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**Committee for the activities of the Council of Europe
in the field of biological and landscape diversity
(CO-DBP)**

Working Group on the Geological Heritage

2nd meeting
15 September 2003 at 9.30 am
Room 2, Palais de l'Europe, Strasbourg

REPORT OF THE MEETING

*Document established by
the Directorate of Culture and Cultural and Natural Heritage*

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1. Opening of the meeting

The Chair of the Working Group, Mr. Jón Gunnar Ottoson (Iceland), opened the meeting and welcomed the participants (see Appendix 1).

Mr. Gianluca Silvestrini, Administrator of the Natural Heritage and Biological Diversity Division, welcomed the participants and recalled how the initiative to deal with the conservation of geological heritage originated, as well as the main decisions taken at the first meeting of the Working Group.

The Secretariat recalled that some States interested in the setting-up of the Emerald Network of Areas of Special Conservation Interest had expressed the wish to include also geological sites in these areas. However, the Standing Committee of the Bern Convention had not considered it appropriate to enlarge the Emerald Network with sites of geological interest. Therefore, the Secretariat had presented the idea of dealing with geological conservation to the members of the Committee for the activities of the Council of Europe in the field of biological and landscape diversity (CO-DBP), which had agreed to create this Working Group. The Group had held its first meeting on 13 September 2002 and had emphasised the existence of many European initiatives for geological conservation and the necessity to support them, avoiding the creation of new instruments. Therefore, it had decided to prepare a draft Recommendation on "Conservation of the geological heritage and areas of special geological interest", which was not binding but had a moral commitment and had more freedom to request action from States, for possible adoption by the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe. In January 2003, the CO-DBP agreed with the preparation of a Recommendation and stressed the importance of avoiding the creation of new instruments as well as working in co-operation with other organisations and scientific institutions dealing with this matter. Finally, the CO-DBP decided to proceed with this initiative and instructed the Secretariat to prepare the Recommendation on "Conservation of the geological heritage and areas of special geological interest", for possible adoption by the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe. The Secretariat contracted Mr. Tony Weighell, of the Joint Nature Conservation Committee, to prepare on behalf of the Council of Europe a draft Recommendation, which was distributed to the members of the Group in May this year.

The Secretariat pointed out that the main objective of the second meeting was the discussion of the draft Recommendation in order to gather possible comments from the members, which would be integrated in the text for its finalisation. The draft Recommendation to be adopted by the Working Group would then be presented for possible comment and adoption to the CO-DBP, at its next meeting to be held in Madrid on 27 January 2004. Once adopted by the CO-DBP the text would finally be presented to the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe for possible adoption and transmission to the Council of Europe member States so that they may apply it as appropriate in their national policies and practice.

2. Adoption of the Draft Agenda (document CO-DBP/GEO (2003) 1)

The Agenda was adopted as it appears in Appendix 2.

3. Presentation and discussion of the Recommendation on conservation of the geological heritage and areas of special geological interest (document CO-DBP/GEO (2003) 2)

The author of the draft Recommendation, Mr. Tony Weighell, presented the structure of the text, the recommendations and the appendixes which provided the background to the recommendations.

The representative of UNESCO emphasized that it was the first time that an activity of political guidelines was launched on conservation of the geological heritage and that the philosophy of the draft Recommendation was also to get together all the actors concerned by the matter and thanked the Council of Europe for this initiative.

All members of the Group presented their comments on the recommendations and the appendixes, and were involved in a lively discussion to revise the document. The remarks made were also transmitted to the Secretariat in writing in order to finalise the text. The Group stressed the need to substitute the term “may” with “should” to use a stronger word when addressing proposed actions to be undertaken by the governments of member States. The Secretariat pointed out the importance of keeping the language of the draft Recommendation clear and as simple as possible in order to seek the support of non-specialised persons composing the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe.

At the end of the meeting the Working Group adopted the draft Recommendation (Appendix 3) in which the amendments proposed have been integrated. The Group instructed the Secretariat to transmit the revised text to the CO-DBP members for possible adoption at the forthcoming meeting to be held in Madrid on 27 January 2004. Once adopted, the Secretariat would present the recommendation to the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe for possible final adoption and transmission to the member States.

The Chair and the Secretariat thanked the members of the Group for their important contributions to the finalisation of the recommendation.

4. Other business

The German representative presented the recent activities carried out in his country on geotope conservation and national Geoparks.

The Group took note of the information and thanked the German representative.

