

UNESCO promotes protection and conservation of biospheres

April, Lesotho: Almost 30 Man and the Biosphere (MAB) programme representatives, from 10 African countries, attended a four-day African Biosphere Reserves (AfriMAB) Sub-Regional kick-off meeting in Maseru, Lesotho aimed at discussing MAB challenges and opportunities in the region. The meeting, marking the commencement of the project, directed the construction of measures to strengthen regional participation in MAB and momentum for achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

Namibia, which currently does not have Biosphere Reserves, was represented by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO) Windhoek office and the Namibia National Commission for UNESCO. The meeting concluded with a practical demonstration of the sustainable benefits of MAB with a visit to the Tsehlanyane National Park, part of the Lesotho MAB candidate for the MAB Biosphere Reserves core zone.

The MAB Programme, established in 1971, is one of UNESCO's flagship science programmes. It aims to mobilise sustainable income generation, research and innovation in biodiversity and conservation in model regions - Biosphere Reserves. These designated sites are an ideal tool for the implementation of the SDGs.

Since its establishment in 1996, the network of AfriMAB hosts 82 Biosphere Reserves, representing 12% of the global MAB network. Only 11 Biosphere Reserves are in Southern Africa, with designation hampered by governance, institutional and political issues, human capacity and financial challenges. Currently, implementation of the MAB Programme has largely been voluntary. More on MAB and Biosphere Reserves: <https://bit.ly/1CI1MLM>

