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Man and the Biosphere
Programme

Becoming a
UNESCO
Biosphere Reserve



A special place

UNESCO biosphere reserves are territories that present a **combination of natural, cultural, social and economical aspects** brought into play to enable the **three functions**:



Therefore, there are **several points to consider** before deciding whether to prepare a proposal for a new biosphere reserve.

#1 Local support & vision

Local communities and other key actors **must have** a clear understanding of:

- ✓ **Why they want** to create a biosphere reserve
- ✓ **How they will utilize** the biosphere reserve concept in their everyday lives
- ✓ **How they will benefit**
- ✓ **How they will eventually contribute** to the goals of the MAB Programme and UNESCO



Examples of **stakeholders** from UNESCO Biosphere Reserves



Meeting in **Trebor Basin Biosphere Reserve (Czechia)**, designated in 1977

Consultation prior to the nomination **Complexe des Aires Protégées du Nord-Est de la République Centrafricaine (Central African Republic)**, designated in 2023



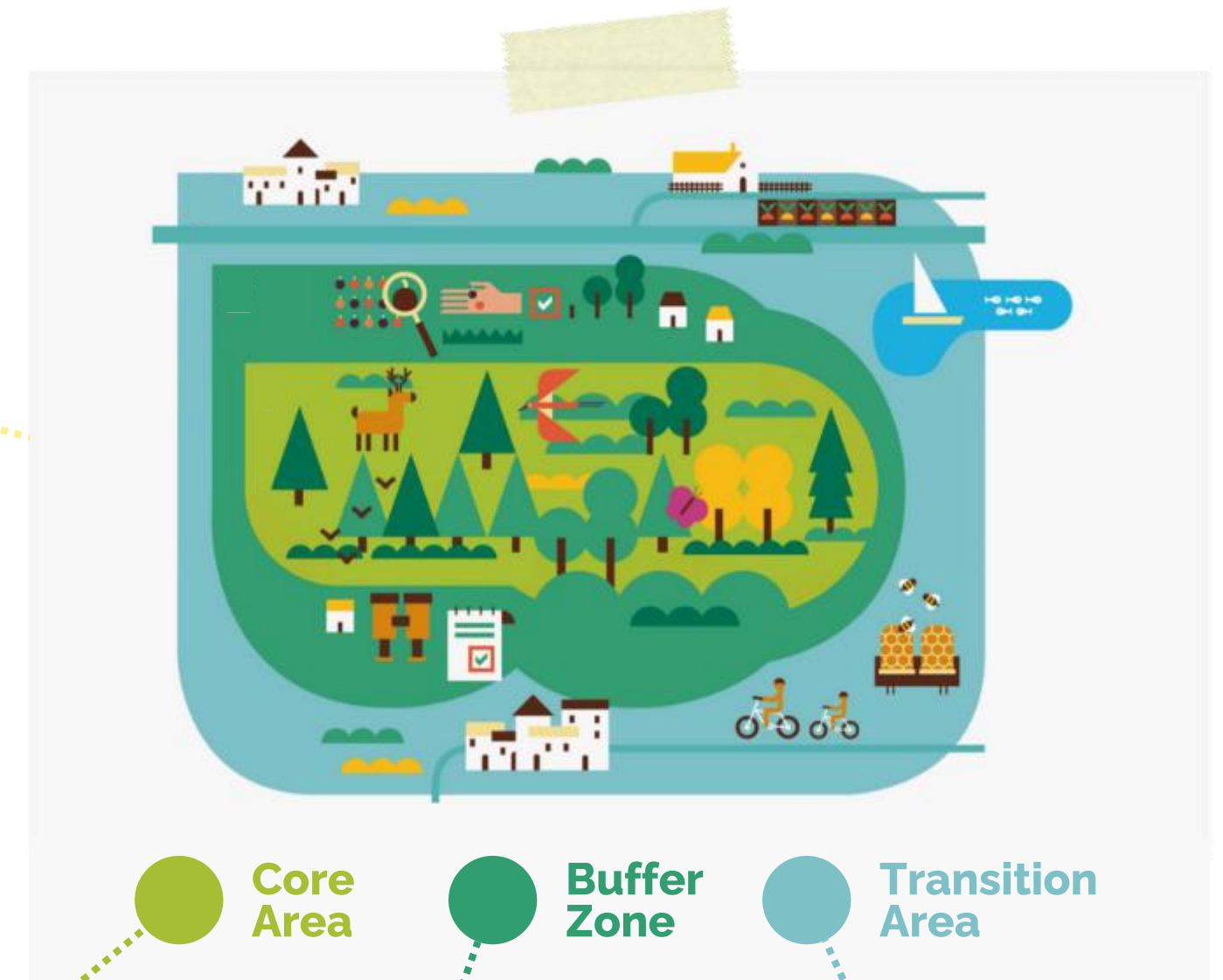
#2 Organization (1/2)

Biosphere reserves have **three types of areas** that may be subject to special recognition.