APPENDIX 1**LIST OF PARTICIPANTS****STATES****BELGIUM**

M. Jean-Marie BAMBONEYEHO

Attaché-Géologue, Division de la prévention et des autorisations, Direction Générale des ressources naturelles et de l'environnement, Ministère de la Région wallonne, 15 avenue Prince de Liège, B-5100 NAMUR

Tel. +32 81 33 61 28 Fax +32 81 33 51 22 E-mail jm.bamboneyeho@mrw.wallonie.be

M. Patrick DE WOLF (*apologised for absence*)

Ingénieur attaché à la Direction de la Nature, Division de la Nature et des Forêts, Ministère de la Région wallonne, 15 avenue Prince de Liège, B-5100 JAMBES (Namur)

Tel. +32 81335816 Fax +32 81335822 E-mail p.dewolf@mrw.wallonie.be

CROATIA

Mr Dragan BUKOVEC

Senior Curator, Croatian Natural History Museum, Demetrova 1, HR-10000 ZAGREB

Tel. +385 1 4851700 E-mail bukovec@hpm.hr

CZECH REPUBLIC

Mr Bohumil KUCERA

Ecological Network Co-ordinator, Agency for Nature Conservation and Landscape, Kali_nická 4-6, CZ-130 23 PRAHA 3

Tel. +420 283 069 252 E-mail kucera@nature.cz

GERMANY

Dr Heinz-Gerd RÖHLING

Lower Saxony Geological Survey, Stilleweg2, D-30655 HANNOVER

Tel. +49 511 643 3567 Fax +49 511 643 3431 E-mail gerd.roehling@bgr.de

Professor Dr Michael SCHMIDT-THOMÉ

Director, Division Head, Bundesanstalt für Geowissenschaften und Rohstoffe, Postfach 51 01 53, D-30631 HANNOVER

Tel. +49 511 643 2352 Fax +49 511 643 3661 E-mail m.schmidt-thome@bgr.de

GREECE

Ms Irimi THEODOSSIOU-DRANDAKI

Geology and Geological Mapping Section Institute of Geology and Mineral Exploration (IGME), Messoghion 70, GR-11527 ATHENS, Greece

Tel. +30210 7757331 Fax +30210 7779467 E-mail ren@igme.gr

HUNGARY

Mrs Katalin BOLNER-TAKÁCS

Head of Speleological and Geological Department, Ministry of Environment and Water, Szepvölgyi ut 162/b, H-1025 BUDAPEST

Tel. +36 1 325 9503 Fax +36 1 325 9509 E-mail bolner.katalin@mail4.ktm.hu

ICELAND

Dr Gunnar Jon OTTÓSSON (*Chairman*)

Director General, Icelandic Institute of Natural History, Hlemmur 3, ISL-125 REYKJAVIK

Tel. +354-590 0500 Fax +354-590 0565 E-mail jgo@ni.is

Dr Helgi TORFASON, Chief of Geology, Icelandic Institute of Natural History, Hlemmur 3,
ISL-125 REYKJAVIK
Tel. +354-590 0500 Fax +354-590 0565 E-mail heto@ni.is

IRELAND

Mr John H MORRIS (*apologised for absence*)
Dr Matthew A PARKES
Irish Geological Heritage Geologist, Geological Survey of Ireland, Beggars Bush, Haddington Road,
IRL-Dublin 4
Tel. +353 (1) 6782858 Fax +353 (1) 6681782 E-mail matthewparkes@gsi.ie

LATVIA

Mrs Dace OZOLA
Senior Officer, Ministry of Environment, Peldu Sreet 25, LV-1494 RIGA
Tel. +371 7026518 Fax +371 7280442 E-mail dace.ozola@vidm.gov.lv

ROMANIA

Mr Cornel MEILESCU
Counsellor, Ministry of Agriculture, Forests, Water and Environment, Bld Libertatii 12, Sector 5,
RO-70542 BUCHAREST
Tel./Fax +40 21 4100531 E-mail cornel@mappm.ro cmeilescu@hotmail.com

SWITZERLAND

Mr Jürg SCHENKER
Division Nature, Office federal de l'environnement, des forêts et du paysage, Case postale,
CH-3003 BERNE
Tel. +41 313228005 Fax +41 313247559 E-mail juerg.schenker@buwal.admin.ch

UKRAINE

Mr Grygoriy PARCHUK
Head of the European Integration and International Co-operation Division, State Agency for Protected Areas,
Ministry of Environment and Natural Resources, 1 Tymiryazevska Str., 01014 KYIV
Tel./Fax +380 44 294 9556 E-mail parchuk@parks.freenet.kiev.ua

