

Biosphere reserves: The Seville Strategy and the Statutory Framework of the World Network

“Biosphere reserves are designed to deal with one of the most important questions the world faces today: How can we reconcile the conservation of biodiversity, the quest for economic and social development and the maintenance of associated cultural values?”

- Seville Strategy 1996, p. 3, UNESCO

- In March 1995, an international conference held in Seville, Spain, resulted in recommended actions for Biosphere Reserves, known as the “Seville Strategy”, to respond to concerns raised during the UN conference on Environment and Development in Rio de Janeiro and the Convention on Biological Diversity (1992).
- Biosphere Reserves are areas of representative or unique coastal/marine and or terrestrial ecosystems of national and international significance according to the UNESCO Man and the Biosphere Programme (MAB) criteria. Within those designated areas, communities agree to become, *‘theatres for reconciling people and nature, they can bring the knowledge of the past to the needs of the future, they can demonstrate how to overcome the problems of the sectoral nature of our institutions’*. (1996 p.7 UNESCO).

The Seville Strategy:

In sum, biosphere reserves should preserve and generate natural and cultural values through management that is scientifically correct, culturally creative and operationally sustainable. The World Network of Biosphere Reserves, as implemented through the Seville Strategy, is thus an integrating tool which can help to create greater solidarity among peoples and nations of the world.” (1995 p. 8 UNESCO).

The strategy outlined concrete goals to unite and guide the WNBR

Goal 1: Use Biosphere Reserves to Conserve Natural and Cultural Biodiversity

Objective 1.1: Improve the coverage of natural and cultural biodiversity by means of the World Network of Biosphere Reserves

Objective 1.2: Integrate biosphere reserves into conservation planning

Goal 2.: Utilize Biosphere Reserves as Models of Land Management and of Approaches to Sustainable Development

Objective 2.1: Secure the support and involvement of local people

Objective 2.2: Ensure better harmonization and interaction among the different biosphere zones

Objective 2.3: Integrate biosphere reserves into regional planning

Goal 3: Use Biosphere Reserves for Research, Monitoring, Education and Training

Objective 3.1: Improve knowledge of the interactions between humans and the biosphere

Objective 3.2: Improve monitoring activities

Objective 3.3: Improve education, public awareness and involvement

Goal 4: Implement the Biosphere Reserve Concept

Objective 4.1: Integrate the functions of biosphere reserves

Objective 4.2: Strengthen the World Network of Biosphere Reserves

Statutory Framework General Criteria to be met to qualify for BR designation:

This Statutory Framework is intended to contribute to the widespread recognition of biosphere reserves and to encourage and promote good working examples". (1996, p.18, UNESCO).

Designation, Support and Promotion of Biosphere Reserves:

1. The Biosphere Region should include a number of ecosystems that represent major biogeographic regions significant for the conservation of biological diversity and have a history of human interventions;
2. The region should show evidence of demonstrating approaches to sustainable development on a regional scale;
3. Biosphere reserves should form a worldwide network and contribute to the objectives of the Convention on Biological Diversity;
4. Each reserve must be nominated by national governments and large enough to fulfil three functions:
 - 1) **a conservation function:** to preserve genetic resources, species, ecosystems and landscapes;
 - 2) **a development function:** to foster sustainable economic and human development; and
 - 3) **a logistical function:** to support demonstration projects, environmental education and training, monitoring related to local, national and global issues of conservation and sustainable development.
5. It should include these functions through appropriate zonation, recognizing:
 - a. a legally constituted core area devoted to long term protection;
 - b. a buffer zone or zones surrounding core areas; and
 - c. an outer transition zone where sustainable management practices are promoted and developed.
6. While the 3 zones were initially intended to form a series of concentric rings, a wide range of zonation patterns have been implemented to meet local needs and conditions. "In fact, one of the greatest strengths of the biosphere reserve concept has been the flexibility and creativity with which it has been realized in various situations. [] The Seville Strategy for Biosphere Reserves reflects this wide range of circumstances." (1995 p. 6 UNESCO).
7. Organizational arrangements should engage public authorities, local communities and private interests in the design and carrying out the functions of the BR;
8. In addition, provisions should be made for:
 - a. Mechanisms to manage human use and activities in the buffer zone or zones, and bring together all interest groups in a partnership approach with information sharing;
 - b. A management policy or plan for the area as a BR;
 - c. A designated authority to implement this policy or plan;
 - d. Programmes for research, monitoring, education and training; and
 - e. A periodic review every 10 years.