Managing MIDAs
Harmonising the management of Multi-Internationally Designated Areas: Ramsar Sites, World Heritage sites, Biosphere Reserves and UNESCO Global Geoparks

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The World Network of Biosphere Reserves under the Man and the Biosphere (MAB) Programme
By focusing on sites internationally recognised within the World Network of Biosphere Reserves, the MAB Programme, launched in 1971, develops the basis within the natural and social sciences for the sustainable use and conservation of the resources of the biosphere and for the improvement of the overall relationship between people and their environment. It predicts the consequences of today’s actions on tomorrow’s world and thereby increases people’s ability to efficiently manage natural resources for the well-being of both human populations and the environment.

UNESCO Global Geoparks under the International Geoscience and Geoparks Programme
UNESCO Global Geoparks are single, unified geographical areas where sites and landscapes of international geological significance are managed with a holistic concept of protection, education and sustainable development. Their bottom-up approach of combining conservation with sustainable development while involving local communities is becoming increasingly popular.

Ministry of Environment of the Republic of Korea
The mission of the Ministry of Environment is to protect the national territory from threats of environmental pollution and improve the quality of life for the public so that people can enjoy ambient natural environment, clean water and clear skies. Furthermore, we aim to contribute to the global efforts to protect our one and only Earth. The tasks of the Ministry of Environment include enactment and amendment of environmental laws and regulations; introduction of environmental administration; building up a framework structure for environmental administration; drafting and implementation of mid- and long-term comprehensive measures for environmental conservation; setting up standards for regulations; providing administrative and financial support for environmental management to local governments; inter-Korean environmental cooperation; and environmental cooperation with other countries.

Jeju Special Self-Governing Province
Jeju Special Self-Governing Province is the largest island off the coast of the Korean Peninsula. It has an area of 1,845.56 km² and a population of 630,000 residents. The island was granted autonomy as a so-called self-governing province in 2006 from the central government, the Republic of Korea. It is a universal recreational island with beautiful natural landscape received as a gift from nature which draws more than 12 million tourists annually from all over the world. Jeju Island is the only place in the world where four international designations overlap in the same place; it comprises a natural World Heritage site, a Biosphere Reserve, a UNESCO Global Geopark and a total of five Ramsar Sites. The province is very interested in improving the management and operations of multi-internationally designated areas as the island is a pioneer in this field. It is trying to create its own development model using a future vision for the island which many residents helped design, based on the concepts of cleanliness and coexistence. The province’s plans for the future are focused on solving pending issues and formulating policies based on these core values.
The designation of geographical entities in this book, and the presentation of the material, do not imply the expression of any opinion whatsoever on the part of IUCN, the Ramsar Convention Secretariat or UNESCO concerning the legal status of any country, territory, or area, or of its authorities, or concerning the delimitation of its frontiers or boundaries.

The views expressed in this publication do not necessarily reflect those of IUCN, the Ramsar Convention Secretariat or UNESCO.

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Bottom left: Jeju Island (Republic of Korea): Biosphere Reserve, World Heritage site, Ramsar Site, UNESCO Global Geopark © Jeju Special Self-Governing Province
Bottom middle: Ngorongoro (United Republic of Tanzania): World Heritage site, Biosphere Reserve © OUR PLACE The World Heritage Collection
Bottom right: The Dolomites (Italy): UNESCO Global Geopark, World Heritage site, Biosphere Reserve © Iain Simpson (CC BY-SA 2.0)


Executive summary and full publication available from: https://portals.iucn.org/library/node/46176.

FOREWORD

IUCN was among the first to recognise the importance of protecting our planet's most valuable natural areas through international protection mechanisms. At IUCN's Ninth General Assembly in 1966, the term “World Heritage” was used internationally for the first time during the discussion of the idea of a legal mechanism to designate areas considered to be of value for all humanity. IUCN and UNESCO's ideas led to the 1972 World Heritage Convention that would mobilise the international community for the protection of outstanding natural landscapes and historic monuments. In a similar way, IUCN was integral in supporting the development and implementation of the Ramsar Convention on Wetlands that entered into force in 1971. IUCN has also hosted the Ramsar Secretariat in its headquarters in Gland, Switzerland since 1987.

IUCN Members have continuously called for the global conservation community to support the implementation of both conventions. They have also urged support for the World Network of Biosphere Reserves, during the development of the Action Plan on Biosphere Reserves in 1984 and the early implementation of the Seville Strategy for Biosphere Reserves in 1996. More recently, in 2008 and 2012, IUCN Members have called for the protection and management of the world's geodiversity and geoheritage. A bureau member of the Global Geoparks Network since its establishment in 2004, IUCN continues to have a consultative role with the newly established UNESCO International Geoscience and Geoparks Programme.

