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UNESCO adds 20 new sites to global network of biosphere reserves



The Sheka reserve in Ethiopia is among 20 new sites added by UNESCO to its global list of biosphere reserves. Photo: Ethiopian Ministry of Science & Technology

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The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization ([UNESCO](#)) today [added](#) 20 new sites to its global list of biosphere reserves, bringing the total to 599 in 117 countries.

The International Coordinating Council of UNESCO's Man and the Biosphere Programme ([MAB](#)), meeting in Paris, France, added sites in Haiti, Kazakhstan and Sao Tome and Principe for the first time to the World Network of Biosphere Reserves.

Biosphere reserves are places recognized by MAB where local communities are actively involved in governance and management, research, education, training and monitoring at the service of both socio-economic development and biodiversity conservation.

They are “sites for experimenting with and learning about sustainable development,” UNESCO said in a news release.

The new additions to the list include the West Polesie Transboundary Biosphere Reserve, which crosses Belarus, Poland and Ukraine; the Sheka reserve in Ethiopia; the four islands that make up the Wakatobi reserve in Indonesia; and the Ferlo reserve in Senegal, which has been threatened by droughts due to human activities, among others.

There were also extensions to four reserves: the Fray Jorge Biosphere Reserve in Chile; the Réserve de biosphère des Iles et de la Mer d'Iroise in France; and the Doñana and Sierra Nevada Biosphere Reserves, both located in Spain.

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