INSTITUTIONS

CZECH SPELEOLOGICAL SOCIETY

Dr Pavel BOSAK (*apologised for absence*)
Czech Speleological Society, Kalisnicka 4-6, CZ-130 00 Praha 3
Tel. +420 2 2092 2392 Fax + 420 2 2092 2670 E-mail bosak@gli.cas.cz

DORSET CITY COUNCIL

Mr Malcolm TURNBULL (*apologised for absence*)
Manager, Coast and Countryside Policy, Dorset City Council, City Hall, GB-DORCHESTER DT1 1XJ
Tel. +44 1305 224132 E-mail m.turnbull@dorsetcc.gov.uk

EUROPEAN FEDERATION OF GEOLOGISTS

Dr Helgi TORFASON, Chief of Geology, Icelandic Institute of Natural History, Hlemmur 3,
ISL-125 REYKJAVIK
Tel. +354-590 0500 Fax +354-590 0565 E-mail heto@ni.is

EUROPEAN PALAEOONTOLOGICAL ASSOCIATION

Professeur Jean-Claude GALL, Institut de Géologie, Université Louis Pasteur, 1, rue Blessig,
F-67084 STRASBOURG Cedex
Tel./Fax +33 3 90 24 04 27 E-mail jcgall@illite.u-strasbg.fr

GEOLOGICAL SURVEY OF IRELAND

Mr John H MORRIS (*apologised for absence*)

Dr Matthew A PARKES

Irish Geological Heritage Programme, Geological Survey of Ireland, Beggars Bush, Haddington Road, IRL-Dublin 4

Tel. +353 (1) 6782858 Fax +353 (1) 6681782

E-mail john.morris@gsi.ie matthewparkes@gsi.ie

INTERNATIONAL UNION OF GEOLOGICAL SCIENCES (IUGS)

Dr Werner JANOSCHEK

Secretary General IUGS, c/o Geological Survey of Austria, Rasumofskygasse 23, A-1031 VIENNA

Tel. +43 1 712 56 74 -180 Fax +43 1 712 56 74 56 E-mail wjanoschek@cc.geoba.ac.at

JOINT NATURE CONSERVATION COMMITTEE

Mr Tony WEIGHELL

Joint Nature Conservation Committee, Monkstone House, City Road, GB-PETERBOROUGH PE1 1JY

Tel. +44 1733 866902 Fax +44 1733 555948 E-mail tony.weighell@jncc.gov.uk

OILKOU & FILIKIS ETAIRAS

Mr George K. KAZANTZOPOULOS (*apologised for absence*)

Environment Manager, Oilkou & Filikis Etairas, GR-14234 Nea Ionia, Greece

E-mail gzkazantz@athens2004.gr

ProGEO

Dr Todor TODOROV

ExPresident of ProGEO, P O Box 121, BG 1113 SOFIA, Bulgaria

Tel. +359 2 989 17 44 Fax +359 2 875 91 04 E-mail uptech@tea.bg

UNESCO

Dr F Wolfgang EDER

Director, Division of Earth Sciences, UNESCO, 1 rue Miollis, F-75732 PARIS Cedex 15

Tel. +331 4568 4115 Fax +331 4568 5822 E-mail w.eder@unesco.org

Dr Margarete PATZAK (*apologised for absence*)

IGCP Secretary Assistant, Division of Earth Sciences, UNESCO, 1 rue Miollis, F-75732 PARIS Cedex 15

Tel. +331 4568 4118 Fax +331 4568 5822 E-mail m.patzak@unesco.org

Dr Mechtild RÖSSLER (*apologised for absence*)

Chief, Europe and North America, UNESCO World Heritage Centre, 7 place de Fontenoy, F-75352 PARIS 07 SP

Tel. +331 4568 1891 Fax +331 4568 5570 E-mail m.rossler@unesco.org

CONGRESS OF LOCAL AND REGIONAL AUTHORITIES OF EUROPE (CLRAE)

Mr Gian-Paolo CORDIALE (*apologised for absence*)

Administrator, Council of Europe, F-67075 Strasbourg Cedex

SECRETARIAT

Mr Gianluca SILVESTRINI, Administrator, Natural Heritage and Biological Diversity Division

Tel. +33(0)388412259 Fax +33(0)388413559 E-mail gianluca.silvestrini@coe.int

Mrs Gill STEIMER, Natural Heritage and Biological Diversity Division

Tel. +33(0)388413191 Fax +33(0)388413559 E-mail gill.steimer@coe.int

APPENDIX 2**AGENDA**

1. Opening of the meeting by the Chair
2. Adoption of the Draft Agenda
(document CO-DBP/GEO (2003) 1)
3. Presentation and discussion of the Recommendation on conservation of the geological heritage and areas of special geological interest
(document CO-DBP/GEO (2003) 2)
4. Other business

