

ECOTOURISM AND SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT IN BIOSPHERE RESERVES: EXPERIENCES AND PROSPECTS

Workshop meeting of the UNESCO Man and the Biosphere Programme
of the European and North American countries (EuroMAB) in conjunction with
The Canadian Commission for UNESCO

Quebec City, Canada, 23-24 May, 2002.

WORKSHOP SUMMARY REPORT

UNITED NATIONS EDUCATIONAL SCIENTIFIC AND CULTURAL ORGANIZATION
MAN AND THE BIOSPHERE PROGRAM

CANADIAN COMMISSION FOR UNESCO

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Introduction.....	3
Workshop Programme	4
Opening Remarks	5
Ecotourism and Biosphere Reserves.....	5
Workshop Objectives, and Expected Outcomes.	7
Host Country Introductory Presentation.....	8
The International Perspective.....	8
2002 : International Year of Ecotourism and World Ecotourism Summit.....	10
The implementation of Sustainable Tourism Development in Biosphere reserves of Central and Eastern Europe using the UNEP-CBD Internatioinal Guidelines.....	11
Sustainable Tourism Certification in Canada	13
Sustainable Tourism: A Comparison of Opportunities and Challenges in Rural and Urban Biosphere Reserves	14
Biosphere Reserves and Ecotourism in Russia.....	16
Some Factors in the Relationship between Tourism and Biosphere Reserves.....	17
Draft Recommendations of the Quebec City Declaration on Ecotourism, and Comments on the World Summit.....	18
Small Group Discussions and Recommendations	22
Biosphere Reserves, Tourism, and Science in Lithuania.....	27
Final Plenary Session Comments	28
References.....	30
Participants	31
Appendix A - Draft Quebec City Declaration on Tourism and Recommendations.....	34

INTRODUCTION

The World Ecotourism Summit, organized by the World Tourism Organization (WTO) and the United Nations Environment Programme and held in Quebec City, Canada 19-22 May 2002, provided opportunity to explore the many dimensions of ecotourism and how they relate to our cultural values, our economies, our education, and our ability to cope with, and in a positive way have an influence on the environmental, demographic, social and economic changes that are in store for all of us. The EuroMAB specialist workshop was convened following the World Summit to consider an important aspect of this whole question - the role of ecotourism in UNESCO MAB Biosphere Reserves.

The EuroMAB workshop was a follow-up activity to the joint meeting of the UNESCO Man and the Biosphere Programme (MAB) National Committees and Biosphere Co-ordinators of European and North American countries which was held in Cambridge, UK, in April 2000. It was also intended to be the basis for contribution to the forthcoming EuroMAB meeting to be held in Rome, in October 2002. The Workshop was funded jointly by the Canadian Commission for UNESCO and by the Division of Ecological Sciences of UNESCO. A meeting room and facilities for the Workshop were generously provided by the Government of Quebec and the World Tourism Organization.

The workshop was chaired by Dr. Fred Roots, chair of the Canadian National Committee for MAB. Mr. Benoit Charlebois, representative of the Canadian Commission for UNESCO, served as workshop organizer, and Ms. Sherry-Lee Sian of the Canadian Biosphere Reserve Association and the Sustainable Tourism Association of Canada volunteered to be rapporteur.

A total of 23 participants representing 11 countries participated, 18 of whom attended both days. A few others, including a program officer from the Korean National Commission for UNESCO, a German consultant working with the German International Co-operation Agency (GTZ), a philosopher and long-standing member of the Charlevoix Biosphere Reserve, a tourism consultant from France, a Summit organizer from Tourisme Quebec, attended one of the days or came in and out sporadically.

WORKSHOP PROGRAM

Friday May 24, 2002

- 08:45 – 09:15 Opening Remarks – Biosphere Reserves and the concept of Ecotourism- Fred Roots
- 09:15 – 09:45 Host Country Introductory Presentation – Christian Hart
- 09:45 – 10:30 International Perspective – Jane Robertson Vernhes
- 10:30 – 10:45 Break
- 10:45 – 11:15 Characteristic Features of Biosphere Reserves vs. Tourism – Fred Roots
- 11:15 - 12:00 Brief summary of the World Ecotourism Summit - Benoit Charlebois
- 12:00 – 13:30 Lunch and informal discussions
- 13:30 – 15:00 Case Study: implementation of sustainable tourism in Central and Eastern European BR using the UNEP/CBD International Guidelines- Michael Meyer
- 15:00 – 15:30 Break
- 15:30 – 16:00 Case Study: Sustainable Tourism Certification – Jennifer Sipkens
- 16:00 – 16:30 Question Period and Discussion
- 16:30 – 17:15 Case Study: A comparison of opportunities and challenges in rural and urban Biosphere Reserves – Sherry Sian
- 17:15 – 17:45 Question Period and Discussion

Saturday, May 25th, 2002

- 08:30 – 09:30 Case Study: Ecotourism Development in Biosphere Reserves in Russia – Natalia Moraleva
- 09:30 – 10:15 Factors in the relationship between Biosphere Reserves and Tourism – Fred Roots
- 10:15 – 10:30 Break
- 10:30 - 11:00 Discussion of Quebec City Declaration and World Summit on Ecotourism
- 11:15 – 12:30 Small Discussion Groups
- 12:30 – 13:30 Lunch-Illustration of Biosphere Reserves in Romania – Constantin Cazacu
- 13:30 – 15:30 Discussion Groups
- 15:30 – 16:00 Break
- 16:00 – 16:30 The MAB Program, Science, and Tourism in Lithuania – Prof. Leonardas Kairiukstis
- 16:30 – 17:00 Discussion Group Recommendations and General Discussion
- 17:00 - Closing

OPENING REMARKS

Dr. Fred Roots welcomed participants on behalf of the Canadian National Committee for the UNESCO Man and the Biosphere Programme, and the Canadian Commission for UNESCO. He expressed his pleasure that the workshop had brought together people with such a wide variety of backgrounds and experiences, and yet numbers were small enough for everyone to share ideas and problems, and to discuss prospects for the future. The workshop was to be a more intimate, democratic and informal affair than the World Summit. However, each participant could bring the wisdom and insight from all the information and discussions that had taken place at the Summit earlier in the week.

Dr. Roots acknowledged the excellent work that Mr. Benoit Charlebois and the Canadian Commission for UNESCO had done in organizing the meeting. He welcomed especially Dr. Jane Robertson Vernhes from the UNESCO Division of Ecological Sciences, Paris, whose presence provided international endorsement to this EuroMAB activity. He expressed thanks to the Government of Quebec and the World Tourism Organization for generously providing meeting facilities and services.

Owing to the fact that the World Summit Declaration and Recommendations were still in draft form with final amendments pending, it was determined to proceed in discussions about ecotourism in Biosphere Reserves in the spirit of the Declaration rather than based strictly on the recommendations themselves. However, the Chair proposed that he present for discussion some comments on selected draft recommendations that might apply to or be helpful to Biosphere Reserves, as an introduction to working group discussions. It was therefore agreed that comments on the Summit would, in the main, be deferred to the second day, and the agenda was modified accordingly.

ECOTOURISM AND BIOSPHERE RESERVES

Dr. Roots opened the discussions with a background overview on Biosphere Reserves, EuroMAB, and ecotourism and its connection to Biosphere Reserves. Biosphere Reserves are an activity of the UNESCO Man and the Biosphere Programme (MAB). In the words of the rather prosaic UNESCO definition, Biosphere Reserves exist “to promote and demonstrate a balanced relationship between people and Nature.” They endeavour to demonstrate and promote this balanced relationship by focussing on ecosystems, not on specific natural features or conspicuous species, nor on preservation for its own sake, but on the interaction between ecosystems and human activities in a place where a range of actions and effects can be studied scientifically. This is achieved, in a successful Biosphere Reserve, through the three interdependent functions of conservation, social and economic development, and logistics support for research, communication, and education.

The accomplishment of these functions in a local as well as international setting involves all the aspects of UNESCO - Education, Science, and Culture - and if advantage is taken of the opportunities, can be enriched and facilitated internationally through the World Network of Biosphere Reserves and through regional MAB groupings like EuroMAB.

