

KHANGCHENDZONGA BIOSPHERE RESERVE included in the MAB, UNESCO
World Network of Biosphere Reserve



International Coordinating Council (ICC) of Man and Biosphere (MAB) Programme, UNESCO in its 30th. Session (23-27 July, 2018) at Palembang, Indonesia designated Khangchendzonga Biosphere Reserve for inclusion in the World Network of Biosphere Reserve (WNBR). India has 18 Biosphere Reserves and now with the inclusion of Khangchendzonga - the number of internationally designated World Network of Biosphere Reserves has become 11 with 7 BRs as domestic designated Biosphere Reserves.

Khangchendzonga Biosphere Reserve is one of the highest ecosystems in the world reaching elevations of 1,220 metres above sea level (masl) to over 8,586 masl. It includes a range of ecoclines varying from subtropical to arctic, as well as vast natural forests in different biomes that support an immensely rich diversity of forest types and habitats resulting in high species diversity and endemism.

The core area is a major transboundary Wildlife Protected Area. The southern and central landscape which makes up 86% of the core area is situated in the Greater Himalayas, while the northern part of the area which accounts for 14% is characterized by trans-Himalayan features. Buffer zones are being developed to promote ecotourism activities. Plantation and soil conservation works are also being carried out. Over 118 species of the large number of medicinal plants found in Dzongu Valley are of ethno-medicinal utility. The transition zone is targeted for eco-development activities, afforestation, plantations of medicinal herbs and soil conservation measures. The core zone - Khangchendzonga National Park - was designated a World Heritage Site in 2016 under the 'mixed' category. Many of the mountains and peaks, lakes, caves, rocks, stupas (shrines) and hot springs function as sacred and pilgrimage sites.