APPENDIX 3**Draft Recommendation on
"Conservation of the geological heritage and areas of special geological interest"
Adopted by the Working Group at its 2nd meeting on 15 September 2003**

The Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe,

Recalling the United Nations Millennium Declaration, in particular the "Respect for nature" in the management of all living species and natural resources;

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

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

Recognising that the conservation and management of geological heritage needs to be taken into consideration by governments in their national goals and programmes;

Noting that some areas of geological importance will deteriorate if they are not taken into account in planning and development policies;

Conscious of the need to promote conservation and appropriate management of the geological heritage of Europe and in particular of areas of special geological interest;

Considering the philosophy and practice of geological and geomorphologic conservation (Appendix 1);

Recognising the need to strengthen the regional co-operation in Europe in the field of geological heritage conservation;

Recommends that governments of member States:

- identify in their territories areas of special geological interest, the preservation and management of which may contribute to protect and enhance national and European geological heritage; in this context, take into account existing organisations and conservation programmes currently engaged in geological conservation (Appendix 2);

- develop national strategies and guidelines for the protection and management of areas of geological interest embodying the principles of inventory development, site classification, database development, site condition monitoring and tourist and visitor management, to ensure sustainable use of areas of geological interest through appropriate management (Appendix 3);

- strengthen existing legal instruments or develop new ones, to protect areas of special geological interest and moveable items of geological heritage, making full use of existing international conventions (Appendix 4).

- support information and education programmes to promote action in the field of geological heritage conservation (Appendix 5);

- strengthen the co-operation with international organisations, scientific institutions and NGOs in the field of geological heritage conservation (Appendix 6);

- allocate more financial resources to support the initiatives proposed above.

Appendix 1

Philosophy and practice of geological and geomorphological conservation.

Geology and geomorphology, as Earth sciences, describe the history and form of our planet. Geology helps us to understand this history in terms of how the face of the planet has changed through time, traced through the evidence of rocks, sediments in all forms, fossils and minerals that reveal past climates, environments, mountain construction, and continent movement. The history of life itself is also revealed, how it began and evolved, how new species appeared and how species became extinct. Geomorphology interprets the landforms we see today – deserts, glaciers, coastlines and others – the conditions under which they were formed, and also provides a record of the recent past and current processes operating on our planet.

Rocks, minerals and fossils are the archives of the history of our planet and the history of life itself. They are evidence of the passage of geological time, revealing the changes that have shaped the Earth's surface over millions of years. These archives make it possible for us to understand the way our planet looks today and the diversity of its fauna and flora. As with archaeological artefacts, geological sites, minerals and fossils are vulnerable and are a non-renewable heritage that belongs to humanity.

Human society interacts with geology and geomorphology in many ways. Through direct exploitation of mineral resources, through reshaping the landscape by industrial or agricultural activity, by the development of infrastructure links. In some cases (for example by quarrying, mining, cutting of new roads) these activities reveal geological or geomorphological information of scientific, educational or cultural value. In other ways our activity destroys this information. Removal of glacial landforms for use as building material, armouring (and obscuring) of rock sections on coasts, infilling of old quarries with waste, are all examples of destructive activities.

Europe has a rich geological heritage. The scientific principles that founded the science of geology were developed in Europe where the varied geology and geomorphology provided an inspiration for original thought. Protecting this heritage is the objective of geological conservation ("geological" being taken here to relate to all branches of geology, including paleontology and mineralogy, as well as all aspects of geomorphology), an activity that parallels and works with the protection of biodiversity and landscapes. The term "geodiversity" has been used to describe the nature of the diverse heritage we are seeking to protect and enhance through this work.

Although not as well developed in practice as biodiversity conservation, and not as well known to the public, geological conservation is being actively promoted in Europe through a number of programmes and the activities of many individuals. The programmes that promote geological conservation seek to recognise areas ("sites") of geological and geomorphological interest, educate the public as to their value and develop management plans or strategies that will not only protect but also enhance their value. These areas may be natural or man-made. Naturally created features include river gorges, caves, coastal rocks, sand dunes, remnant features of past glaciations, glaciers, arid terrains, volcanic landforms. Man-made features include road cuttings, quarries, waste heaps from mines, which may also be of geological heritage value, because they reveal new geological information.