They must be:

- ✓ Representative of their biogeographic region
- ✓ of significance for biodiversity

...but this doesn't mean they must feature 'outstanding universal values'.



In a UNESCO Biosphere Reserve, **what is unique is the way humans and other species co-exist and interact harmoniously.**



#2 Organization (2/2)

CORE AREA(S)

comprise a **strictly protected zone** that contributes to the conservation of landscapes, ecosystems, species and genetic variation

Subject to (at least partially) some form of legal protection

BUFFER ZONE(S)

surround or adjoin the core area(s), and are used for **activities compatible with sound ecological practices** that can reinforce scientific research, monitoring, training and education.

Where the buffer zones do not overlap with protected areas, they can apply to be classified as 'Other Effective Conservation Measures' (OECM)

TRANSITION AREA

is where communities foster **socio-culturally and ecologically sustainable economic and human activities.**

Where the transition areas do not overlap with protected areas, they can apply to be classified as 'Other Effective Conservation Measures' (OECM)

What are 'Other Effective Conservation Measures' (OECMs)?

The **Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD)** recognises 'other effective area-based conservation measures' (OECMs) as a conservation designation for **areas that are achieving effective in-situ conservation of biodiversity with associated ecosystem functions and services and where applicable, cultural, spiritual, socio-economic, and other locally relevant values outside of protected areas.**

#3 Governance & Funding

Starting before the designation, **these two ingredients are interconnected and pivotal** for a successful biosphere reserve.



Menorca Biosphere Reserve (Spain) has established a robust governance structure consisting of a Management Council, a Scientific Board for policy advice, a Mayors' Board representing local authorities, and a Social Board engaging stakeholders. A participatory action plan is created through an open conference every 5 years.



Effective, flexible & inclusive governance structure

welcoming various stakeholders, like communities, entrepreneurs, governmental authorities, NGOs, universities, schools, etc.



Sustained, predictable financial resources

guaranteeing the salary of full time professionals and providing adequate means for critical meetings, especially those involving stakeholders

Entlebuch Biosphere Reserve (Switzerland) created a brand of origin with over 500 certified products from the region, generating value added of over USD 6 million to the local economy.

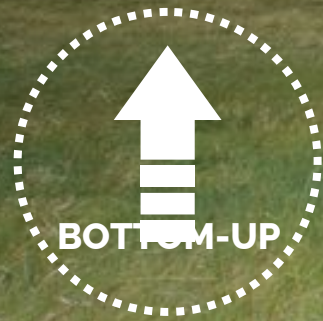


The nomination process

Taking all the aforementioned into consideration can take time, and **that's ok!** A solid nomination file must be backed by evidence, endorsement, and, at times, legislation.

Who starts it?

The nomination procedure for a biosphere reserve process may start as a:



Grass-roots initiative triggers the process, eventually with the support and endorsement of higher governmental hierarchies.



Initiative responds to governmental land management strategy, who eventually gathers regional and local support and endorsement



Initiative is a match of local and higher governmental authorities.



First contact

Preparation
of nomination
file

Local stakeholders should contact their national MAB representatives – usually the **MAB National Committee** – to discuss the potential for a biosphere reserve in a particular area.

Submission
to MAB
Secretariat

Existing biosphere reserves can also be a great source of information for the nomination process.

Evaluation by
the IACBR



Once an agreement is reached between local stakeholders and appropriate governmental authorities, the process is good to start.

Evaluation by
the MAB Council

National MAB

Committees serve as a relay between the different institutions and ministries concerned by the MAB Programme and UNESCO, such as research centers/universities, existing biosphere reserves, etc.

Preparation of nomination file

Submission
to MAB
Secretariat

Evaluation by
the IACBR

Evaluation by
the MAB Council

In order to ensure a **participatory approach**, it is advisable to:

- ✓ Raise awareness of the MAB Programme and the World Network of Biosphere Reserves
- ✓ Establish a **coordinating group** or, at least, a coordinating person, familiar with the MAB Programme
- ✓ Establish contact and, possibly, a visit to existing biosphere reserves in the country or in the region

This preliminary **coordination structure** often provides the basis for the future management entity of the biosphere reserve.

Submission to MAB Secretariat

Evaluation by
the IACBR

The **nomination file must use the official form available on the MAB website.**



All questions should be answered and all annexes included.



When describing technical issues (e.g. zonation), the official MAB terminology should be used.



