call is open.

*** Presentation of the annual meeting and the training course to be held in 2021:**

The annual meeting is proposed to be held in Germany in autumn 2021, in which the 50th anniversary of the MAB program will be celebrated. BR are encouraged to submit ideas for celebrating this anniversary.

The annual training course to be held in Jeju is postponed to 2021 and it will be open to more participants than in the last editions (up to 20 participants).

*** Announcement of the MICRO2020 Conference:**

This biannual conference will be held from **23-27th of Nov. 2020**, under UNESCO patronage. For the first time it will be online-based with several in-person meeting nodes. It is organized with base in **Lanzarote BR** (as the virtual venue) with the collaboration of the Marine Science For Society researchers' network. BR are encouraged to submit abstracts on their local or regional experiences in fighting plastic pollution. Deadline for abstract submission is 20th September. Registration is free and open till the end of October. <https://micro2020.sciencesconf.org/>

*** Presentation of survey among island and coastal biosphere reserves:**

Joint secretariats Jeju-Menorca wish to prepare a brief, qualitative survey addressed to the network members, in order to gather information on how has the COVID-19 crisis impacted the situation of each BR, concretely the impact on the management structures & processes, and the main concerns of the BR managers; it will help to set the thematic priorities for the next period, have a brief assessment on the network's performance and help to better orientate the support tasks of both secretariats. A brief report or infographic on the situation will be prepared with the results of this survey.

A suggestion from participants for this survey is that it could as well gather information on innovative, inspiring initiatives that are arising in response to the crisis, as for example self-autonomy experiences, alternative ways for income generation, autonomous food supply, etc. Some good practices facing the crisis in the Network can be used as learning examples to be shared and transferred. Another suggestion for this survey is to ask if the BR has governance structure and management plan.

Sharing of ongoing social and economic, professional and life experiences from island and coastal biosphere reserves arisen from COVID-19 and 4. Questions and Answers

16th Sep. *Open round of interventions: there are interventions from Principe (Sao Tome & Principe), Archipelago Sea Area (Finland), Isle of Man, Palawan (Philippines), UNESCO Jakarta (Indonesia), Cascade Head (USA), Mauritius, Urdaibai (Spain), Garden Route (South Africa).*

Views and situations experienced in the different reserves regarding the health crisis have been shared. Most of the participant BR are strongly affected in the tourism services and employment of local populations, and facing different problems related to the confinement such as education services, food supply, energy or drinking water. Food security is a big concern in some of the areas. On the other hand, some interesting initiatives are already underway for the recovery towards a better normality than before, and their follow-up will be interesting in order to integrate and make accessible the knowledge accumulated and the lessons learned throughout this situation.

The dependence on tourism has put many island&coastal territories in a vulnerable situation.

One aspect that is causing concern beyond the current health situation is the growing problem of forest fires, aggravated by climate change. As an example, Cascade Head (West coast of the USA) has experienced a devastating wind storm, with serious fires, unprecedented in their area. The UNESCO MAB program has set wildfires as a new area of work in IberoMAB.

The oil spill on the island of Mauritius due to the grounding of a cargo ship, is a big concern in this region, it has seriously affected mangrove and coral habitats as well as the island's marine and coastal wildlife.

Palawan has postponed the International Conference on Biodiversity to 2021, to which BR of the network will be invited (it will be in virtual or physical format).

17th Sep. *Open round of interventions: there are interventions from the Gulf of California Islands and Cozumel (Mexico), Juan Fernandez Islands (Chile), Mata Atlantica (Brazil), Parque Costero del Sur (Argentina), PN Ciénaga de Santa Marta and PN Sierra Nevada de Santa Marta (Colombia), Lanzarote and Mariñas Coruñas (Spain) and Iroise Islands (France). Some informations/questions shared are:*

In August 2021 it will take place the II Seminario Ibero Americano de Conservacion Costera y Marina en RBs, where active participation of the WNICBR is sought (for more information we should contact Clayton Lino and Heloisa Dias from Mata Atlantica). The Iberoamerican BR network has designed an action plan for the UN Ocean's Decade.

Mariñas Coruñas has participated in a seminar on food security. Information on this and other seminars organized by UNESCO are available at: <https://en.unesco.org/mab/resources>

Other questions commented are about:

- *ecotourism and tourism of science observation as an alternative to minery, oil extraction, etc.*
- *the problems of overpressure by tourism and how to limit it*
- *how to overcome the total dependence of tourism as a source income, more when democracy can be threatened by touristic interests*
- *how to connect science with local population*
- *how to sensitize and communicate to the population the role of BR*

Menorca, 30th September 2020

BR Participants list 16 September 2020: Principe (Sao Tome & Principe), Archipelago Sea Area (Finland), Isle of Man, Palawan (Philippines), UNESCO MAB Jakarta (Indonesia), Cascade Head (USA), Macchabee Bel Ombre (Mauritius), Urdaibai (Spain), Garden Route (South Africa), Socotra (Yemen), Cu Lao Cham - Hoi An (Vietnam), Yakushima (Japan), Commander Islands (Russia).

BR Participants list 17th September 2020: Gulf of California Islands, Cozumel, Sian Ka'an (Mexico), Juan Fernandez Islands (Chile), Mata Atlantica (Brazil), Parque Costero del Sur, Pereyra Iraola (Argentina), PN Ciénaga de Santa Marta, PN Sierra Nevada de Santa Marta, Seaflower (Colombia), Bañados del Este BR (Uruguay), Lanzarote, Mariñas Coruñas, Menorca (Spain) and Iroise Islands (France).

Participants from Jeju Secretariat: Jeong Dai, Kwang Sub Jang, Nami Kim.

Participants from Menorca Secretariat: Irene Estaún, David Carreras, Eva Cardona, Joan Rita

Participants from National Parks Autonomous Body (Spain): Virginia Estévez, Daniel Martínez