



Ministero dell'Ambiente e della Sicurezza Energetica

DIREZIONE GENERALE TUTELA DELLA BIODIVERSITA' E DEL MARE

IL DIRETTORE GENERALE

To the kind attention of:

Mr António Abreu
Director of the Division of Ecological
and Earth Sciences, Secretary of the
Man and the Biosphere (MAB)
Programme
7, place de Fontenoy
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cc.

H.E. the Ambassador Liborio Stellino
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SEDE

SUBJECT: Submission of the nomination dossier for “Saline di Sicilia” as a Biosphere Reserve under the UNESCO MAB Programme.

Dear Mr Abreu,

We hereby transmit the nomination dossier of the national “Saline di Sicilia” proposal for designation as a Biosphere Reserve within the framework of the UNESCO MAB Programme, for consideration within the 2026–2027 nomination cycle.

Territorial context and main features of the nomination

The “Saline di Sicilia” proposal covers the coastal area of western Sicily between the territories of Trapani and Marsala and involves the municipalities of Trapani, Paceco, Misiliscemi and Marsala. The proposed area is centred around a coastal and lagoon system characterised by the historic

saltworks of Trapani and Marsala, the Stagnone Lagoon and its associated wetlands. It integrates natural, agricultural, productive and urban areas that are closely interconnected from an ecological, landscape, economic and cultural perspective. The nomination is coordinated by a Steering Committee comprising the four municipalities, the Sicilian Region, WWF Italia, the Libero Consorzio Comunale di Trapani and the Trapani Chamber of Commerce.

The total proposed area covers 10,172.60 hectares, of which 8,053.32 hectares are terrestrial and 2,119.28 hectares are marine. The zonation comprises 932.76 hectares of core areas (8%), 3,288.07 hectares of buffer zones (33%) and 5,951.77 hectares of transition area (58%). The core areas and buffer zones mainly correspond to the Regional Nature Reserves of the Saline di Trapani e Paceco and Isola dello Stagnone, while the transition area covers the municipalities of Trapani, Paceco, Misiliscemi and Marsala, including urban, agricultural and productive areas.

Values and significance of the nomination

A distinctive feature of the proposal is the historical role played by traditional salt-making in protecting and maintaining coastal wetland environments, contributing to the conservation and, in some cases, restoration of habitats and conditions favourable to numerous species, particularly avifauna. The salt-pan system can therefore be regarded as a biocultural landscape and a socio-ecological system in which traditional salt-making represents, at the same time, an economic activity, an element of local identity and a functional component of biodiversity conservation. Salt pans, lagoons, canals and brackish-water bodies form a mosaic of environments of high ecological value, including coastal and lagoon habitats, wetlands and areas of particular importance for migratory birds along the African-Eurasian flyways. The nomination also highlights agrobiodiversity, traditional agricultural landscapes and the tangible and intangible heritage of traditional salt-making including production techniques, local ecological knowledge, architecture, salt windmills and salt museums.

The proposal seeks to integrate these values with the socio-economic dynamics of the territory by promoting sustainable salt production, traditional agricultural products, nature and culture-based tourism, innovation and the circular economy. Particular emphasis is placed on the participation of local communities and stakeholders through the involvement of public administrations, protected-area management authorities, salt-production operators, environmental and cultural associations, educational and scientific institutions, economic operators, civil society organisations and young people. The proposed model envisages the progressive consolidation of permanent forms of participation, including a Biosphere Reserve Assembly and thematic working groups, with particular attention to the representation of the salt-production sector and younger generations.

Objectives and prospects of the future Biosphere Reserve

The nomination identifies three strategic objectives: to conserve and enhance the cultural landscape of the traditional saltworks and the associated ecosystems, integrating biodiversity conservation with salt-making practices; to promote sustainable development through territorial cooperation, strengthening the salt supply chain, identity-based local products, responsible tourism, innovation and the circular economy; and to develop a Euro-Mediterranean laboratory for research, monitoring, education and innovation, with a particular focus on the resilience of coastal ecosystems and adaptation to climate change. The future Biosphere Reserve is conceived as a permanent territorial platform capable of integrating conservation, sustainable development, research, education and participation, while making the most of Sicily's strategic position in the Mediterranean and fostering the exchange of knowledge and good practices with other Biosphere Reserves through the World Network of Biosphere Reserves, EuroMAB and the thematic networks of the Programme.

Conclusions

Given the above, at its meeting held on 9 September 2026, the Italian National Technical Committee for the UNESCO MAB-IGG Programmes expressed a favourable opinion on the “Saline di Sicilia” nomination, recognizing its particular significance as an example of the co-evolution of people and nature and as a territorial laboratory for testing innovative strategies for biodiversity conservation and the sustainable management of Mediterranean coastal wetlands.

The nomination dossier is therefore hereby transmitted for due consideration and the subsequent assessment by the UNESCO MAB Secretariat and the International Advisory Committee for Biosphere Reserves, as part of the 2026–2027 nomination cycle.

Should you require any further information or clarification regarding the nomination, I remain at your disposal. Please accept, Dear Mr Abreu, the assurances of my highest consideration.

Yours sincerely,

Francesco Tomas
President of the National Technical Committee
MAB-IGG UNESCO Programmes

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