



**Operational Guideline
for
National Geoparks seeking UNESCO's assistance**

(Global UNESCO Network of Geoparks)

Huangshan Geopark of China



Paris, 12 January 2004



Danxiashan Geopark of China



United Nations Educational, Scientific
and Cultural Organization

Network of National Geoparks seeking UNESCO's assistance

(January 2004)

Background

Pursuant to decision of its Executive Board in June 2001 (161 EX/Decisions, 3.3.1) UNESCO has been invited "to support ad hoc efforts of Member States" to promote territories or natural parks having special geological features. To this end, the present Operational Guidelines provide directing principles for national geoparks requesting the assistance of UNESCO through the inclusion in a Network of national geoparks. A geopark seeking UNESCO's assistance is a territory with well-defined limits. It is run under the national legislation or regulations, which provide the legal framework for its managerial body, funding tools and logistic support.

National initiatives seeking UNESCO's assistance should integrate the preservation of significant examples of the geological heritage of our planet Earth in a strategy for regional socio-economic development, safeguarding the environment, which is a concept also known as sustainable development¹. They should further a balanced relationship between humankind and the Earth by heightening public awareness and respect of the Earth's value and improving understanding of the Earth's crust and the capacity to use it wisely.

In promoting the protection and sustainable development of geological heritage, Member States' initiatives shall thus contribute to the objectives of Agenda 21, the Agenda of Science for Environment and Development into the twenty-first century adopted by the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED, Rio de Janeiro, 1992). Further, they shall add a new dimension to the 1972 Convention concerning the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage by highlighting the potential for interaction between socio-economic development and conservation of the natural environment.

Besides operating in synergy with UNESCO's World Heritage Centre and the Man and the Biosphere (MAB) World Network of Biosphere Reserves, UNESCO's Division of Earth Sciences co-operates closely with other complementary national and international undertakings, and non-governmental organizations active in geological heritage conservation, like IUGS' Working Group on "Global Geosites", ProGEO and the '*European Geoparks Network*'.

¹ Sustainable development was defined by the World Commission on Environment and Development in *Our Common Future* (1987) as 'development which meets the needs of the present generation without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.'

Before applying for UNESCO's assistance proposers are asked to respect the terms of the present Operational Guidelines. An independent *International Advisory Group* will refer to these guidelines when assessing proposals for provision of UNESCO's assistance to national geopark initiatives. Proposers are further requested to seek contact with and geoscientific advice from their respective national Geological Surveys or other relevant geoscientific institutions.

Operational Guidelines

Article 1 - Criteria

1. A geopark seeking UNESCO's assistance is a territory with well-defined limits that has a large enough surface area for it to serve local economic development. It comprises a certain number of geological heritage sites (on any scale) or a mosaic of geological entities of special scientific importance, rarity or beauty, representative of an area and its geological history, events or processes. It may not solely be of geological significance but also of ecological, archaeological, historical or cultural value. Clearance for geoscientific qualification should be sought with the respective national Geological Survey(s) or other relevant geoscientific institutions.
2. The sites inside the defined area are linked to one another and safeguarded in a formally managed park-type situation; the park is run by a designated authority with adequate management infrastructure, which adopts its own territorial policy for sustainable regional socio-economic development.
3. A geopark seeking UNESCO's assistance serves to foster socio-economic development that is culturally and environmentally sustainable. This has a direct impact on the area involved by improving human living conditions and the rural environment, thus strengthening identification of the population with their area and triggering cultural renaissance. Respectful of the environment, it shall stimulate, for example, the creation of innovative local enterprises, small business, cottage industries and new jobs by generating new sources of revenue (e.g. geotourism, geoproducts). This should provide a supplementary income for the local population and attract private capital.
4. A geopark seeking UNESCO's assistance serves as a pedagogical tool for environmental education, training and interdisciplinary research related to geoscientific disciplines, broader environmental issues and sustainable development. A geopark seeking UNESCO's assistance shall provide pedagogical programmes and instruments for broad environmental education, public awareness raising (geological museums, trails) and scientific research, in which it defines target groups (schools, universities, general public, etc.), planned activities and logistic support.
5. A geopark seeking UNESCO's assistance serves to explore and demonstrate methods of conserving geological heritage (e.g. conservation of representative rocks, mineral resources, minerals, fossils and landforms). Within the legal framework of national legislation or regulations, a geopark seeking UNESCO's assistance shall contribute to the conservation of significant geological features which provide information on various geoscientific disciplines such as all solid geology, economic geology and mining, engineering geology, geomorphology, glacial geology, hydrology, mineralogy, palaeontology,

petrography, sedimentology, soil science, speleology, stratigraphy, structural geology and volcanology.