In the past fifteen years, the national MAB committees of the 42-nation “European” region of UNESCO - which includes Canada and the USA - have found informal meetings held every second year a useful way of communicating and exchanging ideas on common themes in the broad spectrum of UNESCO Man and the Biosphere activities. An important component of these activities has to do with MAB Biosphere Reserves. Therefore it was a logical and progressive step for the Seventh EuroMAB meeting, held in Cambridge, United Kingdom, in April 2000, to be a joint meeting between representatives of MAB national committees and Coordinators or Managers of Biosphere Reserves from EuroMAB countries.

At EuroMAB VII in Cambridge, there had been lively discussion of the various MAB-related and Biosphere Reserve-related international activities that could be carried out in the next two years to make the co-ordination and exchange at the following EuroMAB VIII meeting in October 2002 even more productive. International meetings and workshops were announced or planned for regional groups (Northern Sciences Network, Canada), on changing cultural values (Slovakia), ethnic-ecology (France), thematic monitoring (Ukraine), conflict resolution (France), wetlands (Czech republic). Canada, aware of the plans for the World Summit on Ecotourism, proposed to hold a workshop on “Ecotourism in Biosphere Reserves”. This suggestion was accepted by EuroMAB, and the present Workshop is the result.

The concept of ecotourism and the concept of Biosphere Reserves go together in many ways. Some people feel that although tourism is and should be an important activity in Biosphere Reserves, especially in the core areas, the only responsible tourism in these areas is ecologically conscious and sustainable tourism, thus “ecotourism”. Others have pointed out, however, that there are some distinctive and possibly difficult aspects to ecotourism in Biosphere Reserves that must be considered if ecotourism is to contribute positively to all functions of a Biosphere Reserve - in the core area, the buffer zones, and the transition or cooperation zone -, and if the Biosphere Reserve is to contribute in a strong and positive way to the ecotourism experience. For it is that positive experience, which requires a high level of knowledge and preparation from both leaders and participants, that will give the ecotourists the emotional and inspirational stimulus that Biosphere Reserves can provide, and develop increased understanding and perspective so that they will take henceforth an active personal responsibility toward the natural environment. If it can achieve this understanding and commitment, ecotourism can help Biosphere Reserves fulfill their responsibilities to demonstrate a balanced relationship between humans and Nature.

A decade ago, a perceptive report of the Canadian Environmental Advisory Council called “Ecotourism in Canada”(Scace, et.al., 1992) drew attention to characteristics of ecotourism in protected and managed areas, that had been identified by Prof. James Butler (Butler, 1990). Although the situations and institutions are always evolving, the characteristics of ecotourism in protected and environmentally managed areas listed by Butler are pertinent today:

- 1) Ecotourism must promote positive environmental ethics - fostering environmentally conscious behaviour in its participants;
- 2) Ecotourism does not degrade the natural resource or interfere with natural environmental processes.
- 3) Ecotourism concentrates on intrinsic rather than extrinsic values. Facilities and services never become attractions in their own right.
- 4) Ecotourism is biocentric rather than homocentric in philosophy. Ecotourists enter the environment accepting it on its terms, not expecting it to be modified for their convenience.
- 5) Ecotourism must benefit the wildlife and natural environment. The environment and ecological functions remain essentially undisturbed by the tourism.
- 6) Ecotourism provides a first-hand experience with the natural environment. Movies and zoological parks do not constitute an ecotourism experience.
- 7) Ecotourism has an “expectation of gratification” that is measured in terms of education and/or appreciation rather than in thrill-seeking or physical achievement.
- 8) Ecotourism has a high knowledge-based and experience-based dimension.

Dr. Roots emphasized that Prof. Butler had stated that successful ecotourism involves a high level of participation and knowledge from both leaders and participants, and the satisfaction derived from the experiences is felt and expressed strongly in emotional and inspirational ways. The environment and the biosphere also will be less affected over the long term by virtue of ecotourism experiences than by most other kinds of tourism.. Thus ecotourism can be an effective vehicle for promoting the concrete values of Biosphere Reserves.

Dr. Roots suggested that workshop participants would find it interesting to compare Butler's list of characteristics of successful ecotourism with the working definition of ecotourism that was proposed by the WTO and UNEP in the first draft of the proposed Quebec City Declaration on Ecotourism, dated May 15, 2000, and distributed to all participants at the World Summit. This statement is as follows:-

“For the purposes of this International Year (of Ecotourism), the organisations commissioned by the United Nations to undertake international activities during this year agreed that:

- 1) Ecotourism includes all nature-based forms of tourism in which the main motivation of the tourists is the observation and appreciation of nature as well as the traditional cultures prevailing in natural areas.
- 2) Ecotourism includes interpretation/learning experience
- 3) Ecotourism is generally, but not exclusively organised for independent travellers and small groups by specialised and small, locally owned businesses. Foreign operators of varying sizes also organise, operate and/or market ecotourism tours, generally for small groups.
- 4) It minimises negative impacts upon the natural and socio-cultural environment.
- 5) It supports the protection of natural areas by:
 - Generating economic benefits for host communities, organisations and authorities managing natural areas with conservation purposes;
 - Providing alternative employment and income opportunities for local communities
 - Increasing awareness towards the conservation of natural and cultural assets, both among locals and tourists”.

WORKSHOP OBJECTIVES, AND EXPECTED OUTCOMES

Dr. Roots reminded participants that the original Workshop Objectives, stated in the letter announcing the Workshop with an invitation to participate, were:-

“Within the context of the experiences and opportunities of Biosphere reserves in Europe and North America:

- 1) To exchange experiences related to ecotourism in Biosphere Reserves, and discuss lessons learned therefrom;
- 2) To present selected case studies, including the experience of the Ecological Tourism in Europe (ETE) activities in applying the guidelines developed by the Convention on Biological Diversity;

- 3) To present the Canadian Sustainable Tourism Certification Program and point out the relevance to Biosphere Reserves through a Canadian case study in a Biosphere Reserve;
- 4) To examine the recommendations of the World Summit on Ecotourism to identify those that are relevant and applicable to Biosphere Reserves.
- 5) To develop a Plan of Action and Information Exchange related to ecotourism and tourism in general in Biosphere Reserves in Europe and North America;
- 6) To identify specific projects for individual or co-operative action.

He felt that, in view of subsequent developments and the still incomplete stage of the Summit Declaration, it would be premature to develop a single Plan of Action for Ecotourism that would be useful in all EuroMAB Biosphere Reserve. He hoped that the Workshop would be most valuable as a forum for exchange of information and experiences, and establishment of contacts between Biosphere Reserves in the context of tourism. The Workshop should try to develop some common recommendations or guidelines for ecotourism in Biosphere Reserves which can be implemented as appropriate within each participating country. It should provide the basis for a report to the EuroMAB VIII meeting in Rome in October 2002. These recommendations and guidelines should where appropriate be helped by and be compatible with the discussions at and recommendations from the World Summit.

Dr. Robertson Vernhes added that, taking into account the large size of the Ecotourism Summit and the sweeping range of its recommendations, a Plan of Action based on the Summit recommendations was not likely to be effective. Nevertheless, this smaller workshop, benefiting from the Summit but focusing on Biosphere Reserves, could produce a useful document for discussion of Ecotourism at the forthcoming EuroMAB meeting.

HOST COUNTRY INTRODUCTORY PRESENTATION

Mr. Christian Hart, co-founder and board member of the Lac St-Pierre Biosphere Reserve, presented some distinctive features of this singular Biosphere Reserve as an example of a working Biosphere Reserve in Canada. He highlighted the local tourism-based ventures that helped to prevent major ecological destruction, generated unprecedented environmental awareness in the public and in businesses, supported economic and cultural growth and establishment of protected areas. Ecotourism itself played a part in the redistribution of environmental and economic benefits. Several participants had visited this Biosphere Reserve on May 23rd as part of the World Ecotourism Summit Excursion Program.

THE INTERNATIONAL PERSPECTIVE

Dr. Jane Robertson Vernhes, Senior Program Specialist responsible for the International MAB Program, Division of Ecological Sciences, UNESCO, greeted all participants on behalf of UNESCO, the workshop's organising partner. She gave a brief account of the international context surrounding sustainable tourism and Biosphere Reserves.

