



Key Geoheritage Sites: A new program proposal in IUCN for Geoheritage Conservation

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Geoheritage site can be defined as a site with outstanding geological or geomorphic values, which should be conserved and inherited to future generations. Geoheritage values can be categorized into global and regional (international) values and national value, and they must be legally protected. Unfortunately there is no international protection measure for conservation of nature, thus they can be only protected by national protection laws if available and/or applicable. Unfortunately conservation of significant geoheritage sites is not well recognized at national and international level at present in the world, compared to ecological and biodiversity values. Thanks to the international programs for recognizing geoheritage values, a number of nations have shown interests for UNESCO designation as World Heritage Sites or Global Geoparks. However, both programs are geographically very limited because the World Heritage Sites should display 'the Representatives of the Best in the world' and Global Geoparks with international geoheritage sites must be associated with local communities for geotourism and sustainable development to be endorsed. Therefore, a new program called 'the Key Geoheritage Site (KGS)' is suggested here to recognize and conserve the geoheritage sites of international significance in the world. The KGS should be justified by geological values alone without considering educational and touristic values. For effective designation and protection, objective geological contexts with appropriate criteria should be developed considering representativeness, rarity and integrity. This new program could contribute to conserve geoheritage sites worldwide if it can be adopted by IUCN in the future.