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GSA Connects 2022 meeting in Denver, Colorado

Paper No. 103-1

Presentation Time: 1:45 PM

JUSTIFICATION FOR THE NEW IUCN PROGRAMME (KEY GEOHERITAGE AREAS) FOR GEOHERITAGE CONSERVATION IN THE WORLD

WOO, Kyung Sik, Geology, Kangwon National University, Gangwondaehakgil 1, Chuncheon, 24341, Korea, Republic of (South); IUCN WCPA Geoheritage Specialist Group, Gimpo City, 10113, Korea, Republic of (South), BRILHA, Jose, University of Minho, Earth Science Centre, Campus de Gualtar, Braga, 4710-057, Portugal and CASADEVALL, Thomas, 9774 W Maryland Dr, Lakewood, CO 80232-5046

Geoheritage can be categorized into local, national, and international values and needs to be conserved for future generations because geoheritage sites contain significant evidence for the history of the Earth and the evolution of life, as well as ongoing geological and geomorphic processes. Conservation of geoheritage sites should be justified because they cannot be restored once damaged. Thus, it is necessary to establish legal protection and effective management of these sites in each country. Unfortunately, the necessity for the conservation of geoheritage is not yet sufficiently recognized at national and international levels, compared to ecological and biodiversity values. So far, there is no initiative to promote geoheritage management under international nature conservation policies. Despite the UNESCO's international designations (World Heritage Sites and Global Geoparks) that recognise geoheritage, too many potential geosites representing the 4.6 billion years of the Earth history and evolution of life have been neglected and have been being destroyed. Therefore, a new programme in the International Union for the Conservation of Nature (IUCN) – Key Geoheritage Area (KGA) – has been in development over the past three years, corresponding to the Key Biodiversity Areas programme already underway. The KGA should be primarily based on the scientific value of geological features alone. For an effective KGA designation, objective geological contexts with appropriate criteria should be developed based on representativeness, rarity, and integrity of an area. The KGA is a proposal that is being developed inside the IUCN's World Commission on Protected Areas (WCPA)'s Geoheritage Specialist Group but it will need the collaboration of other relevant organisations such as the International Union for the Geological Sciences (IUGS), ProGEO, and International Association for Geomorphology (IAG), to ensure its full adoption by IUCN.

Session No. 103

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Monday, 10 October 2022: 1:30 PM-5:30 PM

406 (Colorado Convention Center)

Geological Society of America *Abstracts with Programs*. Vol. 54, No. 5
doi: 10.1130/abs/2022AM-378145

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