- The UN has declared year 2002 as the International Year of Ecotourism (IYE) to review ecotourism experiences around the world, in order to consolidate activities and institutional frameworks that ensure its sustainable future development. This goal is achieved with

international, regional and local initiatives in partnership with other UN bodies, international organizations, Member States, the private sector, NGOs, local communities and academia.

- The UNESCO MAB Programme and its World Network of Biosphere Reserves seek to help guide tourism towards a more sustainable path. Biosphere Reserves are sites established by countries participating in the MAB Programme to promote biodiversity conservation and sustainable development based on local community efforts and sound science. They are ideal places to test and develop innovative tourism models that benefit local people and maintain distinctive cultures, biodiversity and associated values.
- Following several decades of rapid growth, the tourism sector is of increasing interest in sustainable development discussions. By its very nature, tourism is ambivalent - generating well-known advantages but also problems.
- With 408 Biosphere Reserves in 94 countries, the World Network of Biosphere Reserves is a unique tool for international co-operation that could help to develop sustainable tourism through sharing of knowledge, best practices and experiences for designing and managing ecotourism.
- Examples of ongoing MAB activities in Biosphere Reserves at the national, regional and international levels include projects to test the draft UNEP/Convention on Biological Diversity International Guidelines for Sustainable Tourism, capacity building and training programmes, research and case studies on ecotourism. MAB is also an active partner in the Tour Operators Initiative (TOI) and collaborates with several other UNESCO initiatives in the area of sustainable tourism ranging from the promotion of strategies for sustainable tourism development, for poverty reduction in the Sahara, to the development of cultural tourism in the mountainous regions of Central Asia and the Himalayas.

Dr. Robertson noted examples of tourism related MAB activities in selected Biosphere Reserves:

- MAB Young Scientists Award Research related to tourism in Biosphere Reserves;
 - "Green label" schemes for environment-friendly products, in co-operation with tourism companies and associations. West Estonian Archipelago Biosphere Reserve (Estonia);
 - Assessment of conflicting demands for water by tourism installations and other users. Amboseli Biosphere Reserve (Kenya);
 - Nature-based tourism programmes tailored for such interests as bird watching, canoeing and large wild-life (wolf, elk, wild boar) re-establishment. Berezinsky Biosphere Reserve (Belarus), in co-operation with Vosges du Nord Biosphere Reserve (France);
 - Indicators of trail resource condition. Southern Appalachian Biosphere Reserve (United States);
 - Promotion of Canadian Biosphere Reserves as world-class ecotourism and/or education/adventure travel destinations through a national project of the Canadian Biosphere Reserve Association (CBRA).
- By often targeting unique or sensitive ecosystems and local, traditional cultures, the ecotourism industry can cause disruption. The recognition of this real or potential problem is a principal reason why the UN has declared the International Year of Ecotourism 2002. Studies to date describing potential benefits to the environment and

landscape, and also those cataloguing the disbenefits or problems from tourism are both becoming numerous; however they have been inconclusive about whether ecotourism itself is profitable, and whether it helps to maintain the quality (attractiveness) and thus the “value” of the destination. It is the objective of the MAB Programme to contribute to better understanding of these problems through dedicated international dialogue, co-operation and networking.

- In the area of sustainable tourism, MAB collaborates with a number of international organizations and partners, such as United Nations Environmental Programme (UNEP), Global Environmental Facility (GEF), World Trade Organization (WTO), World Travel and Tourism Council (WTTC), World Heritage Center (WHC), International Council of Scientific Unions-Scientific Committee on Problems of the Environment (ICSU-SCOPE), Conservation International (CI), Ramsar Bureau, and others.

INTERNATIONAL YEAR OF ECOTOURISM AND WORLD ECOTOURISM SUMMIT

The backdrop to this EUROMAB Workshop was the UN International Year of Ecotourism and the WTO/UNEP World Ecotourism Summit held between May 19th and 22nd, 2002 in Quebec City.

The CCU and UNESCO had encouraged all registered participants to attend the Summit prior to the Workshop in order to explore the connections between the broader topics related to ecotourism in today’s world and the more specific concerns surrounding sustainable tourism in Biosphere Reserves. All but two participants had attended the Summit either as speakers or delegates.

Mr. Charlebois briefly summarized the 3-day Summit conference.

The Summit itself was the culmination of ten regional preparatory conferences, which involved more than 2000 stakeholders around the world. More than 1200 people from over 130 countries attended the Quebec City Summit itself, making it the landmark event of the Year of Ecotourism and the largest ever gathering of stakeholders involved in ecotourism.

The formal Agenda addressed reports from the Regional Preparatory Meetings on the first day, followed by Workshops covering the main 4 areas of concern for Ecotourism worldwide namely, Planning and Product Development, Control and Regulation, Marketing and Promotion, and Cost and Benefits. The second day concluded with two broad discussions about, on the one hand, private sector tourism operators and, on the other hand, development agencies and NGOs.

The meeting concluded with discussions of a draft document that, when finalized, will become “The Quebec City Declaration on Ecotourism”. However, the formal text was not approved by the plenary. The EuroMAB workshop decided therefore that it would not be appropriate to examine the Draft Declaration in a formal fashion (the original Objective No. 4 of the Workshop) but that it would be more useful to comment on selected draft recommendations during the general and group discussion the next day.

The draft Declaration as distributed to the plenary session of the Summit is reproduced in Appendix A.

Dr. Roots had compiled for discussion a list of selected recommendations from the draft Declaration that were pertinent to Biosphere Reserves. Copies of the list would be available to participants the next day and discussed, together with general comments on the Summit itself, as an introduction to discussions on selected themes in small groups.

PRESENTATIONS AND CASE STUDIES

**THE IMPLEMENTATION OF SUSTAINABLE TOURISM DEVELOPMENT
IN BIOSPHERE RESERVES IN CENTRAL AND EASTERN EUROPE
USING THE UNEP-CBD INTERNATIONAL GUIDELINES**

A CASE STUDY BY MICHAEL MEYER, ECOLOGICAL TOURISM IN EUROPE

The Association of Ecological Tourism in Europe (ETE) was formed in Bonn, Germany in 1991 as a forum of nations dedicated to supporting environmentally and socially responsible tourism.

The ETE aims to offer information and education about environmentally friendly and sustainable forms of tourism to providers of tourism services and tourists; to initiate, support, and carry out model projects to promote environmentally friendly and socially responsible tourism; to provide the basis for political and administrative lobbying; and to initiate and implement an environmental award scheme for the national tourism industry.

A proposal was submitted by the ETE to carry out a case study to implement the United Nations Environment Programme/Convention on Biological Diversity (UNEP/CBD) Guidelines. The Global Environmental Facility of UNEP rejected the proposal, so a new submission was developed for implementation in the Sumava Biosphere Reserve (Czech Republic), Aggtelek Biosphere Reserve (Hungary), Babia Gora Biosphere Reserve (Poland), Golija Studenica Biosphere Reserve (Serbia), and Polana and Slovensky Kras Biosphere Reserve (Slovak Republic). Germany will have to seek funding elsewhere, according to GEF rules.

The project objectives are:

- 1) To facilitate an inclusive consultative process involving local communities and all other stakeholders;
- 2) To develop a strategic framework for the management of tourism and biodiversity based on the guidelines of the Convention for Biological Diversity (CBD);
- 3) To design and implement a public awareness and education program;
- 4) To design and establish a scientific monitoring system and carry out targeted studies to understand critical ecosystem elements for resilience;
- 5) To strengthen the capacity for tourism and biodiversity management;
- 6) To strengthen existing policies, regulations and legislation to ensure they are consistent with the conservation of biodiversity; and
- 7) To identify two to four model areas for visitor management in each Biosphere Reserve.

The project will be implemented over a three-year period, starting in 2003.