Protection of the European geological heritage in all its forms requires consistent and persistent effort by government and non-government organisations on a pan-European scale. Programmes exist within Europe to promote the protection of geological and geomorphological features and the heritage values with which they are associated, but there is a need to further develop these programmes and create closer links between them. There is also a need to increase awareness of the importance of geological conservation to allow it to rank alongside and fully support biological conservation. Opportunities now exist to work towards these aims at the European scale working through the Council of Europe and involving member States and the various inter-governmental and non-governmental international organisations operating within Europe, such as UNESCO, International Union of Geological Sciences (IUGS), World Conservation Union (IUCN), etc.,

Appendix 2

Existing conservation programmes, and criteria for selecting areas of special geological importance

GENERAL CRITERIA

Many European countries have developed, or are developing, inventory programmes to identify, describe and protect their important geological areas. These schemes reflect national attitudes to the science of geology in particular and to the landscape in general. They share, however, some common features, seeking to incorporate a number of criteria into national inventories and then protect important areas through designation as national parks, reserves, sites of interest etc. Common elements addressed, and taken into account by these national programmes in listing sites, are;

- the extent to which an area or site represents an important geological phenomenon;
- value of the area to science;
- value of the area to education;
- rarity of geological/geomorphological phenomena within an area;
- degree of disturbance and potential threats;
- area size.

THE IUGS GEOSITES PROJECT

Geosites was an International Union of Geological Sciences (IUGS) initiative to support identification of geological areas (sites) of international significance. The Geosites project was started in 1996 to help redress the imbalance in biological and geological conservation. This perceived imbalance derives from the national and international efforts directed towards biological conservation which often have no geological counterpart. Geosites supports national efforts and encourages the systematic development of site inventories at the national and regional levels and allows comparative studies. A key objective of the programme is to ensure scientifically based justification for sites selected for protection.

Geosites (both geological and geomorphological) are being selected and documented by regional groupings of geoscientists each country contributing to the selection process by choosing and justifying its own sites in a regional geological context. Specialist groups provide additional advice to carry forward assessment and documentation of particular topics, in support of national efforts

The development of a global inventory and database of geological sites was the aim of Geosites with a Global Geosites Working Group established to achieve this.. The programme is active in Europe and is promoted by the European Association for the Conservation of the Geological Heritage (ProGeo).

The International Union of Geological Sciences has recently decided to replace its existing 'Task Group on Global Geosites' and to create a new body to deal with geological heritage. IUGS now feels that the increasing public interest in these fields should be channelled into an international initiative with a proper geoscientific dimension to avoid further separation between economic development and scientifically oriented conservation issues of the geoenvironment. Taking this into account, IUGS is proposing to cooperate closely with UNESCO's activities to assist national Geoparks and the relevant European Council's initiative for geological heritage and the protection of geological sites.

Proposed action:

Governments of member States should support the work of IUGS, ProGeo, NGOs and other relevant organisations within their areas of jurisdiction, encouraging collaboration with statutory national authorities. In particular they should support the work of ProGeo working groups to develop scientifically based pan-European site inventories and the creation of associated databases and should seek ways in which to support the new IUGS initiative to promote geological conservation in Europe.

EUROPEAN GEOPARKS

The European Geoparks programme, designed in co-operation with UNESCO, is another tool to promote geological heritage in Europe, but seeks to include social and economic factors. The programme has the following aims and principles.

- A European Geopark is a territory which includes a particular geological heritage and a sustainable territorial development strategy supported by a European programme to promote development. It must have clearly defined boundaries and sufficient surface area for true territorial economic development. A European Geopark must comprise a certain number of geological sites of particular importance in terms of their scientific quality, rarity, aesthetic appeal or educational value. The majority of sites present on the territory of a European Geopark must be part of the geological heritage, but their interest may also be, in addition, archaeological, ecological, historical or cultural.

- The sites in a European Geopark must be linked in a network and benefit from protection and management measures. A European Geopark must be managed by a clearly defined structure able to enforce protection, enhancement and sustainable development policies within its territory.

- A European Geopark has an active role in the economic development of its territory through enhancement of a general image linked to the geological heritage and the development of Geotourism. A European Geopark has direct impact on the territory by influencing its inhabitants' living conditions and environment. The objective is to enable the inhabitants to reappropriate the values of the territory's heritage and actively participate in the territory's cultural revitalisation as a whole.

- A European Geopark develops, experiments and enhances methods for preserving the geological heritage.

- A European Geopark has also to support education on the environment, training and development of scientific research in the various disciplines of the Earth Sciences, enhancement of the natural environment and sustainable development policies.

A critical difference between "Geosites" and "Geoparks", is in the intention of the latter to include socio-economic factors and to encourage and recognise opportunities for rural regeneration within Europe.

Proposed action:

Governments of member States should work with the European Geoparks programme to identify terrains within their jurisdiction that may merit this form of recognition.

