

4.040 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;

FURTHER RECALLING 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 work led by UNESCO and other international institutions, to promote 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;

FURTHER RECOGNIZING 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 GGN and Global Geosites Programme 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 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 of the Convention 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 Recommendation 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 among international organizations, scientific institutions and NGOs in the field of geological heritage conservation, and to participate in geological conservation programmes;

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

NOTING that the IUCN guidelines for applying protected area management categories explicitly consider among 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;

ALSO RECOGNIZING that the conservation and management of geological heritage need to be integrated by governments into 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 IUCN World Conservation 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 concerning implementation of the IUCN 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 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 implementation of the actions called for in paragraph 1 above.

State and agency members of the United States abstained during the vote on this motion.