

## Transcript of the Video

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What steps must a region go through to be designated by UNESCO as a biosphere reserve and which bodies will be involved in order for a site to become part of the world network of biosphere reserves?

First of all, let us remember that UNESCO is a United Nations agency, where Member States are represented. BRs are established under the auspices of UNESCO's Man and the Biosphere (MAB) programme. The secretariat of MAB is provided by UNESCO's Division of Ecological and Earth Sciences. The main international governing body of MAB is the International Coordinating Council, which is composed of representatives of 34 Member States. The representation of geopolitical regions is balanced. This body generally meets once a year and approves new biosphere reserve designations. It also approves periodic reviews of existing biosphere reserves, which take place every 10 years. The ICC appoints a Bureau, a lighter body. Another expert body, the International Advisory Committee, examines biosphere reserve files from a scientific and technical point of view. These experts, also from different regions of the world, are appointed by the Director-General of UNESCO.

Each biosphere reserve, in order to be recognized, is subject to a nomination process. The Member States submit the candidatures through diplomatic channels, through their Permanent Delegation to UNESCO. Let's recall the steps involved in applying for a site to become a UNESCO biosphere reserve. A file is to be filled in according to a form that everyone can find on the UNESCO website in French, English and Spanish and which can be downloaded in Word or PDF format. It aims to collect a set of information on the site and to ensure that it fulfils the 3 functions and the criteria required to become a BR, namely those described in the Statutory Framework of the World Network of BR of 1995.

The process prior to the application varies in its organization from country to country and can take several years. Once this candidature process is completed, the file is transmitted to UNESCO by the Member State. Each year, countries can submit files to UNESCO before the end of September. Each file will first be checked by the secretariat, which will make sure that all the documents are there, that nothing is missing. Then it will be examined by the technical body, the international advisory committee, this committee of experts who will check that the proposed site meets the criteria of the statutory framework. The advisory committee will make recommendations either to approve the biosphere reserve, or to refuse it, or to approve it on condition that additional documents or clarifications are provided by the member state, which has a few months to do so. The applications and clarifications made, or not, are then examined by the Bureau of the MAB Council, which proposes the sites for designation, proposals that are validated by the MAB International Coordinating Council, generally in plenary session. The MAB ICC usually meets in June/July, which means that it will have taken almost 10 months for the file to be processed within the framework of UNESCO.

So let's go back to the process of submitting candidatures to UNESCO: how does the candidature process take place in the country, and who does what? It depends on the country and I will take two examples, France and Morocco.

In France, the French MAB committee has chosen to support applications from territories that wish to become a biosphere reserve. The initiative is therefore generally local, and may come from associations, researchers or elected representatives. The first step in the application process is a declaration of interest from the territory to the French MAB committee. It will be examined and encouraged if the proposed territory is likely to be able to meet the BR criteria. If this is the case, the deliberation of a local authority or administrative structure bearing the candidacy is requested, as well as membership of MAB France. A whole consultation process is then set up at local level. The application file is studied by MAB France, which will only forward it to UNESCO via the Permanent Delegation when it is deemed appropriate, in order to fulfil the statutory framework and functions expected of a BR.

The MAB France committee attaches great importance to the concertation stages prior to the establishment of the biosphere reserve and proposes that an information phase on the important project be carried out: a website, press articles, public meetings will help explain to the population what a biosphere reserve is, what it will be used for, what its outlines could be, and what role people can play in this process.

The second stage is that of appropriation: it is therefore a question of answering all the questions that arise so that the stakeholders understand the interest, what the biosphere reserve can bring them. Then, a process of co-construction of the project begins: what are the challenges facing the territory, how will the biosphere reserve enable them to be met, what are the priority subjects, who are the stakeholders concerned, all these points will be debated in the villages and towns and will enable the biosphere reserve project to be built. This project will take the form of a management document.

Morocco has another way of proceeding. In Morocco, in the 1980s, it was a question of involving the regions in the dynamics of sustainable local development and promoting them. The biosphere reserve will contribute to the fight against soil degradation, desertification, poverty and the loss of biodiversity. The choice made by the Moroccan state is to work on the scale of traditional production systems, such as the argan grove, for example, which concerns the distribution area of the argan tree, a tree to which very ancient uses are linked. The same applies to palm groves, which are places of great heritage interest. These places present a diversity and originality of land use. Biosphere reserves are established on the scale of regions that have a particular wealth or character. It is also a question of integrating networks of protected areas, a diversity of land use and sites of heritage interest into a vast territory in a sustainable development perspective. It is the Moroccan State, through the Department of Water, Forests and Agriculture, which initiates and presents the dossier to UNESCO. The work of collective appropriation takes place after the designation of the biosphere reserve.