Each of the international site designation mechanisms has its own specific profile and focus, but they all share the overall goal of ensuring the appropriate management and conservation of these cherished natural areas. IUCN recognises the exceptional and pioneering work carried out by Ramsar and UNESCO through the designation of Ramsar Sites, World Heritage sites, Biosphere Reserves and UNESCO Global Geoparks, and we will continue to work to support and strengthen the efficient implementation of all of these initiatives.

IUCN's concern with Internationally Designated Areas (IDAs) led to the acknowledgement of the challenges for areas with multiple international designations. Consequently, a project aiming to prepare written guidance on the opportunities for harmonising the integrated management of these Multi-Internationally Designated Areas (MIDAs) was established, in coordination with the secretariats of the Ramsar Convention and UNESCO. The project stems from an IUCN Resolution (WCC-2012-Res-052) adopted at the 2012 IUCN World Conservation Congress in Jeju, which hosts only area in the world where all four designations directly overlap.

The diverse ways in which the actual areas can overlap, together with the range of benefits and/or challenges that multiple designations can bring to natural areas, show the nature of this challenge. Yet, despite the complexity, all IDAs, and all MIDAs in particular, should demonstrate the highest standards and quality of practice, as model conservation areas and an inspiration to our work in protected areas. IUCN is uniquely placed to support MIDAs. The launch of this Guidance is a much needed contribution to connect these sites, improve their integrated management, and contribute to improved coordination of the procedures of the different international designating bodies.

IUCN encourages site managers, national stakeholders, and the secretariats of the Ramsar Convention, the World Heritage Convention, the Man and the Biosphere Programme and the International Geoscience and Geoparks Programme to apply, test and provide feedback on the recommendations in this Guidance.

Inger Andersen
Director-General
International Union for Conservation of Nature

Kathy MacKinnon
Chair
IUCN World Commission on Protected Areas
An Internationally Designated Area (IDA) is a natural area internationally recognised by a global or regional designation mechanism. As of 31 October 2015, there are 3,313 IDAs which have been listed as Ramsar Sites under the Ramsar Convention; natural and mixed World Heritage properties, as well as cultural landscapes, under the World Heritage Convention; Biosphere Reserves recognised within the World Network of Biosphere Reserves of the UNESCO Man and the Biosphere (MAB) Programme; and UNESCO Global Geoparks as part of the UNESCO International Geoscience and Geoparks Programme (IGGP). These include 2,218 Ramsar Sites; 197 natural World Heritage properties, 32 mixed World Heritage properties based on both cultural and natural criteria, as well as 95 World Heritage cultural landscapes; 651 Biosphere Reserves; and 120 UNESCO Global Geoparks throughout the world.

Among these, there are 263 areas where different IDAs fully or partially overlap thus carrying double, triple or even quadruple international designations. These areas are named Multi-Internationally Designated Areas (MIDAs) for the purpose of this publication. Among MIDAs, there are 215 Ramsar Sites wholly or partially embedded in 169 Biosphere Reserves; and 109 Biosphere Reserves which overlap with 100 World Heritage sites. Ninety-seven Ramsar Sites are also inscribed wholly or partially in 70 properties of the World Heritage List, while 22 Ramsar Sites are part of five UNESCO Global Geoparks. Sixteen Biosphere Reserves are embedded in 14 UNESCO Global Geoparks, and 15 UNESCO Global Geoparks overlap with 13 World Heritage sites. Apart from these double designations, triple and quadruple designations have also been given to specific areas. A comprehensive list of MIDAs (indicating year of inscription of the site, its surface area and geographical coordinates) is appended to this publication, listing all areas that have these overlapping international designations.

Following up on Resolution WCC-2012-Res-052 adopted at the IUCN World Conservation Congress (Jeju Island, Republic of Korea, September 2012), this Guidance addresses specific issues related to the management of MIDAs, and includes recommendations for harmonising the management, systematic conservation and sustainable use of these areas aimed at the local, national and international stakeholders of MIDAs.

While all four international designating bodies share the overall goal of conservation for present and future generations and are in line with sustainable development objectives, each instrument has its own purposes, profiles and management requirements, which justifiably sets it apart from the other three designations. This Guidance provides an overview of the four international designating bodies to facilitate comparisons between them. It summarises different aspects of the four designations, such as their purposes, history, legal frameworks, administrative arrangements, governance structures and bodies as well as scientific advisory bodies, and governmental obligations. The respective site admission criteria give an idea of the specificities of each designation. Differences among the four designations are also reflected in their reporting requirements and monitoring.
Ramsar Sites develop and maintain an international network of wetlands which are important for the conservation of global biological diversity and for sustaining human life through the maintenance of their ecosystem components, processes and benefits/services.