The expected outcomes are:

- Replicable models of sustainable tourism in Biosphere Reserves based on the CBD Tourism Guidelines;

- Growth of a network of stakeholders to promote sustainable tourism development supportive of biodiversity conservation;
- Transparent policy process for facilitating public participation in tourism development and for resolving conflicts between competing objectives for the improved socio-economic welfare of local communities;
- Strengthened institutional and management frameworks for ensuring biodiversity conservation and sustainable tourism development;
- Strengthened management capacities of selected Biosphere Reserves;
- Enhanced knowledge of the opportunities and the barriers in each Biosphere Reserve to contribute to the development of a scientific monitoring system;
- Enforceable laws, regulations and policies in respective host countries for biodiversity friendly tourism; and
- Not less than two and no more than four model areas for visitor management in Biosphere Reserves.

SUSTAINABLE TOURISM CERTIFICATION
A CASE STUDY BY JENNIFER SIPKENS, SUSTAINABLE TOURISM ASSOCIATION OF CANADA

Ecotourism is loosely defined, and polished marketing has contributed to “green-washing” of ecotourism in North America. In response, codes of ethics, ecotourism criteria, and guidelines are becoming more prevalent in the ecotourism and adventure travel business sectors as public concern over the environment grows. However, these systems are often voluntary, self-designed and self-imposed, and there is no mechanism for authenticating the sustainable practices of the tour operator. A certification program whereby operators comply with a set of standards, exhibit an accepted level of performance to participate in the certification program and are audited for compliance will help to identify exemplary operators.

The Sustainable Tourism Association of Canada (STAC) that grew out of the Ecotourism Product Club of the Canadian Biosphere Reserves Association conducted a national study to assess the status of ecotourism in Canada and produced initial standardized sustainable tourism criteria.

The development of the Sustainable Tourism Certification Program began in June 2000. The Sustainable Tourism Certification Program was based on the “Horizons Certification Programme” developed in Saskatchewan and then refined based on analysis of Australia and Costa Rica certification programs, Agenda 21 for the Travel and Tourism Industry, and the Tourism Industry Association of Canada’s (TIAC) Sustainable Tourism Guidelines.

Several ecotour operators in Biosphere Reserves and throughout the country tested and provided feedback on the test certification program. Specialists in environmental management, community economic development (emphasizing tourism), and natural resource management were invited to review the standards. This feedback was used to refine the program.

The standards have been adapted to Canada’s environmental, social and cultural diversity. They have now been tested by several operators across the country. A grading system and auditing program will be developed to ensure compliance with the standards, and to lend credibility to sustainable tourism products in Canada. The certification program will also provide tools to assist operators who want to increase their level of performance.

There are no studies to date which clearly establish the economic benefits of certified versus non-certified ecotourism products. STAC does not guarantee greater profitability from adopting the standards, only cost-savings and more sustainable business. It can be reasonably expected that certification to environmentally acceptable standards will increase public credibility, expand public support and participation, and justify investment. Ultimately, the standards should enhance sound business profitability and should help to maintain the quality (attractiveness) and thus the value of the destinations.

To be considered for certification, tourism businesses must exhibit proper business and operating licenses and assure the STAC that all government regulations are met. From there, they must meet a minimum level of criteria to participate in the program. This will ensure that certified businesses understand and demonstrate sustainable tourism principles.

Further information about the Canadian Ecotourism Certification Program can be obtained from the Sustainable Tourism Association of Canada at jsipkens@telusplanet.net.

**SUSTAINABLE TOURISM: A COMPARISON OF OPPORTUNITIES AND CHALLENGES
IN RURAL AND URBAN BIOSPHERE RESERVES
A CASE STUDY BY MS. SHERRY SIAN, SUSTAINABLE TOURISM ASSOCIATION OF CANADA**

Many assessments look at ecotourism operations from the Biosphere Reserve perspective but this examination attempts to examine and compare opportunities and challenges to tourism in rural and in urban Biosphere Reserves in Canada based on Redberry Lake Biosphere Reserve (Saskatchewan) and Niagara Escarpment Biosphere Reserve (Ontario).

Redberry Lake is a 5,600 hectare saline lake in a heavily cultivated, closed watershed in the farmland prairie of central Saskatchewan. A Regional Park with cottages and recreation facilities is located on the Northwest shore. Sailboats and swimmers can be seen using the lake on summer days. With a declining agricultural economy and substantial outmigration, the hope for the future economy hinges on ecotourism and recreation industries. Both a Migratory Bird Sanctuary and an Important Bird Area, the rich diversity of bird species provides a huge draw for bird watchers. A Sustainable Community Plan recently identified ecotourism development as necessary to sustained development within the area.

The Niagara Escarpment is a linear continuous topographic feature in south-central Ontario, that stretches from Niagara Falls to the tip of the Bruce Peninsula through the most heavily populated and highly developed region of Canada. Protected areas along the escarpment make the core areas of the Biosphere Reserve. The area is a prized location for homes and cottages as well as the location of small extractive industries and varied agriculture, providing heterogeneous buffer zones and zones of co-operation in the Biosphere Reserve. It is a tourist magnet; 117 parks and protected areas are strung along its 725-km length connected by a continuous walking path, the Bruce Trail. Most of the Niagara Escarpment is privately owned, including many of its core natural areas. Land use is governed by the provincial government Niagara Escarpment Plan. This Plan implements a development approval process and has established criteria for minimizing cumulative effects to maintain the natural and cultural heritage of the area.

The comparative assessment noted the following contrasts:

1) Community Involvement and Leadership

- Redberry – Community leadership is exercised by the Redberry Lake Regional Economic Development Authority which includes rural (4) and urban (1) municipalities as well as a representative of the regional park and founding NGO. This mechanism serves the roughly 600 residents of the Biosphere Reserve.
- Niagara Escarpment – Leadership is provided by the Ontario provincial government Niagara Escarpment Commission and associated staff. Three nodal, community-based advisory committees are planned but only one is operational. This mechanism seeks to involve the roughly 120,000 residents of the Biosphere Reserve.

2) Infrastructure

- Redberry – A secondary highway in poor state of repair provides the only access. There is no bus service to the communities. The closest international airport is 1 hour drive away from the Town of Hafford in the heart of the Biosphere Reserve. Communications are somewhat limited with intermittent access by cell phone and limited internet access throughout the Biosphere Reserve that may hinder operations, restrict marketing opportunities and educational programs typically associated with ecotourism.
- Niagara Escarpment – The high resident population creates a sufficient tax base to support a highly developed transportation infrastructure. Many well-maintained roadways permit easy access. The closest airport is within a 30-minute drive and train, bus, and taxi service also permit easy access. Communications are also well-developed with cellular

and internet access widely available throughout the Biosphere Reserve to support marketing and educational activities typically associated with ecotourism.

3) Market Profile

- Redberry – The present market region consists primarily of Saskatchewan and neighbouring provinces. For long-distance tourists from eastern North America, the area could be a stop of high interest en route to British Columbia and Alaska. However, the general public impression of the area is that it is flat farmland with few sites of interest. This impression is dispelled when people visit the Biosphere Reserve. The perceived lack of diversity in natural attractions and available activities must be overcome if the area is to support a viable ecotourism industry. An estimated 300,000-350,000 people live within 100 km of the Biosphere Reserve, although few visit the area, unless their family continues to reside there.
- Niagara Escarpment – The area is world renowned, and attracts visitors from around the world, especially from the United States and Japan. The different parts of the escarpment are well-knowning places for bird watching, kayaking, hiking, skiing, vineyards etc. A diversity of accommodation options are attractive to ecotourists. An estimated seven million people live within 100 km of the Biosphere Reserve.

4) Enabling and Disabling Policies

- Redberry – A highway sign along the main route is not permitted by the Department of Transportation and consequently, the Biosphere Reserve has low visibility to passing tourists. Agri-food policies also prevent the processing and sale of local food products. This restriction diminishes local benefits that could be incurred by local producers, peripheral to ecotourism.
- Niagara Escarpment – The licensing fees required to tour throughout the region are very expensive, hindering fuel efficient transportation and diminishing the quality of the ecotourism product. Strict land use controls preserve the aesthetic values of the landscape, affecting land prices, investment, and tax revenues.

