

II SPANISH CONGRESS OF BIOSPHERE RESERVES BIESCAS, TORLA-ORDESA (HUESCA) ORDESA-VIÑAMALA BIOSPHERE RESERVE

18-21 SEPTEMBER 2017

ORDESA-VIÑAMALA DECLARATION SPANISH NETWORK OF BIOSPHERE RESERVES

All representatives of public administrations, as well as civil society organizations involved in the development of the UNESCO MaB Program in Spain and in the management and coordination of Spanish biosphere reserves, meeting in the II Spanish Congress of Biosphere Reserves, held from 18 to 21 September 2017, in Ordesa-Viñamala Biosphere Reserve (Huesca), in commemoration of the 40th anniversary of its declaration:

- Expressing our sincere gratitude to the organizers of the event, the Spanish National Parks Autonomous Agency of the Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries Food and Environment (OAPN), the Government of Aragon and the Consortium of the Ordesa-Viñamala Biosphere Reserve, for the extraordinary work done in the coordination of the II Spanish Congress of Biosphere Reserves, in which the new Action Plan of Ordesa-Viñamala 2017-2025 for the Spanish Network of Biosphere Reserves (RERB) has been agreed. We also thank the staff of the Ordesa and Monte Perdido National Park, the SARGA, the mayors, the local governments and the inhabitants of the Ordesa-Viñamala Biosphere Reserve for the kind hospitality they have extended to all the Congress participants.
- Convinced that the II Spanish Congress of Biosphere Reserves was held at a crucial moment for the UNESCO MaB Program and for the RERB, considering the recent approval of the MaB Program Strategy (2015-2025) and the Lima Action Plan (PAL) for the World Network of Biosphere Reserves (2016-2025) by the International Coordination Council of the MaB Program. Therefore, it is precisely now, when the need to adapt the guidelines of both documents to the particular scenario of the RERB arises.
- Recalling that the Strategy of the MaB Program, the PAL, and the PAOV, approved in the II Spanish Congress of Biosphere Reserves, contemplate in their objectives the integration of the guidelines and proposals of the

Sustainable Development Objectives (ODS), defined in the Agenda 2030 for Sustainable Development, adopted by the United Nations General Assembly in December 2015, and they propose that biosphere reserves of UNESCO should be established as places of excellence and as territorial, social and environmental tools for the achievement of these objectives and, therefore, for the implementation of sustainable socio-economic models.

-Underlining that the biosphere reserve figure is based on the commitment made to UNESCO, not only by public administrations, but also by associations, social groups and the inhabitants of the reserves, to promote and implement models of sustainable development in their territories. The commitment of institutions and individuals is the engine for biosphere reserves to achieve the objectives of UNESCO's MaB Program, and this commitment must be acquired through participatory management processes and by enabling that the inhabitants of the reserves feel they are a fundamental part of its operation.

- Aware that the RERB is of great importance in the global context and that, as the results obtained in the last calculation of the values of the RERB indicators show, we can consider that some aspects such as the organization, planning, participation and functioning of the Spanish biosphere reserves currently have a positive performance. However, we consider that there are still significant deficiencies in fundamental aspects that will have to be rectified in the coming years, taking the new Strategy of the MaB Program, the PAL and the PAOV as a reference.

- Emphasizing the importance of promoting programs and projects that activate sustainable socio-economic processes within biosphere reserves, capable of reactivating and enhancing the local economy and linking it to the basic concepts that inspire the creation of biosphere reserves. In this regard, it is essential to facilitate communication and participation processes and programs on the objectives pursued by the MaB Program, the RERB and the biosphere reserves, and to take advantage of the benefits that the quality brands of the reserves and the brand "Spanish Biosphere Reserves".

- Underscoring the need for the RERB and the biosphere reserves individually to propose and coordinate forums for the exchange of experiences, information and work proposals with strategic groups for the development of the MaB Program. In this context, the scientific community (universities and research centers), associations of entrepreneurs (including farmers, stockbreeders and fishermen), environmental groups and other citizens' associations

(neighborhood associations, women's associations, parents, etc.) acquire particularly importance.

- Urge the Spanish biospheres and their stakeholders to collaborate and participate in international regional and thematic networks sponsored by UNESCO's MaB Program. We consider truly positive the identification of synergies and opportunities for collaboration with other biosphere reserves and organizations, drawing on the experience gained in other countries in relation to the development of the MaB Program and the management of biosphere reserves. It is of special interest for Spanish biosphere reserves network cooperation, especially: IberoMaB Network, EuroMaB Network, Mediterranean Biosphere Reserves Network and Global Islands and Coastal Network.

- Noting that the celebration of the International Year of Sustainable Tourism in 2017 and the renovation time that the UNESCO's MaB Program (and the RERB in particular) are facing at the moment, will be a boost for the tourism sector and a great opportunity for the future to add value to the precious landscapes, and cultural and natural resources of the Spanish biosphere reserves, through the design and implementation of innovative practices of sustainable tourism which generate positive socio-economic effects in their territories.

- Encourage the European public administrations, the Spanish administrations (including regional and local administrations), and the private sector to establish permanent specific mechanisms and funding channels to optimize the management, operation and development of the MaB Program in Spain, the RERB and the biosphere reserves. These entities, aligned with the main international agreements ratified by Spain, try to confront the great environmental and social challenges that we face and whose effects we will endure in the coming decades.

- Propose that UNESCO take the necessary steps so that the member countries agree to raise to the appropriate bodies the worldwide establishment of the "International Day of Biosphere Reserves".

- Encourage the creation of partnerships between Spanish biosphere reserves or between Spanish and other biosphere reserves, in order to collaborate in the design of joint projects that may be eligible for national and international funding programs. This way, biosphere reserves, supported by national committees and regional or thematic networks, will implement their commitment to local development and networking, which will facilitate the provision of funding to the territories

- Aware that women are key to the sustainable development of our peoples and to the society as a whole, that there are still inequalities of opportunities between men and women in our society, and that achieving higher levels of equality is a matter of fundamental human rights and ethical responsibility, we present biosphere reserves as territories for the implementation of effective policies of equality between men and women. As a first approximation to the marked objective, we propose to change the denomination in Castilian of the MaB Program, Man and Biosphere to “MaB Program, Person and Biosphere”.

- State that one of the main problems that the biosphere reserves face is the depopulation of their municipalities. This issue causes a serious economic, social, environmental and management problem that requires action to stop this human exodus. Therefore, administrations are encouraged to take steps to adopt criteria of positive economic and tax discrimination for companies and entrepreneurs located in these areas.

-Call upon the Spanish biosphere reserves to turn into territories where "design for all the people" is implanted, becoming a paradigm of universal accessibility within all their areas (infrastructures, services, offers, etc.), thus facilitating the use and enjoyment for all.

-Agree to submit this statement to the Director-General of UNESCO through the Spanish National Commission for Cooperation with UNESCO, to the Spanish Committee of the MAB Program, to those responsible for biosphere reserves in the autonomous communities, to the management bodies and to the municipalities that constitute the Spanish biosphere reserves, as a sign of the commitment of all the actors involved in the development of the RERB. At the same time, it is of vital importance to make this declaration available to all inhabitants and social groups of the Spanish biosphere reserves, in order to engage them in all that was agreed the II Spanish Congress of Biosphere Reserves.