World Heritage properties serve for the identification, protection, conservation and transmission to future generations of natural and cultural sites of outstanding universal value.

Biosphere Reserves stand for harmonised management and conservation of biological and cultural diversity, and economic and social development based on local community efforts and sound science.

UNESCO Global Geoparks foster international cooperation between areas with geological heritage of international value, through a bottom-up approach to conservation, local community support, promotion of heritage and sustainable development of the area.

The management of MIDAs is at the core of the Guidance, illustrated by 11 case studies from a range of countries plus a special chapter on Jeju Island (Republic of Korea) which comprises all four international designations. In Jeju, the successful designation as a Biosphere Reserve paved the way for World Heritage listing, certification of five Ramsar Sites and recognition as a UNESCO Global Geopark in successive steps and for complementary reasons. Jeju’s efforts in harmonising local management structures for the four international designations may give insights for MIDA stakeholders in other countries and regions.

With regard to site management, there are advantages in an area having two or more international designations. Multiple forms of international recognition have the potential to increase the resilience of natural areas to external pressures as they underline the diverse values of a site in the global arena. Linking conservation with sustainable development is a common aspiration of all four designations and can facilitate the engagement and participation of local communities in site conservation and management. International designations accentuate the significance of an area for research, education and public awareness, and are helpful in fostering transboundary collaboration, twinning of sites, global knowledge sharing and partnership programmes. At the national and international levels, MIDAs can provide a platform for strengthened inter-institutional cooperation. In many cases, multiple designations help fundraising efforts for site management at the national level and contribute to securing financial resources from international donors. Multiple international designations also contribute to raising national visibility and global site prestige, which in turn helps to reinforce the economic base of the area through tourism and the marketing of locally branded products.

Challenges for the management of these areas come to the fore when different national authorities are in charge of the same MIDA, and no harmonised legal or administrative framework exists, let alone a coordination mechanism fine-tuning the policies and intervention activities of the various responsible institutions. Lack of coordination may also result in competition for securing national and international funding for site management. Moreover, each designating instrument has its own primary objectives and approaches, and these might not necessarily be compatible with the geographical extents for which sites have been listed by other designating instruments. Differing reporting requirements in terms of depth of information and time cycles solicited by the four designating bodies pose a heavy workload on site managers and national authorities. Additionally, site managers are rarely trained in handling multiple international designations. Smooth information flows from site managers via national authorities to the four global secretariats and vice versa are not always ensured. Ever-increasing tourist numbers might jeopardise the environmental integrity of these sites. International designations may also evoke resistance from local communities and indigenous peoples, usually related to issues of land-use restrictions or sometimes even lack of respect for community and indigenous peoples’ rights. A multiplicity of different forms of recognition risks confusing local communities and visitors regarding the significance of each designation, or else the perceived “higher value” of one international status may eclipse those designations that may be perceived of “lower value”. Finally, the effectiveness of international designations may be diluted through an ever-growing number of IDAs and MIDAs.

An improved management system for MIDAs should be based on the complementarity and the synergies created by the different designations. In this light, the Guidance provides a number of recommendations addressed to three target groups: site managers of MIDAs at the local level; focal points of the four designating instruments and stakeholders at the national level (ministries and affiliated national authorities and others); and decision-making bodies of the four international designating instruments and their respective secretariats at the international level.
Recommendations for site managers at the local level

✱ Improve staff capacity building
Training and capacity-building activities for site managers on the specificities, similarities and potential for synergies of the four international designating instruments should be institutionalised as part of regular in-service training for protected area staff, as well as for other local stakeholders.

✱ Create a joint coordination mechanism at site level for all international designations
To the extent possible, a joint coordination mechanism, with sufficient management and decision-making capacity, should be institutionalised at site level for all overlapping international designations. This mechanism would be in charge of harmonising the different objectives and requirements of a site’s international designations.

✱ Revise and update management plans
If an area has obtained multiple international designations, a new coherent and single management plan should be worked out (or updated if it already exists) to accommodate all the objectives and requirements of the respective international designations.

✱ Engage with and respect the rights of local communities and indigenous peoples
Local communities and indigenous peoples should be fully engaged and participate in the planning and management of MIDAs through various governance mechanisms, as well as receiving concrete benefits from site conservation. All MIDA processes should observe the principle of free, prior and informed consent (FPIC) when considering the rights of indigenous peoples.