5) Sustainability in the context of multiple uses within a defined region

- Redberry – A Sustainable Community Plan is in place encouraging ecotourism development. However infrastructure limitations and limited attractions make it difficult to market the area. A social capacity research project is underway to identify rural economic development prospects in support of ecotourism development. Low regional economy and low tax base make investment in tourism facilities or works to improve conservation difficult.
- Niagara Escarpment – The Niagara Escarpment Plan helps to ensure that land is not adversely affected by inappropriate tourism development or infrastructure. Restoration projects encouraged in partnership with local organizations help to maintain the high quality resource/natural environments attractive to ecotourists. High and rising land values make investment in restoration expensive but possible.

Preliminary comments from the comparative study:-

The establishment and continued operation of Canadian Biosphere Reserves is based on a voluntary and moral commitment of diverse stakeholders to work together to live in harmony with the natural environment. The promotion of ecotourism as a major activity in some Biosphere Reserves may create

undesirable shifts in the economic benefits and in the desire for cooperation among some communities and participating institutions or agencies. Furthermore, the targeted promotion of a small segment of tourism may handicap other tourism operators when they are considering the appropriateness of their practices in some ecologically sensitive areas. The coordinating committee for the Biosphere Reserve (such as Redberry Regional Economic Development Authority and the Niagara Escarpment Commission) can unite the community by challenging the entire tourism industry to endorse environmentally sustainable tourism through redefining their practices to support a fully functioning Biosphere Reserve. However, to do this, the Biosphere Reserve coordinating committees would have to be active in local or regional policy. The Sustainable Tourism Association of Canada (STAC) has an important role in this connection.

BIOSPHERE RESERVES AS A BASIS FOR ECOTOURISM IN RUSSIA

A CASE STUDY BY DR. NATALIA MORALEVA, THE RUSSIAN ECOTOURISM ASSOCIATION

Dr. Natalia Moraleva described some problems and opportunities of Russia's incipient ecotourism industry from an organizational perspective. Under the former communist system, protected areas excluded people and were well-funded and staffed. Most Russian Biosphere Reserves were established as strictly protected natural areas. With the present democratic Russian system, the views on land management have changed. Poverty has accentuated human use pressures at the fringes of protected areas. This situation has accentuated the division between strict protection and sustainable use. At the same time, public and economic interest in tourism is growing.

The Russian Ecotourism Association was created to bridge this divide. The Association brings together nature protected areas from various regions of Russia, ecotravel agencies, and NGOs specialized in the sphere of ecotourism. Major activities of the Association are coordination of ecotourism activities of various stakeholders, marketing the Russian ecotourism product, production of publications about Russian nature and ecotourism possibilities, training of the personnel, monitoring and control of tourism impacts, consulting services.

The experience of the Association to date has highlighted several impediments, such as:

- the lack of communication between government departments;
- the difficulties in establishing lines of communication between tour operators and the nature reserves that contain the most attractive ecotourism products;
- the continued financial reliance of the Association on external sources;
- poor rural infrastructure that impedes tourist travel;
- unreasonably high prices charged by some operators, and
- lack of product information (e.g. bird inventories) in some locations.

Dr. Moraleva also pointed to the high level of interest and involvement in ecotourism among Russian environmental groups, and the existence of successful local ecotourism projects sustained by a high level of community involvement (such as the construction of accommodations consistent with local culture), and the important role of children. She described how the expanding functions of Biosphere Reserves and MAB in Russia are related to international activities such as IUCN and the Convention on Biological Diversity.

**SOME FACTORS IN THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN TOURISM AND BIOSPHERE
RESERVES**

To provide a link between the case studies presented and the comments on the Ecotourism Summit, and to serve as a context for discussions in smaller groups, Dr. Roots presented some thoughts regarding features of Biosphere Reserves that could enable, enhance or hinder the tourism experience.

General Comment

- 1) To be successful within Biosphere Reserves, the ecotourism activities and tourist experience should be compatible with all the characteristics of ecotourism in protected and managed areas as outlined by Butler (previously referred to) and in addition should also help the tourist to understand, take part in, and contribute to the three main functions of a Biosphere Reserve:
 - Conservation of:-
 - ✓ ecosystems
 - ✓ ecological functions
 - ✓ landscape, hydrology/coastal features, and habitats
 - ✓ historical and local cultural attributes
 - Improvement of Social, economic and cultural development and sustainability
 - Provision of sites and opportunities for research, monitoring, education, communication and international contact and exchange (the logistic function).
- 2) Ecotourism in Biosphere Reserves must incorporate visits to and explanations to visitors of the role of the Core Areas, Buffer Zones, and Transition or Co-operation zones in a way that shows to the visitors that these, together, demonstrate balance between human activities and Nature.
- 3) Biosphere Reserves, in general, can support and help to implement the spirit of all the main clauses of the Declaration on Ecotourism. But the priority for Biosphere Reserves is Nature and the future, not immediate commercial business.
- 4) In turn, ecotourism, properly informed and conducted, can support the functions of Biosphere Reserves.

Characteristics of Biosphere Reserves that are important to ecotourism.

There are some important characteristics of Biosphere Reserves that should be kept in mind as they relate to tourism in general and to ecotourism:-

- 1) Biosphere Reserves are, above all, selected places where relatively undisturbed Nature and active economic and social development, with all its cultural overtones, exist side by side in the same ecological setting. It is the study and knowledge of interaction and interdependence of these, and the lessons learned from that study, that characterise a Biosphere Reserve and its role as an exemplary of sustainable development.

Tourists must be able to visualise and understand this interaction, and learn from it. Tour operators must understand and support this purpose. Otherwise, the tourist visit will not be "ecotourism" in a Biosphere Reserve.

- 2) Biosphere Reserves are not government structures or entities. They typically include land of which some parts are owned and managed by governments, and other parts owned by industry, private citizens and institutions, all of whom have voluntarily co-operated for a common purpose of ecological protection, sustained social and economic development, and learning about long-term management of living resources and ecological productivity. No ownership or legal rights are in any way changed by the creation of a Biosphere Reserve.

Therefore Biosphere Reserves, as complete entities, are not subject to special regulations. They are subject to and must be governed by all the regulations that apply to their component parts. Tourists must be helped to understand that Biosphere Reserves are not special protected "parks", but places where ecological responsibility is exercised through ordinary land rights and regulations.

- 3) Biosphere Reserves are fundamentally places of research and monitoring in both the natural and social sciences. This means that all activities, including all aspects of tourism itself, can and should be scientifically studied and monitored; and the effects of such activities on the biosphere, natural resources, local and regional economy, cultural integrity and expression should also be studied and monitored.

Biosphere Reserves may offer an unique opportunity to observe and measure the impacts of different numbers or groupings, timing, movements etc., of tourists. Thus they can provide assessment or models of the "tourist carrying capacity" of landscapes and ecosystems. Such studies require investment, data-gathering and persons knowledgeable in the theoretical and applied social and behavioural sciences to be associated with the ecotourism activity. The network of Biosphere Reserves, within a country or internationally, can facilitate comparative studies.

- 4) Biosphere Reserves are areas that will be managed, studied, and monitored over a long period of time - at least over several decades. They are throughout much of the world prime places to observe and record long-term environmental and ecological change, including the effects of regional and global changes due to natural causes as well as to changing human activities and technologies.

Ecotourism in Biosphere Reserves can be an excellent way of educating people about global change or changes in the local Nature and the environment over time. At the same time extreme care must be taken to ensure that tourism activities do not disrupt the irreplaceable role of Biosphere Reserves as long-term ecological benchmarks and monitors.

**DRAFT RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE QUEBEC CITY DECLARATION ON ECOTOURISM
(QCDE), AND COMMENTS ON THE WORLD SUMMIT**

To introduce discussion of the World Summit by the EuroMAB workshop, Dr. Roots presented comments on a selection of some recommendations of the draft Declaration that appeared to be pertinent to Biosphere Reserves. These are summarized below (symbols and numbers refer to the draft recommendations in Appendix A; in italics are subjective comments related to Biosphere Reserves).

- 1) (QCDE-A.1) National Policies should be consistent with sustainable development, formulated through wide consultation.

