

The Stonehammer Declaration

The 6th International UNESCO Conference on Global Geoparks was held from September 19 to 22, 2014 in Saint John, Stonehammer Global Geopark, Canada, and attended by 500 delegates from 30 countries.

After deliberation, the delegates hereby affirm that:

1. The Global Geopark community fully endorses efforts made after the decision of the 36th General Conference of UNESCO to improve cooperation between UNESCO and Global Geoparks through the establishment of the UNESCO Global Geoparks in the framework of the International Geosciences and Geoparks Programme.

We very much welcome the increasing levels of support for Global Geoparks within UNESCO, we acknowledge the results of the consultations made by the Working Group on Geoparks formed following the decision of the 191st Executive Board meeting and expect that the present strong relationship between the Global Geoparks and UNESCO will be strengthened through the establishment of UNESCO Global Geoparks during the 38th General Conference. In particular, we advocated that the Global Geoparks Network have a non-profit association legal status and will act as the advisory body to UNESCO, to continue the development of Global Geoparks around the world. The GGN shall maintain its consultative relations with UNESCO, through a Memorandum of Understanding. This is specifically important in the least developed areas of the world.

2. The Global Geopark community celebrated the 10th anniversary of the GGN and recognized its highly successful and rapidly evolving development that was initiated in 2004 with the support of the Earth Sciences Division of UNESCO. The GGN reached 100 members during the 6th International UNESCO Conference on Global Geoparks.

Global Geoparks are territories with geological heritage of international significance that implement strategies for holistic heritage management, promotion and sustainable development that are innovative, integrated, and respectful of local traditions and desires. To keep growing, the GGN should insist on the existing evaluation/revalidation system based on high quality criteria in Geopark management, operation and services to their visitors.

3. The GGN assists in the development of models of best practice and quality-standards for territories that integrate the protection and preservation of geoheritage sites in a strategy for regional sustainable economic development. Networking within the Global Geoparks Network is encouraged to strengthen the capacity of human resources through collaboration and co-operation. This will ensure development and support of various advisory roles, networking programs, research projects of common interest and interrelated human activities within the GGN. The 6th International UNESCO Conference on Global Geoparks is a fine example of capacity building.

4. The Global Geopark community encourages the efforts to strengthen the cooperation among local people, scientists and other experts, tourism industries, municipalities, central governments and other stakeholders on Geopark development and operation.

Global Geoparks promote the links between geological heritage and all other aspects of the area's natural and cultural heritage, clearly demonstrating that geodiversity is the foundation of all ecosystems and the basis of human interaction with the landscape.

Geoparks are providing geo-scientific knowledge as a substantial element for nature conservation, geoheritage protection, environmental education, including natural disasters and climate change, geotourism development and proper management in Geoparks. Every Global Geopark should have daily access to the expertise of geoscientists. Therefore, effective sustainable development of our Geoparks as well as of our local communities will remain as a goal.

5. The Global Geopark community encourages an equitable geographical development of Global Geoparks and thus supports all efforts to expand Global Geoparks in those areas of the world that are currently under-represented in the GGN. The first Global Geopark Conference in North America has afforded the opportunity for aspiring Geoparks in the region to gain experience and knowledge of the Global Geoparks Network and has increased awareness of Geoparks. Delegates look forward to the development of a rich and vibrant North American Geoparks Network, based on the diverse geology and cultural heritage of the continent. Participation of First Nations at the opening ceremony provided a unique and inspiring message for delegates and for future North American Geoparks.

Agreed in Stonehammer Global Geopark 22-09-2014