✱ Promote communication, education and awareness raising
Communication, education and awareness-raising programmes regarding the environment should be showcased in MIDAs, by site managers and responsible national authorities, combining their resources and expertise to promote the multi-faceted recognition of the area.

✱ Manage tourism and visitor numbers
Visitor numbers should be adequately managed, and sustainable tourism strategies and plans should be developed and implemented in order to safeguard the conservation and environmental integrity of a MIDA. Tourism activities should be fully compatible with the conservation objectives of all the different designations that apply to the area.

✱ Develop and display branding that transmits the site’s values
The branding of a MIDA should successfully translate the site’s values into appropriate and sustainable tourism and information products and activities, which can transmit these values and educate visitors. Additionally, the logos and significance of each international designation should be visibly displayed and explained on site.

✱ Use visitor centres to raise awareness of international designations
Visitor centres and educational activities should be used to raise awareness amongst local communities, the general public and decision makers, in an easily understandable manner, of the site’s various forms of international recognition and the primary objectives of each designation.
Recommendations for authorities and focal points at the national level

✱ Choose the most appropriate international designation
Establishing a MIDA is not necessarily advantageous for a site so these should only be created with careful consideration. National authorities should first focus their attention on the specific comparative advantage that a site could receive according to the profile of each designation. Choosing the most appropriate designation for a site should aim to contribute to improving its management effectiveness and governance arrangements, as well as sharpening the appropriate branding and marketing profile of the area.

✱ Assess the added value of international designations
Thanks to their specific profiles, international designations have the potential to add value to each other in some circumstances, and to act synergistically to enhance site protection and management. However, such added value needs to be carefully considered, and so, for new designation proposals, evidence should be provided of such added value. Any additional international designation(s) should be agreed upon by all relevant national stakeholders.

✱ Monitor designation effectiveness
The responsible national authorities should critically assess if each international designation of a MIDA effectively helps the area in its efforts to enhance environmental conservation, sustainable development and resource use, and engagement and benefit sharing with local communities.

✱ Improve coordination and information sharing among different authorities
When MIDAs are the responsibility of different national authorities, they should ensure an adequate and effective coordination structure for enhanced site management, information sharing and reporting. Assigning focal point functions for Ramsar and UNESCO designated sites to a single national institution could prevent duplication of efforts and expenses, and should be sought where possible.

✱ Align conservation policies and institutional mechanisms across different regions and countries
In the case of transboundary MIDAs, or MIDAs spanning different administrative provinces or states within the same country, aligned environmental and site conservation policies and institutional mechanisms should be sought between the different responsible authorities.

✱ Ensure an effective legal framework for MIDAs
States with, or planning to seek, IDAs and MIDAs should establish an effective and harmonised legal framework for such sites at the national level to ensure coherence in their conservation and management.

✱ Establish coordinated fundraising efforts
National authorities and site managers in charge of MIDAs should actively use the complementarity of international recognition to secure external financial support needed for enhanced site management and conservation. These fundraising efforts should be coordinated and should take into account the conservation objectives of all international site designations.

✱ Use expertise from different supporting communities
National authorities in charge of MIDAs should ensure that the great variety of expertise of the different communities supporting each designation is jointly shared, in an inter- and transdisciplinary manner, to the benefit of site conservation, management and educational activities.
Recommendations for the designating bodies at the international level

- Improve coordination and information exchange among the designating bodies
  The four designating bodies in charge of Ramsar and UNESCO designated sites should review existing cooperation agreements and, where appropriate, update these to ensure complementary support for the benefit of MIDAs.

- Hold regular meetings among the secretariats
  The four secretariats should hold regular, at least annual, joint meetings for information exchange, maintenance of a joint MIDAs database, provision of support for sites facing significant damage or danger, and discussion of other coordinated policies, projects and activities.

- Participate in governing meetings of the designating bodies
  Participation of representatives of each designating body (including their secretariats and relevant advisory bodies) in meetings of the governing bodies of all four international instruments is recommended, in order to increase information flow and coherence on policy decisions affecting MIDAs.

- Maintain an up-to-date list of MIDAs
  The joint creation and maintenance of an online list of MIDAs, ideally integrated within the IUCN/UNEP-WCMC World Database on Protected Areas, is recommended as a basic requirement for collaboration, and is consistent with the clearing-house function of the four secretariats.

- Harmonise reporting and ensure joint monitoring
  Harmonised reporting to the designating bodies should be established for MIDAs, since it will be more cost-efficient if reporting requirements for one designation can also feed into the requirements for the others. This will enhance the quality of reports and facilitate joint technical assessments and monitoring. The current practice of joint missions to some MIDAs when monitoring takes place should be extended and made consistent for all MIDAs.