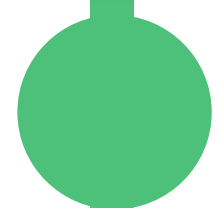
Establish contact and, possibly, a visit to existing biosphere reserves in the country or in the region

Evaluation by
the MAB Council

Once the nomination file meets **all the requirements**, has **all the necessary data** and has received **the consent of all key stakeholders**, including signatures, it can be officially submitted to the MAB Secretariat.

A new **online submission process** is under development and will be in place by 2026. This will greatly simplify the nomination and submission.

**Deadline
30 Sep
every year**



Evaluation by the IACBR



Evaluation by
the MAB Council

After verification by the MAB Secretariat, the nomination form is forwarded to the **International Advisory Committee for Biosphere Reserves**.



The IACBR may recommend be deferred or approved pending the submission of extra information. The site has 2-3 months to submit this information.



If the site meets the criterial, the IACBR recommends the approval.

The IACBR conclusions are submitted to the **MAB Council**.

Composed by 12 highly qualified and knowledgeable members, the IACBR provides technical advice to the MAB Council and the Director-General of UNESCO.

Evaluation by the MAB Council

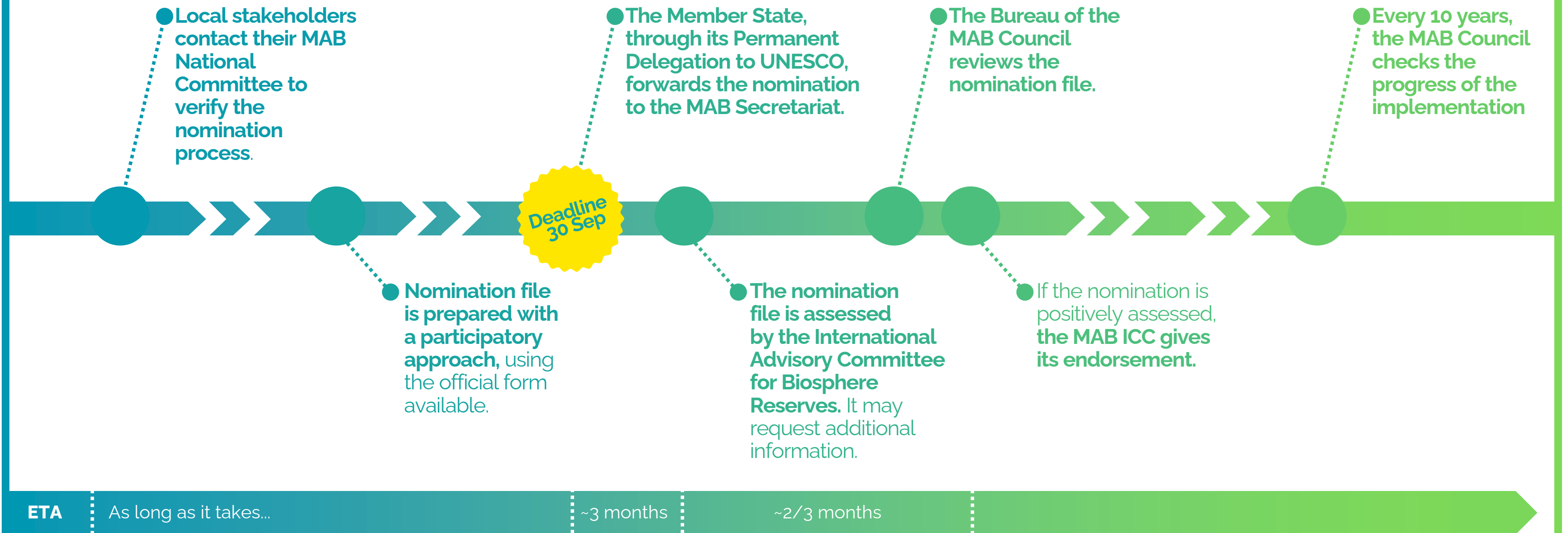
Gathered in yearly sessions, generally in around June (in 2025 in September), **the MAB Council takes the final decision on the designation.**

In case of **deferrals**, the MAB ICC generally recommends the re-submission of proposals with additional details and documentation.

Officially known as the **International Co-ordinating Council (MAB-ICC)**, the MAB Council is our the programme's main governing body

Nomination & designation

Biosphere reserves are designated by national governments and then internationally recognised by the MAB Programme.





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Man and the Biosphere
Programme

Becoming a
UNESCO
Transboundary
Biosphere Reserve



A celebration of peace

Nature does not understand or respect **political boundaries between countries**. However, ecosystems spanning across national borders may be subject to **different, and at times conflicting, land use and management approaches**.