If these policies are applied to development in the transition or co-operation zone of Biosphere Reserves, which are usually privately owned and thus subject to different regulations than protected core areas, could the BR's help show how policies for nature protection and for sustainable economic/ social development must be ecologically consistent and compatible, and thus relate to natural ecological processes? If this can be done, ecotourism could be a powerful tool to promote the principles of Biosphere Reserves.

- 2) (QCDE-A.2) Governments “guarantee” the protection of nature.

Beyond the fact that a “guarantee” to protect Nature is impossible, it may be helpful to point out that BR's include both protected Nature and economically managed developed land and natural resources, with special attention to local cultures and different knowledge systems. How will ecotourism fit into Biosphere Reserve responsibilities here?

- 3) (QCDE-A.3) Involvement of all stakeholders.

BR's do this. Ecotourism could help tourists and all concerned become aware of successes and of problems.

- 4) (QCDE-A.5) Development of sustainable growth management tools, land use planning, etc.

This is a central function of BR's. It would require careful explanation and demonstration to tourists.

- 5) (QCDE-A.8) Policies and strategies to manage tourists.

Many BR's have experience of this. Information on methods, successes, problems could be shared. Comparative experiences in different Biosphere Reserves should be helpful to the tour operators.

- 6) (QCDE-A.12) Definition of environmental and health standards, and development of the capability to apply them.

Ecotourism in BR's can take a lead role in explaining the nature and importance of “environmental standards” and criteria for ecologically responsible tourism.

- 7) (QCDE-A.13) Research programs, baseline studies, etc.

BR's are already in this business. But much needs to be done to provide suitable on-going scientific information in a form that is accessible to tour operators and tourists. All tour operators should have access to, and use, BRIM, MABFlora and MABFauna, etc. The research should extend to scientific study of ecotourism activities and impacts.

- 8) (QCDE-A.14) International Principles and Codes.

BR's have clear functions in the international context.. See 12 principles of the “ecosystem approach”, as outlined in the UNESCO MAB booklet “Solving the Puzzle: the Ecosystem Approach and Biosphere Reserves” 2000. The Periodic Reviews of Biosphere Reserves (every ten years) provide an international check on performance, including the adequacy of management, or the effects of tourism.

- 9) (QCDE-A.16) Educational programs - children, nature conservation.

Education is fundamental to BR's, and to the MAB/UNESCO Mission. Many schools involve BR's as part of learning about Nature, Science, and Citizen responsibility. More should be done to bring Biosphere Reserves into the international MABNET schools programme in many countries. Ecotourism could help in popularising the educational role of BR's.

- 10) (QCDE-B.18) Good environmental behaviour of business.

BR's can be highly visible examples, recognised by governments, businesses, the public and, internationally, of sustainable profitable economic development in a healthy environment. Ecotourism must itself be recognised as an industry, and also managed in BR's in a sustainable and profitable way.

11) (QCDE-B.21) Co-operation with everybody.

Essential to each Biosphere Reserves. Will need care, to maintain openness and cooperation when marketing competitive tourism packages if the ecotourism activity is still to give priority to conservation, research, monitoring and education.

12) (QCDE-B.22) Local products etc.

An approved goal of BR's, within legal restrictions, and provided the commerce does not hinder co-operation and voluntary support. Can help local economies and serve as examples of sustainability in the region. Will be specifically addressed by the MAB Task Force on Quality Economies in Biosphere Reserves.

13) (QCDE-B.24) Indigenous involvement.

Biosphere Reserves need to give more attention to this also. Biosphere Reserves performance has been uneven in most countries where indigenous societies and culture provide opportunities for culturally-rich sustainable economic and social development. Tourism can be an important part of this, but it needs to develop with care and sensitivity with full and willing involvement of indigenous people themselves, to preserve dignity and cultural values. MAB and BR's need to identify good examples from which all can learn.

14) (QCDE-B.25) Promote ethical behaviour among tourists.

Essential in BR's, which include private land, features of special cultural significance as well as vulnerable or sensitive natural systems. BR's have a responsibility to provide leadership. (Butler's principle No. 1.)

15) (QCDE-C.30) NGO's monitor and research impacts of ecotourism.

This must be an essential part of the environmental, ecological, and cultural monitoring and assessment which are characteristic of BR's. It should be included in the Periodic Reviews of BR's.

16) (QCDE-C.31) Cooperation to ensure that research data and information supports decision-making on tourism development and management.

BR's possess and are continually gathering research and monitoring data that could be directly relevant to sustainable tourism development. These data must be accessible to tour operators, in a form they can use.

17) (QCDE-C.32) Co-operate with research institutions to develop solutions to ecotourism problems.

BR's are sites of relevant social and natural sciences research and data, that could serve as bases for studies of ecotourism, and its challenges or effects

18) (QCDE-D.36) Exchange of experiences internationally.

The World Network of Biosphere Reserves and EuroMAB are established for this purpose, could be useful, to tour operators. Many tourists themselves could benefit from the Networks.

19) (QCDE-D.41) Community and traditional skills and products

A source of strength for Biosphere Reserves. This subject will also be a main topic of the Task Force on Quality Economies

INITIAL REACTIONS TO WORLD SUMMIT FROM PARTICIPANTS

Following the Chairman's introduction, the participants briefly discussed their initial reactions to the Summit Declaration drafting process and to the Final Draft Declaration. The following are some of the spontaneous comments made during the discussion.

- 1) It is important for all people from Biosphere Reserves involved with ecotourism and sustainable tourism to translate the spirit of the Declaration into ACTION PLANS highlighting the central role that the Biosphere Reserve Model can play in demonstrating concretely how tourism (economic development) can be sustainable and compatible with cultural and environmental protection.
- 2) The EUROMAB organisation should formally identify ways in which Biosphere Reserves can implement those Quebec City Declaration Recommendations applicable to Biosphere Reserves.
- 3) People should be less critical of the wording of the Quebec City Declaration on Ecotourism and more keen to act on the spirit of the recommendations in their national contexts.
- 4) There are several Biosphere Reserve "hooks" such as Recommendation A-5: Land Management issues and Recommendation A-8: Tourist Access Management among many others.
- 5) There were not enough field people as speakers. There were too many « official » public /national/ international statements. Not enough open exchange of ideas other than during coffee breaks.
- 6) There were some disappointing presentations and some contradictory presentations. This is inevitable in a large meeting;- unfortunately there was not time or willingness to discuss or learn from the contradictions.
- 7) There was insufficient time/space allocated to specific stakeholders such as protected area managers, for example.
- 8) The size of groups in second day workshops should have been smaller for better interaction and dialogue.
- 9) There were interesting and repeated contributions made by certain delegates concerning the intent and the promotion of ecotourism to encourage benefit sharing schemes. These do not seem to be reflected in the Declaration.
- 10) Some pre-summit and post-summit workshops might better have taken place within the Summit Program.
- 11) Protected Area concerns were addressed in Summit Workshops but were not touched upon during Plenary Sessions.

- 12) Some participants considered that there was, and still is even after the Summit, ambiguity between “ecotourism” and “sustainable tourism”. However, it was felt by EUROMAB participants that this ambiguity may not be relevant to ecotourism in Biosphere Reserves.
- 13) The Quebec City Declaration on Ecotourism may/will greatly support local/regional/national/international regulators to understand policy/management issues, related to natural environment protection.
- 14) There is much uncertainty surrounding the realistic potential of domestic and foreign ecotourism revenues. The outlooks for revenues to the tour operators, the ecotour companies, the surrounding communities, may all be different, and have influence on investment in environmental protection.
- 15) Less developed countries will require external support to develop better sustainable ecotourism solutions.
- 16) The Summit did not seem to acknowledge that Europe also has high potential for ecotourism.
- 17) A suggestion was made by the Co-operation Agencies Workgroup for Tour Operators to meet again in Hannover, Germany in 2003.
- 18) It is important to underline that the greatest part of ecotourism spending power is in EUROMAB countries.
- 19) One must ask what the limits of ecotourism success may be in Biosphere Reserves? How is the “carrying capacity” of a Biosphere Reserve for ecotourism determined?
- 20) Important world players such as IUCN, FAO and large Tour Operators were conspicuously absent.