EUROPEAN LANDSCAPE CONVENTION

The aims of this Convention are to promote landscape protection, management and planning, and to organise European co-operation on landscape issues. The Convention sets out general and Specific measures for national parties to undertake. In general the Convention seeks to ensure that landscapes are recognised as an essential component of people's surroundings, with specific measures to be taken to analyse landscape characteristics and pressures transforming them.

Geological and geomorphological features form the structural framework for all landscapes, and are essential characteristics of landscapes that need to be considered when applying the Landscape Convention. Landscape assessments made in this way will take account of the particular values assigned to them by populations concerned and in many instances these values will relate directly to the geological features and heritage value of the landscape.

EUROPEAN DIPLOMA OF PROTECTED AREAS

The European Diploma for Protected Areas was established by the Council of Europe to protect natural and landscape heritage, seeking to recognise protected areas that are of truly European, rather than national or regional, significance. The Diploma is awarded on the basis of natural heritage or landscape value, level of

protection and state of conservation. Conditions for the award of the Diploma are strict but it can be awarded to natural or semi-natural areas that have important biological, geological or landscape value. These values may be expressed scientifically, culturally or aesthetically. In all cases appropriate protection systems must be in place.

The award is time limited so regular monitoring and regular re-assessment are needed to ensure renewal of the Diploma. This regular review encourages a high level of protection for Diploma sites. The Diploma also encourages networking of managers and sharing of experience. The Diploma also provides – through its recognition of biological and geological phenomena – a useful model for integration of a range of natural heritage values into a protected area system.

Sites awarded Diploma status include "strict" geological sites such as the palaeontological site of Ipolytarnoc Nature Conservation Area (Hungary) but extends to wider landscapes with important geological features such as the karst landscape at Karlstejn in the Czech Republic and the volcanic terrains of Teide in Spain.

The Council of Europe acknowledges, through the Diploma, that productive collaboration between protected area programmes is important at the European level, and recognises the possibilities of collaboration with UNESCO and the IUCN as examples of such possible joint working.

WORLD HERITAGE CONVENTION

Background

In 1972 the General Conference of UNESCO adopted the Convention concerning the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage. The Convention provides for the creation of the World Heritage Committee, its Bureau and the World Heritage Fund. The Operational Guidelines for the Implementation of the World Heritage Convention allow for identification, on the basis of nominations submitted by States Parties, of cultural and natural properties "*of outstanding universal value*" which are to be protected under the Convention and to list those properties on the World Heritage List.

The Operational Guidelines for the Implementation of the World Heritage Convention define "natural heritage" as follows:

- "*natural features consisting of physical and biological formations or groups of such formations, which are of outstanding universal value from the aesthetic or scientific point of view;*
- *geological and physiographical formations and precisely delineated areas which constitute the habitat of threatened species of animals and plants of outstanding universal value from the point of view of science or conservation;*
- *natural sites or precisely delineated natural areas of outstanding universal value from the point of view of science, conservation or natural beauty*".

The Convention is therefore capable of recognising a wide range of geological and geomorphological phenomena, including the relationship between cultural and natural values at a landscape scale.

European World Heritage sites

The World Heritage List currently contains the following European sites with specific geological and/or geomorphological interests. Many other European World Heritage sites have such features of interest but are not explicitly recognised in site citations.

European World Heritage sites with important geological and geomorphological interest (natural criteria (i))	
Site Name	Country
Messel Pit Fossil Site (Palaeontological site)	Germany
Caves of the Aggtelek Karst and Slovak Karst (Cave systems)	Hungary and Slovakia
Aeolian Islands (Volcanic island systems)	Italy
The High Coast (Post-glacial coastline)	Sweden
Dorset/East Devon Coast (Palaeontological and Earth history site)	United Kingdom
Giant's Causeway and Causeway Coast (Volcanic coastline)	
Pirin NP (Limestone landscape)	Bulgaria
Lake Baikal (Ancient lake system)	Russian Federation
Kamchatka Volcanoes (volcanic processes and landforms)	
Jungfrau-Aletsch-Bietschorn (Glacial processes and landforms)	Switzerland
Monte San Giorgio (Fossil site)	

The objective of the World Heritage Convention is to recognise natural and cultural sites of "*outstanding universal value*". As a consequence, the Convention will recognise a limited number of geological sites within Europe. It does serve, however, as a model for recognising the scientific, cultural and economic value of conserving geological and geomorphological phenomena. The model can be used to encourage other site and landscape based conservation approaches.

The first step to nomination of a World Heritage site is the preparation of a national Tentative List of sites of potential World Heritage status. The preparation, or revision, of national Tentative Lists provides an opportunity to recognise the role of geology and geomorphology within World Heritage. This can apply to sites that are of explicit interest for these aspects of science, or sites where geology and geomorphology underpin biological or cultural values.

