

## Statement to address the value of supporting learning processes in model regions for sustainable development

In September 2015, the United Nations General Assembly agreed on a global agenda for sustainable development – the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. Unique in its kind, the Agenda with its 17 Sustainable Development Goals and 169 targets is tackling a broad spectrum of development issues crucial to human prosperity. It underlines a clear recognition that social, environmental and economic development cannot be treated separately. Rather, they are interlinked and interdependent dimensions of sustainable development that need to be treated in an integrated manner. Hence, the Agenda is, simultaneously, “(...) a plan of action for people, planet and prosperity”. This requires an extensive transformation of our society. This is an issue that spans over all sectors, and strategies and methods for “breaking the silos” need to be developed. Solutions to global challenges are mainly local. Therefore, it is of great importance that communities are empowered to contribute to change. The public’s awareness and engagement is a prerequisite for the implementation of the Agenda.

While addressing the Agenda, conflicts of interest may arise between goals and targets. UNESCO Biosphere Reserves are places where these conflicts are addressed, where needs are identified and analysed, where synergies are explored and where communities are included in finding solutions to sustainability challenges. With small means and little formal power the Swedish biosphere reserves have achieved a range of results by connecting local initiatives to national and international strategies, by connecting people and nature, and by stimulating new knowledge development as well as education for sustainable development. The success of the biosphere reserves is based on collaboration, learning and a holistic view on people and nature – connecting local and global perspectives. Their thorough experience of integrated work with sustainable development in practice in a Swedish context make them interesting as strategic areas to learn from, invest in, and support when implementing the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development in Sweden<sup>1</sup>.

We here pledge our joint commitment to facilitate learning and dissemination of good practices from UNESCO Biosphere Reserves in the Baltic Sea Region, within and beyond the network of biosphere reserves. The intentions of this joint commitment shall contribute to raising awareness of sustainability challenges linked to the Baltic Sea, enhanced knowledge of inter-connectedness between land and sea, as well as learning from biosphere reserves as arenas for implementing the SDGs with a multi-stakeholder approach.

**Havs  
och Vatten  
myndigheten**



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<sup>1</sup> Heinrup, M. and Schultz, L. 2016: Swedish biosphere reserves as arenas for implementing the 2030 Agenda, Environmental Protection Agency