

The Federation's biosphere reserve poised to secure capacity-building assistance in sustainable and biodiversity-driven agricultural technique

September 6th 2022

Basseterre, St. Kitts (St. Kitts and Nevis National Commission for UNESCO): On Thursday this week, stakeholders in the St. Kitts and Nevis' Man and Biosphere reserve site in St. Mary's (Cayon) received some good news from the Federation's Ambassador to UNESCO. He announced the provision of major capacity-building assistance from the UNESCO's Earth Network programme.

After recently submitting a proposal, the MAB National Committee and the St. Kitts and Nevis National Commission for UNESCO learned that the UNESCO headquarters in Paris is preparing the technical support to fulfil the project request. The project seeks to address specific challenges associated with agricultural practices, tools and methods of the St. Mary's biosphere reserve site: cultivation, preservation and monetization of sustainable and biodiversity-led sustainable agriculture processes. The overall aim is to embrace better use of tropical forests, enhance the cultivation of new fruits and combat soli-erosion.

It is expected that at least two leading biodiversity and ecological experts (from UNESCO Earth Network's roster of volunteer experts) with experience in tropical environments, will visit the Federation and assist the members of the MAB National Committee to enhance the biodiversity and ecology of the St. Mary's Biosphere Reserve, as early as mid-November this year.

Last Thursday at UNESCO headquarters in Paris, St. Kitts and Nevis' Ambassador to UNESCO, Dr. David P. Doyle, discussed the plans, scope and timing for implementing this capacity-building initiative with Meriem Bouamrane, Chief of UNESCO's Man and the Biosphere (MAB) Programme Research and Policy section: Ecology and Biodiversity, and her project officer, Martin Delaroche.

The St. Kitts and Nevis' capacity-building project is part of the wider Multi-Partner Trust Fund of the 'UNESCO Earth Network' created in 2021. It is in line with UNESCO's Strategy for Biodiversity, contributing to the goals of the Paris Climate Agreement and the post-2020 Global Biodiversity Framework as well as to the two UN Decades of Ecosystem Restoration and Ocean Science.

"We are very pleased to support UNESCO designated sites, such as St Mary's Biosphere Reserve, and share their unique contribution to the UN Decade on Ecosystem Restoration

2021-2030 and implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). We invite other donors to join the Earth Network Programme”

Commented Meriem Bouamrane, Chief of the UNESCO MAB Research and Policy section:

The UNESCO MAB team in Paris and the St. Kitts and Nevis MAB Committee will now embark, in the coming weeks, on defining the terms of reference of experts associated with the Earth Network project and fine-tune the project concept.

This is great news on the advancement of this project. Our MAB Team here in St. Mary's will be happy to hear of this development”.Mrs Telca Wallace, key coordinator of the St. Mary's MAB activities and MAB committee member concurred and added: ”

“The Government of Italy is to be congratulated for allocating catalytic and much-needed funding to enable UNESCO's MAB ecology and biodiversity sector to provide leading-edge expertise to St. Kitts and Nevis' MAB site, as well as supporting the implementation of the Federation's biodiversity and sustainability strategy ambassador Doyle noted: ”

The expertise is designed to open the door in recipient countries, like St. Kitts and Nevis, to transformative actions within territories to regenerate human-to-nature relationships and restore ecosystems, conserve ecosystem harmony and amplify the power of youth, which are the three pillars of UNESCO's strategic actions for biodiversity.

The project benefits from the Italian Government-funded UNESCO Earth Network programme with an initial support of EUR 3 million (US\$3m) from the Government of Italy for three years. The programme offers UNESCO Member States, including small island developing states, support for their UNESCO designated sites in the area of biodiversity, the ocean and climate change, ecosystem restoration and capacity building supported by volunteer experts in these areas.