

CGR4.MOT055 - IUCN World Conservation Congress, Barcelona, 5-14 October 2008
Conservation of geodiversity and geological heritage

NOTING that the United Nations General Assembly proclaimed 2008 to be the International Year of Planet Earth, initiated jointly by the International Union of Geological Sciences (IUGS) and the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) in order to increase awareness of the importance of Earth sciences in achieving sustainable development and promoting local, national, regional and international action;

AWARE of the rapidly growing interest and commitment of States, NGOs, and communities to save, study and sustainably use their geodiversity and geological heritage;

RECALLING that geodiversity, understood to include geological and geomorphological diversity, is an important natural factor underpinning biological, cultural and landscape diversity, as well as an important parameter to be considered in the assessment and management of natural areas;

RECALLING FURTHER that geological heritage constitutes a natural heritage of scientific, cultural, aesthetic, landscape, economic and/or intrinsic values, which needs to be preserved and handed down to future generations;

NOTING the pioneering experience led by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) and other international institutions in promoting the conservation and sustainable use of geological heritage through the development of the Global Geoparks Network (GGN);

RECOGNIZING the escalating impact of development that is frequently unsustainable upon the world's geodiversity and geological heritage;

RECOGNIZING FURTHER that in planning such development, the intrinsic values, both material and intangible, of the geodiversity, geoheritage and geological processes present at natural areas are often underestimated or even ignored;

AWARE that the Global Geopark Network and Global Geosites Program of UNESCO cover less than 1% of the world's land surface and less than 1% of the marine area, and that most of the geological heritage lies in the wider landscape outside protected areas;

RECALLING that the Preamble to the *World Heritage Convention* adopted by the UNESCO General Conference recognizes that the deterioration or disappearance of any item of the natural heritage constitutes a harmful impoverishment of the heritage of all the nations of the world, and that Article 2 considers geological and physiographical formations of outstanding universal value from the point of view of science or conservation as natural heritage;

RECALLING ALSO the pioneering trend set by the adoption of Rec(2004)3 (*Conservation of the Geological Heritage and Areas of Special Geological Interest*) by the Council of Europe in 2004, and its call to strengthen cooperation amongst international organizations, scientific institutions and NGOs in the field of geological heritage conservation, and participate in geological conservation programmes;

RECOGNIZING that the conservation of geodiversity and geological heritage contributes to deal with species loss and ecosystem integrity;

NOTING that the IUCN guidelines for applying protected area management categories explicitly consider amongst the objectives common to all protected areas the need to: a)

maintain diversity of landscape or habitat, b) conserve significant landscape features, geomorphology and geology, and c) conserve natural and scenic areas of national and international significance for cultural, spiritual and scientific purposes;

RECALLING that the conservation of geodiversity and geological heritage at international, national and local levels contributes to the objectives of the *United Nations Decade of Education for Sustainable Development (2005–2014)*;

RECOGNIZING the important role of geological and geomorphological conservation in maintaining the character of many landscapes;

RECOGNIZING ALSO that the conservation and management of geological heritage need to be integrated by governments in their national goals and programmes;

NOTING that some areas with geological and geomorphological values will deteriorate if they are not taken into account in planning and development policies; and

AWARE of the need to promote the conservation and appropriate management of the world's geological heritage, in particular areas of special geological interest;

The World Conservation Congress at its 4th Session in Barcelona, Spain, 5–14 October 2008:

1. CALLS ON IUCN's members to support the Secretariat in the design, organization, hosting and funding of future Forum sessions on Geodiversity and Geological Heritage to ensure that this mechanism will achieve the widest possible involvement of government, independent sector groups and international organizations around the world;

In addition, the World Conservation Congress, at its 4th Session in Barcelona, Spain, 5–14 October 2008, provides the following guidance in the implementation of the Programme 2009–2012:

2. REQUESTS the Director General to:
 - a. Convene a continuing series of meetings on Geodiversity and Geological Heritage in the regions in partnership with members and other organizations; and
 - b. Establish a Secretariat focal point to facilitate the organization of these meetings and to provide their continuity while maintaining the minimum organization and administration possible; and
3. CALLS ON IUCN's Commissions, especially the World Commission on Protected Areas, to support the Secretariat in the design, organization, hosting and funding of future Forum sessions on Geodiversity and Geological Heritage to ensure that this mechanism will achieve the widest possible involvement of government, independent sector groups, and international organizations around the world.

Sponsors:

Sociedad Geológica de España
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Fundación Naturaleza y Hombre
Ecologistas en Acción

Comment:

The activities called for in this motion are partially included in the proposed Programme 2009–2012 and constitute part of the work of WCPA. It also asks IUCN to convene and fund a Forum on Geodiversity and Geological Heritage that would require new resources. This motion is referred to a Programme Hearing.

Explanatory memorandum

This resolution on the conservation of geodiversity and geological heritage has been elaborated and is proposed to the General Assembly of IUCN by the Geological Society of Spain, and in particular its Commission on Geological Heritage.

The main objective of this resolution is to incorporate the conservation of geodiversity and geological heritage into the agenda of IUCN, the main reason being that both are part of the Earth's natural heritage and hence need to be considered by IUCN. In order to achieve this, the preamble draws attention to (1) the conceptual framework set by the World Heritage Convention in 1982, which considers geological heritage as part of the natural heritage, (2) the objectives of the current International Year of Planet Earth adopted by the UN General Assembly, and (3) the pioneering steps set by the recommendations of the European Council in 2004.

The preamble also attempts to recall basic concepts regarding geodiversity and geological heritage, and the need to consider these aspects in nature conservation, land management and sustainable use of resources. It is often forgotten that all we know about Earth's evolution, including the evolution of climate, species, habitats and resources, is based on the geological record. Geological heritage includes those most valuable sites with the best record of Earth's evolution. Likewise, the diversity of geological and geomorphological features underpins biological, cultural and landscape diversity, and thus needs to be considered as one more value of natural heritage requiring appropriate adaptive management towards an integrated conservation.

We believe the time is appropriate for IUCN to begin considering geodiversity and geological heritage in forums and congresses. Our focus with this resolution at this fourth World Conservation Congress is to promote actions and initiatives in this direction, with the hope that future work may gradually develop towards recommendations regarding the conservation of geodiversity and geological heritage.

The general objective of this motion strictly follows the general objective of IUCN: to promote the conservation and sustainable use of natural heritage for future generations. But, in order to be complete, natural heritage needs to include geological heritage, the natural archive for the memory of the Earth.