Proposed action:

Governments of member States should:

- review the geological heritage of their areas of jurisdiction to identify geological/geomorphological areas of potential World Heritage status and add these areas to their national Tentative Lists of potential World Heritage sites;

- ensure that any underlying geological/geomorphological values of importance for a site are made explicit in the nomination documents for cultural and natural World Heritage sites.

Linking existing European programmes

There is no formal relationship between the various international or European programmes designed to recognise geological heritage. The respective roles of the various programmes are summarised below.

- The Geosites (IUGS and ProGeo) programme in Europe assists in the development of national site inventories and regional (trans-boundary) networks of sites.

- The European Diploma for Protected Areas recognises protected areas of European significance, including sites important for geological, biological and landscape values.
- The European Geoparks (UNESCO and others) programme seeks to link geological and geomorphological features at the landscape scale to social and economic development.
- The World Heritage Convention (UNESCO) recognises sites of global significance but also provides a model for recognising geological heritage and linking it to biodiversity and cultural heritage.

Proposed action:

Member States should work with each of these programmes to identify areas of special geological significance and promote their recognition by whichever programme is most appropriate.

Governments should ensure that the work of these programmes is linked through an appropriate national body to ensure the most effective recognition and promotion of this area of nature conservation.

Governments may also wish to recognise that the existing European Diploma for Protected Areas should be used as, or developed into, a model for protecting geological heritage in a European context.

Appendix 3

Managing areas of special geological interest

Management of areas (sites) of special geological interest must be appropriate to the scientific interest and physical nature of the area concerned. Management of geological areas of interest must also take account of biodiversity issues and cultural considerations.

Effective management of areas of geological interest requires certain basic levels of information and understanding as to the nature, distribution and condition of sites. Clear scientific understanding of the value of areas of interest is an important pre-requisite to effective management.

Management of geological areas of interest within a national and European context will require development of the following:

1. recognition of the distribution and nature of this resource through development of national area (site) inventories;
2. classification of area (site) types according to:
 - a. scientific value (geological or geomorphological features displayed and their scientific importance);
 - b. physical characteristics (coastal, river valley, mountain, quarry, roadside exposure etc.);
 - c. specific management requirements of individual areas (sites);
3. develop indicators to identify threats and monitor degradation of geological heritage;
4. implementation of site condition monitoring programmes based upon management requirements of specific area (site) types, these programmes to be linked to existing biodiversity monitoring programmes where possible;
5. creation of national/regional databases to include inventory and monitoring information. Such databases are essential for management of areas (sites) and the dissemination of information relating to their scientific and educational value. Internet-based databases should be the standard to ensure the maximum dissemination of information;
6. linking national "areas of special geological interest" databases to:
 - a. regional and local planning to ensure that planning authorities are aware of and take into account these special areas in creating/implementing plans;
 - b. biodiversity databases to ensure consistency of approach when managing natural heritage.

Proposed action:

Governments of member States should develop national guidelines for managing areas of geological interest embodying the above principles of inventory development, site classification, database development and monitoring programmes, these to be linked to existing programmes.

Appendix 4

Legislation for protecting areas of special geological interest and moveable geological heritage

Management of areas of special interest for geology, geomorphology or biodiversity requires a combined approach, using education, the development of management plans and the use of appropriate legal protection measures. Education (awareness raising) and effective management planning are essential but need to be underpinned by the law.

Legal measures to protect "environmental capital" in the form of biodiversity or geodiversity will vary according to individual national approaches. These approaches will reflect:

- national legal systems;
- different cultural approaches to protection of the environment;
- the physical differences in national landscapes;
- the different historical perspectives underlying current legal measures;
- traditional rights and activities.

PROTECTING AREAS OF GEOLOGICAL IMPORTANCE

Areas of geological importance are subject to a range of threats that may damage or totally destroy them. Such threats may come from such sources as rural or urban development projects, coastal engineering work, or excessive visitor pressure and usage.

Protected areas or "natural monuments" falling into IUCN Category III are managed mainly for conservation of specific natural features and are well suited for the protection of geological heritage areas. Category III protected areas are defined as "containing one, or more, specific natural or natural/cultural feature which is of outstanding or unique value because of its inherent rarity, representative or aesthetic qualities or cultural significance".

Legal measures for area (site) protection should define the nature of the environmental resource to be protected, fix penalties for committing damaging acts and assign responsibility to the appropriate agencies.

