

National Network of Korean Civil Society for Opposing to the Naval Base in Jeju Island

29 May 2013

Michel Ravassard Irina Bokova

Director-General of UNESCO

7, place de Fontenoy

75352 Paris 07 SP France

cc. Gretchen Kalonji, Assistant Director-General for Natural Sciences, UNESCO

Jong-kwan Choi, Chairperson, MAB Korean Committee Secretariat

RE: UNESCO's Periodic Review on the Jeju Biosphere Reserve

Dear Ms. Michel Ravassard Irina Bokova,

We, the National Network of Korean Civil Society for Opposing to the Naval Base in Jeju Island, are writing to you today to share our concerns on destructive impact of the Jeju naval base construction on the UNESCO Biosphere Reserve. We note that on 29 May 2013, the UNESCO will carry out the periodic review on the Jeju Biosphere Reserve at the 25th Periodic Conference of the UNESCO Man and the Biosphere(MAB) International Coordinating Council (ICC). This review is significant as it is the first review on the Jeju Biosphere Reserve since 2002.

The UNESCO has designated a site as the Biosphere Reserve which seeks to reconcile conservation of biological and cultural diversity and economic and social development through partnerships between people and nature, based on local community efforts and sound science. Mt. Halla National Park, and Seopseom, Munseom and Beomseom, has been designated as the UNESCO Biosphere Reserve in 2002 upon the framework mentioned above. Unfortunately, the waters around Beomseom are very close to Gangjeong Village where the new naval base is being constructed and negative environment impacts are expected to the Biosphere Reserve in relation to the Naval Base Construction.

We are highly concerned about direct and indirect environmental impact on the Biosphere Reserve by the construction of Jeju naval base. If the construction is completed, navy vessels and civilian ships will sail through the Biosphere Reserve's buffer zone and impact soft coral bed underneath. Even though the naval base is not constructed directly on the Biosphere Reserve, it is a threat to the adjacent waters due to washout and concrete structures during the construction.

In this regards, we would like to share our following concerns on destruction and pollution of the Jeju Biosphere Reserve in relation to the Jeju Naval Base construction to the MAB secretariat.

Inconsistent Maps of the Biosphere Reserve Buffer Zone

There are three different maps which point out the buffer zone of Jeju Biosphere Reserve provided by the Government. Inconsistent maps of the Biosphere Reserve buffer zone brings confusions and

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raises doubts on the Government's performance on monitoring the management and preservation of the entire Jeju Biosphere Reserve.

According to the coordinates which the Government has submitted to the UNESCO and the National Assembly, the buffer zone is the waters surrounding the three islands, rectangular shaped. However, in the Periodic Report submitted by the Government to the MAB last September, the map of the buffer zone is a parallelogram shape which is different from its coordinates. Moreover, the buffer zone shown in 'GongGam Korea(<http://www.korea.kr/main.do>)', a website publicizing the Government's policies, is a irregular shaped zone.

As you may already be well aware, the Biosphere Reserve is consists of core zone, buffer zone, and transition zone. We believe that the UNESCO's official view is that the buffer zone, as well as the core zone, should be under activities that does not impede the purpose of sound preservation. We emphasize that all three zones should be strictly examined in this Periodic Review and exact map of three zones should be publicized.

Urgently Made Plans to Protect the Jeju Biosphere Reserve from the Jeju Naval Base Construction

In the last World Conservation Congress held in September 2012, the Government insisted that the Jeju Naval Base construction does not violate the Biosphere Reserve. However, in any of abovementioned three maps, the sea route of the Jeju Naval Base would cut through the buffer zone, which would bring negative impacts on the Biosphere Reserve. The Government did not mention about these concerns in its Periodic Report submitted in September 2012.

Since the Jeju Naval Base is still under construction, the negative impact of navy vessels and ships on buffer zone it not yet visible. However, it is not possible to sail into the Jeju Naval Base without intruding the buffer zone. Therefore, the UNESCO should take precautionary actions to review the expected damages and urge the Government to take relevant countermeasures. The Jeju Naval Base construction should be stopped and postponed until comprehensive inspection is made on its expected impacts on the Biosphere Reserve.

Concerns Raised on Pollution and Damages of Adjacent Waters by the Jeju Naval Base Construction

We would like to point out that insufficient environmental protection measures has caused damages and polluted the near water of the Jeju Naval Base construction site, including the buffer zone. For example in April 2012, the silt protector surrounding the site was damaged due to heavy rain but the construction companies carried on the process without reinstalling it. We could witness that the sea contamination and pollution caused by the construction enforced without the slit protector reached near the Beom Island which is the buffer zone.

Also seven caissons, 8-story high concrete structures which is plunged into the sea bed to make breakwaters, has been severely damaged by the Typhoon Bolaven in 2012. Since 5 May 2013, The

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Navy's only measure was to smash broken caissons into pieces by using underwater compressors. Considering the toxic composition of concrete debris, it is obvious that it would pollute the waters and affect marine ecosystem.

Objective Reviews on the Jeju Biosphere Reserve is Required considering the Jeju Naval Base Construction

We reiterates that serious environmental damages that can be caused by the Jeju Naval Base construction including its expected sea route. We note with concern that the Government submitted its Periodic Review report to the UNESCO while not mentioning these problems and concerns. We, the Korean civil society organizations, urge the UNESCO ICC of the MAB to conduct its review on the Jeju Biosphere Reserve objectively and comprehensively while taking serious note on the concerns raised.

If you have any questions or need a clarification, please do not hesitate to contact People's Solidarity for Participatory Democracy (Ms. Huisun Kim, Ms. Gayoon Baek at peace@pspd.org) .

Yours Sincerely,



Mr. Taeho Lee

Co-convener, National Network of Korean Civil Society for Opposing to the Naval Base in Jeju Island
Secretary-General, People's Solidarity for Participatory Democracy