SMALL GROUP DISCUSSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

After discussion of the general relations between tourism and Biosphere Reserves, participants divided into four smaller groups to discuss in more detail four themes that had emerged concerning ecotourism and Biosphere Reserves. Each group considered a series of suggested topics and related recommendations of the draft Quebec City Declaration (Appendix A). Each produced a list of recommendations or statements, which were then reported and discussed at the final plenary session of the EuroMAB workshop.

Theme: 1: Planning, Management, and control of Ecotourism and Biosphere Reserves.

Suggested topics for discussion (related, where relevant, to QCED draft recommendations 3, 5, 6, 8, 12, 14, 18, 20, 21, 24):-

- Assessment of tourism potential and benefits;
- Judgement of feasibility, design of tourism methods, scope, scale, timing, taking into account the constraints and priorities of Biosphere Reserves;
- Mechanisms for obtaining and interpreting information about environmental and ecological impacts, thresholds of disturbance;

- Options and mechanisms for control of numbers of visitors, their behaviour, etc.
- Certification;
- Community involvement, knowledge, permission;
- Indigenous and cross-cultural issues;
- Demand made on Biosphere Reserves staff and volunteers;
- Interference or cooperation with Biosphere Reserve activities.

Recommendations from Group Discussions of Theme 1.

- 1) Biosphere Reserves should be promoted as structures for coordinating and integrating the work of all actors concerned, including those directly or indirectly involved in ecotourism.
- 2) There must be strong leadership in the development and functions of Biosphere Reserves, notably through committed personalities who are respected by local communities.
- 3) Biosphere Reserves should be promoted as examples and sites for study of ecotourism development and practice; this would involve the creation and maintenance of a data base using ecotourism indicators.
- 4) The development of an ecotourism strategy for a Biosphere Reserve should give priority to the needs and aspirations of local communities, including their right to refuse the promotion of ecotourism in the area.
- 5) In terms planning of ecotourism, each Biosphere Reserve should “think locally and act locally” but should be ready to “exchange globally” its experience and ideas within the framework of the World Network of Biosphere Reserves.

Theme 2 - Marketing, Communication, and Networking Aspects of Ecotourism in Biosphere Reserves.

Suggested topics for discussion (related, when relevant, to QCED draft recommendations 9, 10, 11, 21):-

- Effective description and promotion of the special features and purposes of Biosphere Reserves as a tourist experience;
- Assessment of the degree, nature, and locations or extent of public interest in Biosphere Reserves and the concern for landscape and ecology; the readiness of the tourism clientele to embrace the “sustainability” experience;
- Assessment of the relative costs of marketing and publicity, costs of preparation of materials and information including information specific to the Biosphere Reserve; and the potential market for ecotourism in Biosphere Reserves in relation to the market for other tourism in the surrounding regions;
- Local community involvement:- helpfulness and/or costs; need for information in advance to

communities;

- Local cultures and “special places” for which the Biosphere Reserve has particular responsibility;
- Government incentives or involvement, and the role of the Biosphere Reserve in coordinating core, buffer, and transition zones into a tourist package;
- Networks of other Biosphere Reserves; joint publicity or communication or ecotourism products;
- Copyright, ownership, and franchising of tourism products in Biosphere Reserves.
- Demand placed on Biosphere Reserve staff and volunteers.

Recommendations from Group Discussions of - Theme 2

- 1) Each Biosphere Reserve is encouraged to establish its own web site with information on ecotourism possibilities, contact addresses, etc. Every effort should be made to ensure that such web sites are professional in presentation and continually updated to ensure that they present a favourable “image” of the site and the country/landscape concerned, with a clear message of the Biosphere Reserve concept and purposes.
- 2) Lesser known Biosphere Reserves should be encouraged to develop web links with neighbouring Biosphere Reserves which are more renowned tourist destinations. Such links will help to diversify tourist circuits, make Biosphere Reserves more visible in general, and strengthen the message of balance between human activities and Nature.
- 3) Priority should be given to investing in training of Biosphere Reserve personnel in web site creation and maintenance.
- 4) Web sites of Biosphere Reserves should emphasise the special educational, research, and experimental character of Biosphere Reserves as “living laboratories” to test out and demonstrate best ecotourism planning and practice.
- 5) The “twinning” of Biosphere Reserves having good experience with ecotourism with Biosphere Reserves lacking such experience and capacity should be encouraged, both North-South and East-West.
- 6) Individual Biosphere Reserves are encouraged to take initiative with regard to ecotourism, to establish contacts with the tourism industry, and not be passive recipients of tourism. They should become familiar with modern tools and processes for assessing market potential and ensuring the B.R. principles are present in ecotourism marketing. Information should be shared to make best use of existing experience in developing ecotourism.
- 7) The UNESCO MAB International Secretariat should be encouraged to set up a special web page of the MABNet on ecotourism development, with information sources, for example indicating the interest of the *Reisepavillon* (Germany 2003) and its North American equivalent, the Product Club experience in Canada, etc.
- 8) The MAB Task Force on the Development of Quality Economies in Biosphere Reserves should be encouraged to continue to explore the economic potential, environmental and

legal aspects of labelling of Biosphere Reserve products and services (MAB Circular Letter 2/2002).

- 9) Individual Biosphere Reserves are encouraged to work with national tourism organisations to seek funding to develop ecotourism in their territories, and to carry the ecological and conservation message into the industry.

Theme 3 - Training and Education aspects of ecotourism in Biosphere Reserves.

Suggested topics for discussion (related, where relevant, to QCED draft recommendations 7, 14, 16, 25, 39, 41):-

- Training of tour operators and leaders, to understand the characteristics of Biosphere Reserves and be able to instil into tourists the message that Biosphere Reserves are not just places to visit but places to learn from;
- Training of Biosphere Reserve personnel, to understand the needs and interests of tourists and to develop interests, and skills in transmitting the Biosphere Reserve message to the public, and to assemble information and materials for educating tourists;
- Community involvement in training and education, and demonstration to tourists of community benefits from Biosphere Reserves;
- Cultural and cross-cultural aspects of the tourist experience in Biosphere Reserves, with involvement, whenever possible, of persons representing local cultures or indigenous peoples;
- Availability of training and educational material about Biosphere Reserves in forms and content suitable for tourists;
- Compatibility or interchangeability of tourist-related information or educational material with other Biosphere Reserves;
- Role of ecotourism as a teaching aid, or as a demonstration experience of Biosphere Reserves concepts.

Recommendations from Group Discussion of Theme 3

- 1) Biosphere Reserves should establish a data base of all information of relevance to ecotourism, which is accessible to all stakeholders. These data should be updated frequently.
- 2) Biosphere Reserves should identify target groups for training, that are:
 - ✓ internal to a given site (e.g. management bodies, local community and local interest groups, local tourism offices)
 - ✓ external to a given site (tourists, operators, local authorities, international groups, scientific groups).

- 3) Indigenous and cultural groups should be involved in the training.
- 4) Biosphere Reserves should be encouraged to explore the feasibility of web-based Electronic Training and Education Programmes (ETAP) (with needs assessment, inventory of existing information, sources of advice, etc), to be conducted especially in parallel with formal schooling efforts.

Theme 4: Research, Monitoring, and Assessment aspects of ecotourism in Biosphere Reserves.

Suggested topics for discussion (related, where relevant, to QCED draft recommendations 13, 24, 30, 31, 32, 36, 40):-

- Inventories of flora, fauna (BRIM, MABflora, MABfauna) and their form and accessibility to tour operators and tourists;
- Availability and appropriateness of environmental data, and its use by tourists in linking environment to the characteristics and functions of Biosphere Reserves;
- Availability and appropriateness of cultural and historical information of Biosphere Reserve region as input to tourism;
- Ecotourism as a means for appreciating without disturbing the monitoring of short-term change, long-term trends, ecological or environmental surprises;
- Ecotourism in relation to studies of environmental/ecological processes, and assessment of human impacts;
- Ecotourism as a player and a subject in studies of economic/environmental costs and benefits:- who pays, who gains; the effect of tourism on local and regional wealth distribution;
- Research on tourist motivation, behaviour, early response to and long-term influence of the Biosphere Reserve experience;
- Relation of ecotourism to on-going scientific research and monitoring in Biosphere Reserves:- how can tourism help to meet the popular demand and business incentive for clear and simple answers to environmental and resource questions when knowledge and inventories are incomplete?
- How to avoid interference of scientific work by visitor curiosity or ignorance.
- How informed ecotourism in Biosphere Reserves can help avoid sensational interpretations or popular unjustified conclusions, based on incomplete information, about future changes in Nature, the environment, or resources.

