

IBEROMAB'S DECLARATION ON THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC

The COVID-19 pandemic will have a strong impact both on the present and future of the biosphere. In this regard, the Bureau of the Ibero-American and Caribbean Network of MAB Committees, Focal Points and Biosphere Reserves (IberoMAB), a regional network which forms part of the World Network of Biosphere Reserves of the UNESCO MAB Programme, affirms that:

1. The epidemic became a pandemic within a few months due to the globalization of the economy and the rapid growth of dense urban populations.
2. The epidemic challenged the concept and achievements of the current concept of human welfare, showing that it is based solely on increased consumption.
3. The epidemic highlighted the fragility, inconsistency and social bias of production, and the differentiated access that diverse social sectors have to food, health, sanitation and education.
4. The epidemic showed that the population does not have access to the media and forecasts to address the causes nor consequences of the pandemic.
5. The epidemic deepened the differences both between and within the rural and urban sectors of society.
6. The epidemic highlighted the potential of rural communities, indigenous peoples, and afro-descendants to maintain their organization and self-sufficiency even in critical times.
7. The pandemic is precedent for companies, private initiative, and public administration institutions and other key actors to recognize and support biosphere reserves in their efforts to protect and maintain numerous ecosystems and natural resources, which are key for the healthy condition of the environment as well as to promote sustainable local and regional productive activities.

To address this situation, several governments and international institutions have proposed implicitly:

1. That the only way to recover the previous way of life is the immediate recovery of the production and consumption model that prevailed before the pandemic.
2. That short and long-term economic and social recovery depends on the natural resources of the environment.

The consequences of this strategy in the short and medium term are:

1. An increase in the production of a few species of plants and animals (monocultures).
2. An extension of the current area of cultivated land.
3. A decrease in forest cover, deforestation and fragmentation.
4. Increased accumulation of agrochemicals and loss of fertility in the soil and in fresh, brackish and marine water.
5. Further alteration of the habitat of wild and cultivated species and the disruption of ecological cycles and processes of natural renewal.
6. The simplification of biological and cultural diversity (loss of traditional and vernacular knowledge).

Under this scenario, biosphere reserves:

1. Represent one of the best alternatives available for finding new paths for development based on the biophysical and cultural conditions of the territory and the dynamics of natural cycles.

2. Are characterized by a design (core, buffer and transition) that adapts to almost any territorial condition and distribution of biodiversity in natural systems and those transformed by human settlements, facilitating the exchange of knowledge, collective reflection and innovation.
3. Maintain constant communication with other biosphere reserves through the IberoMAB Network and the World Network of Biosphere Reserves and shared Action Plans (Lima Action Plan and IberoMaB Action Plan), creating powerful synergies of knowledge and experience.
4. Possess important historical documentation, valuable biological collections, and the greatest biological and cultural diversity preserved to date in protected areas.
5. Represent an invaluable forum for collective participation in the resolution of conflicts that arise between sectors responsible for planning and coordinating the future of the reserve.

The IberoMAB Network states that:

1. We are at a critical time for the biosphere and the planet.
2. Biosphere reserves have the potential to provide answers and innovative nature-based solutions that integrate rural and urban populations as part of a common vision for the environment, diversity and well-being.

To achieve this, the biosphere reserves of Ibero-America and the Caribbean propose:

3. To widely disseminate their potential for creating within their environment prospects for change and innovation in the relationship between society and the environment, at both local and regional level.
4. Empower the entire community, with an emphasis on vulnerable groups, women, indigenous peoples and youth, to encourage new generations to contribute to improving the design of the structure and function of the reserves, and to successfully address changes that arise in the future.
5. Manage external support and resources to develop initiatives and demonstrate results through scientific and technical research projects for development.
6. Remain informed and present in national and international forums of biological and social research and the humanities in order to publicize their achievements and compare their results with specialists.
7. Use the action and management plans of biosphere reserves to enrich and strengthen local, regional and national government plans for environmental, biological and cultural diversity and sustainable development.