Proposed action:

Governments of member States should consider:

- ***developing and implementing new laws if such areas cannot be protected by existing laws;***
- ***strengthening existing laws to increase protection;***
- ***integrating the legal protection of geological areas of interest with protection of biodiversity;***
- ***using the existing range of international instruments to protect sites including World Heritage, the European Landscape Convention and the Habitats Directive;***
- ***the implementation of new or existing laws for the protection of areas of geological importance, these to be linked to development of national site inventories and the development of national databases of sites.***

PROTECTING MOVEABLE GEOLOGICAL HERITAGE

The legal protection of areas of special geological interest (geosites, geoparks, geotopes etc.) will provide protection from a variety of damaging activities, including protection from damage due to removal (collecting) of materials of scientific interest. Moveable geological materials may be collected for various reasons, such as:

- scientific study;
- commercial sale;
- use in education;
- curiosity value.

In certain circumstances, collection from areas of geological importance may be damaging to the area itself, or cause loss of valuable scientific information, for various reasons:

- physical damage may be caused to rock formations by excessive, inexpert or careless collecting;
- specimens may be destroyed or damaged during the act of collection;
- collecting of rare/unusual specimens by non-specialists or commercial collectors may result in the disappearance of important scientific specimens into private collections;
- specimens collected in one country may be exported to collectors or museums in another country, with a perceived loss of "cultural" heritage to the country of origin.

Many European countries employ wildlife legislation, nature conservation legislation, monument protection legislation or other legal instruments to protect areas (sites) from damage through collecting. In other cases control is exercised by education programmes and voluntary codes of conduct.

Proposed action:

Governments of member States should review their existing legal and voluntary control methods to ensure moveable geological heritage is protected by appropriate legal means, in the national and international context.

Appendix 5

Information and education programmes to promote action in the field of geological heritage conservation

Access to information and public participation in environmental decision-making is now understood to be an important part of sustainable development (Aarhus Convention). The Council of Europe has recognised the importance of awareness-raising activity with clear objectives for education and awareness-raising programmes and well-defined target groups. The objectives of such programmes are to raise awareness and develop partnerships centred on conservation and enhancement of natural and cultural heritage. The Working Group on the Geological Heritage emphasises in this Recommendation that the geological heritage of Europe is an important and integral part of the region's natural heritage.

The concepts of geological and geomorphological conservation remain less well publicised than those relating to the conservation of biodiversity or the protection of landscapes. The Council of Europe is actively involved in nature conservation and landscape initiatives through such programmes as the Pan-European Biological and Landscape Diversity Strategy and the European Landscape Convention. The "Europe: a common heritage" campaign had as an objective the recognition of the importance of natural and cultural heritage, and making the most of the economic and social potential of this heritage.

The purpose of any geological conservation information and education programme should be parallel to that described above, and should complement information/educational initiatives raising awareness of landscape and biodiversity issues. Geological conservation in all its forms and features represents an important part of the European common heritage, with scientific, social and economic aspects. Geological conservation is directly relevant to biodiversity conservation and to landscape protection and the proposed programme should emphasise integration with these other conservation/protection programmes.

Proposed action:

Governments of member States should promote action in the field of geological heritage conservation by identifying and utilising opportunities to develop and support information and education programmes, both within their own jurisdictions and regionally, acting through the Council of Europe and other relevant international or European organisations.

Appendix 6

Strengthening the co-operation with international organisations, scientific institutions and NGOs in the field

The Working Group on the Geological Heritage recognises the importance of a regional approach to the conservation of Europe's geological heritage, and advocates cross-boundary co-operation between member States and the strengthening of links between organisations and institutions that are working across Europe in this field. Relevant organisations currently involved in, or with an interest in, geological heritage include the World Conservation Union (IUCN), UNESCO's Earth Sciences Division, UNESCO's World Heritage Centre, the International Union of Geological Sciences (IUGS), European Palaeontological Association and ProGeo. A wide range of European institutions are also engaged in geological conservation work.

In the framework of the Committee for the activities of the Council of Europe in the field of biological and landscape diversity (CO-DBP), the creation of the Working Group on the Geological Heritage has established a basis for future co-operation, including as it does representatives from the organisations listed above and institutions participating in conservation work. Several States have also sent participants to the Working Group with the result that many interest groups are represented, ensuring that a wide range of views are expressed. The activities of this Working Group have initiated discussion of pan-European co-operation in the field of geological conservation between organisations and institutions.

Proposed action:

Governments of member States should strengthen the co-operation with international organisations, scientific institutions, NGOs, in the field of geological heritage conservation by encouraging participation by state institutions in the geological conservation programmes identified in this Recommendation and promoting collaboration between the relevant institutions and organisations.