



Key Geoheritage Areas: a promising IUCN initiative for global geoconservation

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Abstract

During the last fifty years, numerous international designations have been established with a focus on biodiversity and/or natural heritage conservation, but only a small number are dedicated to geoconservation. This discrepancy underscores the relatively low level of public awareness regarding the importance of geodiversity and geoheritage. Apart from UNESCO's World Heritage and Global Geoparks initiatives, and the recent IUGS Geological Heritage Sites list, there are no other international designations specifically aimed at recognizing geoheritage. As more countries develop their own national inventories of geoheritage, additional geosites are being identified and protected, leading to a growing realization that the number of geosites with international significance far exceeds those recognized by UNESCO and IUGS. Moreover, many key geosites may never be included in these lists due to failure to meet the necessary selection criteria.

In 2020, the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) adopted Resolution 74, calling for a scoping study on a new initiative termed Key Geoheritage Areas (KGAs). Subsequently, a working group was established to conduct this study and propose guidelines for KGAs. A public consultation was conducted from July to September 2023, and a final version of the KGA Guidelines is currently being prepared, incorporating many of the suggestions raised during the consultation.

A KGA is an area with well-defined boundaries where significant geological features (rocks, minerals, fossils, sediments, soils, landforms and landscapes) represent past or on-going Earth processes contributing substantially to the global understanding of the planet's history and its life-support systems. The primary objective of the initiative is to recognize and conserve geoheritage

values of international significance and to disseminate and promote this information to advance geoconservation efforts worldwide. The KGA initiative does not merely comprise a list of geosites; rather, it is strongly committed to persuading national and local authorities to protect the most relevant geosites and implement IUCN geoconservation guidelines, ideally with active involvement from local communities.

The final establishment of the KGAs initiative is expected to occur in October 2025, following its final adoption by IUCN.

Keyword

Geoconservation, International designation, Geoheritage, KGA, IUCN