- Share information during nomination and reporting processes
  The four secretariats, and their technical groups and advisory bodies, should routinely share existing information on proposed and existing MIDAs (nomination dossiers, periodic reports, ad hoc state of conservation reports), in order to ensure harmonised approaches between the applications of the different designating instruments.

- Organise joint capacity-building activities on the operations of each designation
  The four secretariats should organise joint capacity-building activities for site managers, national focal points, and other relevant stakeholders on the specific profiles of each designation. These should aim to foster possible synergies among the international instruments, and facilitate the exchange of best practices in the management of MIDAs.

- Implement joint projects and networking at site level
  By combining their expertise and outreach capabilities, the designating bodies should assist MIDAs in implementing joint projects of common interest at the site level, and in fostering twinning and networking arrangements among MIDAs.

- Develop harmonised branding and communication strategies
  The designating bodies should develop branding and communication strategies for their respective designations that do not compete with each other, but rather focus on communicating the added value of each designation and highlighting their potential for cooperation and synergistic activities.
USEFUL REFERENCE WEBSITES

(1) Ramsar Convention
- Home page: www.ramsar.org/
- Ramsar Sites Information Service: rssi.ramsar.org/
- Ramsar handbooks and manuals: www.ramsar.org/resources/ramsar-handbooks-and-manual
- Other important documents and publications related to Ramsar Sites: www.ramsar.org/library

Contact address:
Ramsar Convention Secretariat, Rue Mauverney 28, CH-1196 Gland, Switzerland
Tel: +41 22 999 0170  Fax: +41 22 999 0169
E-mail: ramsar@ramsar.org  Website: www.ramsar.org

(2) World Heritage Convention
- Home page: whc.unesco.org/
- Convention Concerning the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage (Convention text): whc.unesco.org/en/conventiontext/
- World Heritage List: whc.unesco.org/en/list/
- World Heritage Periodic Reporting: whc.unesco.org/en/periodicreporting/
- International Assistance: whc.unesco.org/en/intassistance/
- Biosphere Smart portal: www.biospheresmart.org/
- Other important documents and publications related to Biosphere Reserves and the MAB Programme: whc.unesco.org/en/related-info/publications/mb-official-documents/

Contact address:
World Heritage Centre, UNESCO, 7, place de Fontenoy, F-75352 Paris 07 SP, France
Tel: +33 1 45 48 34 96  Fax: +33 1 45 48 06 70
E-mail: whc-info@unesco.org  Website: whc.unesco.org

(3) UNESCO Man and the Biosphere (MAB) Programme
- Biosphere Smart portal: www.biospheresmart.org/

Contact address:
Man and the Biosphere (MAB) Programme Secretariat, Division of Ecological and Earth Sciences, UNESCO, 7, place de Fontenoy, F-75352 Paris 07 SP, France
Tel: +33 1 45 48 34 96  Fax: +33 1 45 48 06 70
E-mail: mab@unesco.org  Website: www.unesco.org/new/en/natural-sciences/environment/ecological-sciences/man-and-biosphere-programme/
(4) UNESCO Global Geoparks

- Evaluation documents A and B: www.globalgeopark.org/aboutGGN/Documents/9999.htm

Global Network of National Geoparks:

- www.globalgeopark.org/
- Contact address: Section for Earth Sciences and Geo-hazards Risk Reduction Division of Ecological and Earth Sciences UNESCO
  7, place de Fontenoy
  F-75352 Paris 07 SP
  France
  Tel: +33 1 45 68 41 17
  E-mail: pj.mckeever@unesco.org
- Website: www.unesco.org/new/en/natural-sciences/environment/earth-sciences/

(5) Other relevant websites

- ASEAN Heritage Parks: chm.aseanbiodiversity.org/index.php?option=com_wrapper&view=wrapper&Itemid=110/
- Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD): www.cbd.int/
- CBD Aichi Targets: www.cbd.int/sp/targets/
- European Diploma for Protected Areas: www.coe.int/en/web/bern-convention/european-diploma-for-protected-areas
- IUCN Green List of Protected and Conserved Areas: www.iucn.org/theme/protected-areas/our-work/green-list
- IUCN Library System: portals.iucn.org/library/dir/publications-list
- IUCN publications linked to advice on nominations for World Heritage sites: www.iucn.org/theme/world-heritage/our-work/advisory-role/nominations
- IUCN World Heritage Outlook: www.iucn.org/theme/world-heritage/our-work/iucn-world-heritage-outlook
- UN Sustainable Development Knowledge Platform: sustaineddevelopment.un.org/
- World Database on Protected Areas (WDPA) – Protected Planet: www.protectedplanet.net/