Recommendations from Group Discussions - Theme 4

- 1) Individual Biosphere Reserves should compile comprehensive sound and updated inventories of species, habitats and landscapes of interest and/or potential threat from ecotourism, with appropriate monitoring of changes assessed against the inventories.
- 2) Biosphere Reserves should be encouraged to organise and collate environmental data taking account of the role of ecotourism in:-
 - ✓ the interest of using GIS, especially to prepare maps for promotional material

- ✓ making recourse to a network of research teams to share data and methods
 - ✓ mobilising students and /or visitors to collect data.
- 3) Biosphere Reserves should make special efforts to encourage socio-cultural research related to tourism including on the characteristics of the local communities, local cultures, demographic and socio-economic trends, opinions, needs and expectations on ecotourism development; trends in ecotourism, etc.
 - 4) Biosphere Reserves should stimulate and encourage economic research, on topics such as possibilities of economic return for investment in ecotourism, impacts of ecotourism on local economy (employment figures, distribution of wealth, gains and losses), comparisons of efficiency of different ecotourism activities, developing ecotourism products which maximise benefits for local economy, the impact of environmental planning in the Biosphere Reserves and the development of ecotourism, visitors' fees and ways of providing direct income to local communities in Biosphere Reserves.
 - 5) The data generated through research on tourism and its effects should contribute to the BRIM (Biosphere Reserves Integrated Monitoring) references and data base: and planning of ecotourism in Biosphere Reserves should draw upon BRIM data.

BIOSPHERE RESERVES IN ROMANIA

During the “working lunch break”, as an interlude in the Discussion Groups sessions, Mr. Constantin Cazacu presented and described a set of slides illustrating Biosphere Reserves in Romania that has been prepared to promote tourism. The pictures not only showed the scenic beauty and historic significance of some Romanian Biosphere Reserves, but provided opportunity for discussion on how these attributes can be made appealing to tourists.

BIOSPHERE RESERVES, TOURISM AND SCIENCE IN LITHUANIA

Prof. Leonardas Kairiukstis of the Lithuanian Forest Institute and a long-time participant in UNESCO and MAB activities, remarked on the evolution of MAB activities and Biosphere Reserves under changing political and economic circumstances, and the growth of public concern for the quality of the environment and sustainable use of resources. One aspect of these changes has been an expansion of local and international tourism. He felt that ecotourism, as the term was being used at this workshop, was not yet a distinct concept in the eastern Baltic countries. However, tourists, by and large, included some of the most environmentally-concerned sections of society, and their interests should be engaged to support Biosphere Reserves.

Prof. Kairiukstis emphasized that throughout all the political, social and economic changes of countries in transition, the one constant that was extremely valuable was the continuation of Biosphere Reserves as sites for multi-subject scientific research and monitoring. The scientific basis for Biosphere Reserves was irreplaceable. It was valuable not only locally but to the surrounding region and to the next generation. Whatever else it does, ecotourism must not compromise the scientific integrity and functioning of Biosphere Reserves. There had not been much emphasis on science and research at this Workshop, but Prof. Kairiukstis wanted to make sure that this priority was not overlooked.

FINAL PLENARY SESSION - COMMENTS

The recommendations from the four discussion groups were then presented, in plenary, (see above) followed by general discussions and comments. The following are summaries of some of the comments.

- The workshop as a whole provided a valuable interchange between persons of different backgrounds and experiences, who were familiar with Biosphere Reserves of different character and state of development (one participant was from a country that has not yet established Biosphere Reserves), and who had knowledge of a range of tourism and ecotourism activities.
- Although there are exceptions, ecotourism or the tourism industry does not understand or care about Biosphere Reserves as dynamic examples aimed at improving the relationship between human activities and Nature. Nor does it care about the issues of sustainable development except as a fashionable draw for tourists. Most ecotourism seems to view Biosphere Reserves as places to visit Nature, and sees them little different from a natural park or an attractive conservation area. Biosphere Reserves have an important information and educational job to do, individually and together, to transmit the true message of their purpose into ecotourism, in deeper and more convincing ways than has been done until now.
- Because a Biosphere Reserve is not a single political or administrative entity, but is a selected and well-studied piece of landscape where different owners, inhabitants and authorities have agreed to act in concert for a mutual goal of long-term Nature protection and sustained social and economic development, tourist activities in Biosphere Reserves should be part of the common goal. Neither the tourists nor the tour companies should use the Biosphere Reserves merely as places of interest for visiting or viewing, or simply attractive destinations that people will pay money to visit. Biosphere Reserves have a responsibility to ensure that each tourist takes home a message of greater environmental and ecological concern, and a determination to act in ecologically appropriate ways in the future.
- Biosphere Reserves are sources of information about Nature and natural processes, living resources, the environment, and the effects of human activities and how all these are changing in the region. Therefore, tourism in Biosphere Reserves must be designed not only to place value on the information and indications of ecological, social and economic change, but also the tourism activities themselves, and their changes, should contribute to this information.
- From a tourist promotional point of view, Biosphere Reserves often present an image of some of the naturally attractive or parts of the country, and they can include ideas about environmental protection and philosophical concern for the future. The national and international networks of Biosphere Reserve can strengthen this image, if the image is promoted properly. There is thus great opportunity locally at each Biosphere Reserve, and also nationally and internationally, to make serious contact with the ecotourism industry and ensure that the Biosphere Reserve concept and message is understood, accepted, and properly promoted as part of ecotourism.
- Any real progress or change in the relationship between ecotourism and Biosphere Reserves will require dedicated staff effort and resources to assemble and package information for use by the tourist industry and tourists. Most Biosphere Reserves in the EuroMAB region are very short of resources of any kind. To take on the burden of providing new information or acting as hosts or guides to more effective ecotourism, however desirable it may be, for many Biosphere Reserves will at present be impossible.
- Because Biosphere Reserves are not in themselves single legal entities but are composed of parts whose legal jurisdictions and rules for business may differ (a National Park and a commercial forestry operation may both be valuable parts of the same Biosphere Reserve, but the laws to which they are responsible may be quite different), tourism-generated commercial ideas such as

tour promotion or product labelling in the name of the Biosphere Reserve must be carefully investigated before being embarked upon. The legal aspects, and the effects that commercialization may have on businesses whose voluntary cooperation is essential, should be addressed in advance.

- There appears in several countries to be opportunities for the ecotourism industry to become more involved with schools, to facilitate the educational role of Biosphere Reserves.
- Scientific research in Biosphere Reserves, in the social, cultural, and managerial sciences, has an opportunity to study the recent rapid growth of ecotourism. Such studies would add to the understanding of motivation and development of curiosity about Nature and environmental concern in modern society, but they also should be valuable to the tourist industry itself. The ecotourism industry may be interested in funding such studies.
- Because ecotourism is an activity of the more affluent sections of society, undertaken by persons who tend to be urban and able to exercise choice in where they spend their disposable wealth, and because Biosphere Reserves are for the most part are in rural areas where the inhabitants live close to the land with little disposable wealth, ecotourism in Biosphere Reserves provides opportunities and case studies of some of the distinctive features, contrasts, changing values, and challenging issues of modern society. Such studies could examine the role of Biosphere Reserves in different political, economic, social and cultural settings, against the backdrop of changes in environmental quality and living resources.
- It would be most interesting to have a follow-up workshop on the development of Biosphere Reserves and ecotourism, in “countries in transition”.

With these and many other comments from a “tour de table” the Workshop closed two days of interesting discussions. The Chairman and the rapporteur stated that a draft report on the workshop would be circulated to all participants as quickly as possible.

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