

Conservation of the natural diversity and natural heritage in mining environments

CONSIDERING that mining activity often exposes geological heritage of national and international importance, like karst cavities, fossils and minerals or geological structures, such as the giant geodes in the mines in Naica (Mexico) and Pulpí (Spain), or the dinosaur fossil tracks in the Cretaceous limestone quarry in Sucre (Bolivia);

ALSO CONSIDERING that mining activity can generate landscapes of high aesthetic value that can be declared Protected Landscapes (e.g. the Río Tinto mines, Huelva, Spain) or UNESCO World Heritage Sites (e.g. the Las Médulas Roman gold mines, León, Spain);

FURTHER CONSIDERING that in these surface and underground mining environments, the geological and biological processes can be very diverse and/or unusual, and that they can contain unique types of mineral or unique species, and that they are very useful for the study of the origin and evolution of life and natural diversity (both of geodiversity and biodiversity) in extremophilic environments on this and other planets;

RECALLING that underground and surface (open-cast mines and quarries) mining environments are natural laboratories for investigating and teaching about the natural processes and their results;

RECOGNISING that, after the end of mining activities, the restoration of the mining environment can lead to the irreparable loss of the geological, biological and/or cultural natural heritage that the exploitation had generated;

ALSO RECOGNISING that examples of best practices for the scientific, educational and tourist use of mining environments already exist; and

RECALLING the IUCN Resolutions in favour of geoconservation and the proper management of geodiversity and the geological heritage (Resolution 4.040 *Conservation of geodiversity and geological heritage* (Barcelona, 2008), Resolution 5.058 *Ecosystem management for disaster risk reduction (DDR)* (Jeju, 2012) and Resolution 6.083 *Conservation of the moveable geological heritage* (Hawai'i, 2016)) and Resolution 6.053 *Protecting coastal and marine environments from mining waste* (Hawai'i, 2016), which calls on all states to restore their coastlines affected by mining waste, whilst ensuring that this process does not affect the environment or the conservation of the natural and cultural heritage;

The IUCN World Conservation Congress 2020, at its session in Marseille, France:

1. CALLS ON the Member States to conserve mining environments, both underground and surface (open-cast mines and quarries), whose value derived from the conservation of their natural heritage, both geological and biological, is considered greater than the value of their restoration; and
2. ASKS the Member States to launch initiatives to guarantee that the natural heritage of these mining environments is used for biodiversity conservation, and also to promote scientific, educational, cultural and/or tourist purposes, and to this end:
 - a. encourages the Member States to draw up inventories of the natural and cultural heritage resulting from mining activities, both historical and current, and to take the necessary legal action to conserve them;
 - b. urges the Member States to ensure that mining authorisations and their environmental impact studies include a requirement for initiatives for the conservation and sustainable use of the natural heritage that arises during the activity and/or after it finishes, in mining restorations;
 - c. asks the Member States to support public and private initiatives for the sustainable scientific, educational and tourist use of mining environments, with the proper safety measures; and
 - d. calls on the Member States to take steps to raise positive awareness and to educate civil society, companies, non-governmental organisations and public authorities regarding the conservation of the natural and cultural heritage generated in mining environments.