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منظمة الأمم المتحدة
للتربية والعلم والثقافة

联合国教育、
科学及文化组织



Division of Ecological and Earth Sciences
Man and the Biosphere (MAB) Programme

Ms Venera Domi
Secretary General
Director of International
Organisations
General Directorate of Multilateral
Relations
Ministry of Foreign Affairs
6.Bldv. Gjergj Fighta
Tirana
Albania

16 JUL 2014

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Dear Ms Domi,

I take great pleasure in informing you of the decision by the International Coordinating Council of UNESCO's Man and the Biosphere (MAB) Programme to approve the **Ohrid-Prespa Transboundary Biosphere Reserve (Republic of Albania / The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia)** proposed by your country.

The Council arrived at this decision at its 26th session, which was held in East Vättern Landscape Biosphere Reserve in Jönköping, Sweden, from 10 to 13 June 2014.

Based on the recommendations of the International Advisory Committee for Biosphere Reserves and the MAB Bureau, the MAB Council made the following comments:

The Council welcomed this proposal for a transboundary biosphere reserve (TBR) by Albania and The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, located in the Ohrid and Prespa regions. The landscape of the proposed transboundary area is a combination of water bodies (the Ohrid and Prespa Lakes) and surrounding mountain reliefs while flat areas border the external limits of the territories (stretching across three countries: Albania, The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia and Greece). With a total surface area of 446,244ha and an estimated total of 455,000 inhabitants, the proposed area includes part of Lake Ohrid and its surroundings in The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia that is currently inscribed on the World Heritage List, as well as part of Lake Ohrid in Albania which is currently being considered as a possible extension of the existing natural and cultural heritage of the Ohrid Region World Heritage Site.

The Council acknowledged the strong involvement of local institutions during the nomination process and welcomed the plan to establish a platform for exchanging experiences of protected areas between experts, practitioners and the local population.

The Council noted with appreciation the decision to adopt a two-step approach in the transboundary biosphere reserve nomination process, "leaving the doors open" to Greece to join at its earliest convenience.

The Council approved this nomination as the first phase of a Transboundary Biosphere Reserve, and further encouraged the countries to continue the dialogue with Greece, in order to consider as a second phase the watershed TBR between the three countries, as the watershed and ecosystem management approach it would benefit all countries sharing this ecosystem to cooperate and work together.

I would be grateful if you could transmit these comments and our congratulations to the authorities concerned.

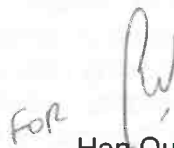
In accordance with the wishes of the MAB Council, UNESCO provides each new biosphere reserve with a certificate signed by the Director-General of UNESCO, which the country may wish to reproduce in the form of a plaque at the site concerned. I should be grateful to be informed in due course on your plan regarding the inauguration ceremony or event to be organized for this transboundary Biosphere Reserve.

The full report of the 26th session of the MAB International Coordinating Council is available on the UNESCO-MAB website at:

<http://www.unesco.org/new/en/natural-sciences/environment/ecological-sciences/man-and-biosphere-programme/about-mab/icc/icc/26th-session-of-the-mab-council/>

I thank you for your continued support of the MAB Programme and its World Network of Biosphere Reserves that now consists of 631 biosphere reserves in 119 countries.

Yours sincerely,



Han Qunli

Director, Division of Ecological and Earth Sciences
Secretary, Man and the Biosphere (MAB) Programme