Transboundary biosphere reserves provide:



A tool for **common management**

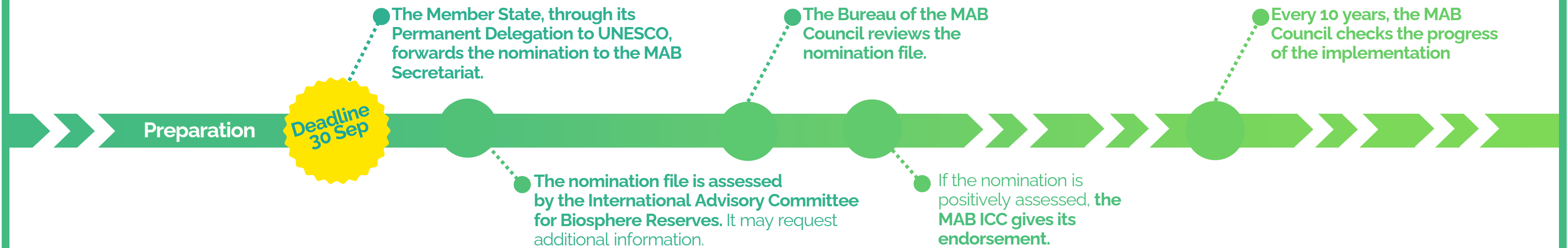


Official international recognition of **political willingness to cooperate** in conservation and sustainable use

Recommendations for the **establishment and the operation of Transboundary Biosphere Reserves** were developed in the **Sevilla+5 Meeting** (2000).

Ways to implement

The **calendar for the nomination** of a regular one-country biosphere reserve and of a transboundary biosphere reserve is the same.



The nomination process can be implemented in **two ways**:



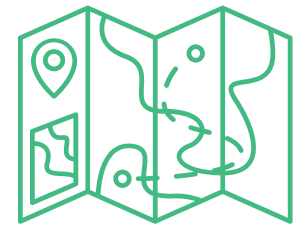
Two or more separate biosphere reserves in individual countries, already established, come together as a transboundary biosphere reserve

The transboundary site is jointly established by the countries concerned in one step when concomitantly designating the national biosphere reserves.

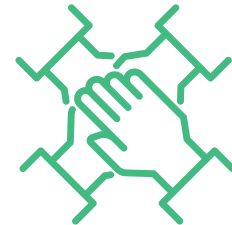


Things to note

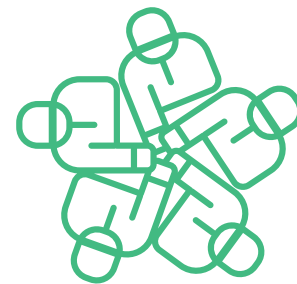
Although the nomination calendar is similar, **the nomination of transboundary biosphere reserves should address several issues:**



The **zonation** should be defined in line with the general criteria for the designation of biosphere reserves



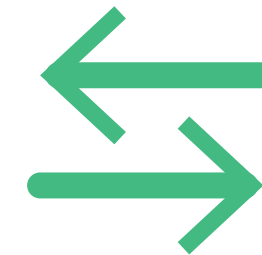
Local and national partners should be identified, and a joint working/coordination group established to define the basis and identify key issues for cooperation.



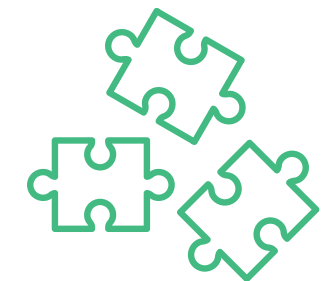
A joint management structure should be established with clear mandates.



Governmental authorities in both (or all) countries should sign an **official agreement** regarding the transboundary biosphere reserve.



A decision must be made as to whether the various parts (i.e. on either side of a border), will be nominated by the respective state authorities in each country, or the concerned state authorities in both/all countries will submit a joint **nomination**.



An indication of the main **components of a plan for future cooperation** must be provided.

Although the biosphere reserve concept provides a general framework for action in a transboundary location, it is important to bear in mind that real-world situations can vary significantly across the world, and **flexibility is crucial even more than in a national context.**

Facts & Figures



Bosques de Paz, or Peace Woods, (Ecuador/Peru) is located in a former war zone. The peace treaty took place in 1995.

Mediterranean Intercontinental (Morocco/Spain) is the first intercontinental biosphere reserve in the world, covering the Mediterranean arch.



The **W-Arly-Pendjari** (Benin, Burkina Faso and Niger) is at the frontline against desertification in the Sahara, comprehending almost 10 million hectares.



Great Altay (Kazakhstan/Russian Federation) is one of the last refuges of the threatened snow leopard

25 TRANSBOUNDARY BIOSPHERE RESERVES

THANK YOU!
MERCI ;GRACIAS!
СПАСИБО!

شكرا
谢谢你！