6. The management authority of the park shall ensure adequate protection measures, in consultation with respective Geological Surveys or relevant statutory bodies, to guarantee the effective conservation of a site or area and provide means for physical maintenance, as appropriate. A geopark seeking UNESCO's assistance remains under the sole jurisdiction of the State in which it is situated. It is the State's responsibility to decide how to protect the particular sites or areas, in conformity with its national legislation or regulations.
7. A geopark under UNESCO's assistance should respect local and national laws relating to the protection of geological sites and its managing body should take the moral decision not to sell minerals and fossils. It should also accept that there are different cultural habits across Europe regarding collectors and permit in certain circumstances the limited collecting of geological samples for educational purposes from naturally eroded sites.
8. The body in charge of the particular geopark shall provide a thorough management plan containing among others:
 - (a) a global analysis of the geopark
 - (b) an analysis and diagnosis of the territory
 - (c) an analysis of the potential for local economic development
9. On the territory of a geopark seeking UNESCO's assistance, organizational arrangements shall be provided to involve public authorities, local communities, private interests, and both research and educational bodies in the design and running of the park, its regional economic development plan and activities. This co-operation shall stimulate discussion and encourage partnerships between the different groups having a vested interest in the area; it shall motivate and mobilise local authorities and the local population.
10. The designation of an area as a geopark seeking UNESCO's assistance shall be given appropriate publicity and promotion by the management body of the geopark concerned, who shall keep UNESCO regularly informed about the latest progress and developments in the park.
11. If a geopark's territory is identical to or overlaps with an area inscribed on the World Heritage List or registered as a MAB Biosphere Reserve it is necessary to obtain prior clearance from the appropriate bodies of the said initiatives before submitting the proposal.

Article 2 - Nomination procedure

1. The proposal for a geopark seeking UNESCO's assistance may be submitted at any time of the year.

2. A proposal shall be prepared by the existing managing body of a national geopark of States belonging to one of the Agencies of the United Nations System on the basis of the attached nomination form.
3. The proposer may seek assistance from the Division of Earth Sciences of UNESCO, its international team of advisors and other experts for the preparation of the proposal.
4. The proposal, duly signed by the managing body, the Geological Survey or other relevant geoscientific institution, the governmental entity, and the National Commission for UNESCO, should be addressed to the UNESCO, Division of Earth Sciences, through and with the support of the National Commission for UNESCO in the Member State concerned. Should no National Commission be established in the State, the submission should be directly forwarded to the Division of Earth Sciences.
5. The Division of Earth Sciences shall verify the contents of the proposal and supporting materials and, in the case of incomplete documentation, request complementary information from the proposer.
6. Proposals are assessed by an International Advisory Group, which recommends to the Director-General of UNESCO the assistance or not of the Organization.
7. The members of the International Advisory Group are nominated by the Director-General of UNESCO in consultation with the Scientific Board of the International Geoscience Programme (IGCP).
8. Travel costs, accommodation and local transportation costs of additional advisors in charge of an eventually necessary on-the-spot evaluation of the geopark seeking UNESCO's assistance should normally be borne by the country where the geopark is located or any other party or entity concerned with the proposal.
9. UNESCO shall notify the proposer and the National Commission for UNESCO in the country concerned of the decision taken by the Director-General of UNESCO.

Article 3 - UNESCO's assistance

1. UNESCO's assistance may be attributed upon a positive assessment of the proposal by an independent International Advisory Group through UNESCO.
2. The Organization's association with a national geopark consists of authorizing the management body of a park to use in connection with respective geopark initiatives, expressions such as "with the support of UNESCO" or "with the assistance of UNESCO", if material and/or intellectual aid has been provided

by UNESCO. UNESCO shall reserve its assistance for joint intellectual activities or events, such as holding workshops, conferences and congresses, as well as for co-publications between UNESCO and the geopark. This includes, for example, leaflets and websites, but does not comprise the use of UNESCO's logo by individual parks nor for commercial purpose.

3. The attribution of UNESCO's support or assistance is a sign of recognition of excellence and in no way implies any legal or financial responsibilities on the part of UNESCO. It is the responsibility of the managing body of the geopark to avoid any misunderstandings with the public in general and park officials in particular in this regard, and to defend UNESCO against any claims which might be made to this effect.

Article 4 - Reporting and periodical review

1. The status of each national geopark seeking UNESCO's assistance shall be subject to a periodical review within 5 years based on a report prepared by the designated authority concerned in cooperation with respective authorities who signed the original proposal, and forwarded to UNESCO through the National Commission for UNESCO.
2. If on the basis of this report, the International Advisory Group considers that the status or management of the park is satisfactory since it was designated or last reviewed, this will be formally acknowledged.
3. If it is considered that the geopark no longer fulfils the criteria set out in Article 1, the designated authority concerned may be recommended to take appropriate steps to ensure conformity with the provisions of the said Article. Should the park not fulfil the criteria of the said Article within one year, it shall cease to be associated with UNESCO.
4. UNESCO shall notify the designated authority concerned and the National Commission for UNESCO of the outcome of the periodical review.
5. Should a sovereign State/authority wish to withdraw from the attributed association, it shall notify UNESCO through its National Commission giving the reasons thereto.

Nomination Form for a National Geopark seeking the assistance of UNESCO

Member States interested in establishing a national geopark seeking the assistance of UNESCO, are invited to follow the Operational Guidelines for national geoparks and to complete the annexed form. The information contained in this form will serve UNESCO's International Advisory Group in assessing the proposal. It is divided into four sections:

- 1. Identification of the territory**
- 2. Scientific significance**
- 3. Territorial analysis**
- 4. Signature section**

Before completing the form, the proposer is advised to familiarize him- or herself with the selection criteria and the definitions of a geoparks seeking assistance of UNESCO, laid down by the Operational Guidelines. Furthermore, it is absolutely necessary during the preparatory phase, to seek co-operation with Geological Surveys, local public bodies, local communities and private interest groups and to broaden the composition of the start-up team in charge of the project geopark. This will be helpful to establish a feasible development concept for the geopark and to get a broad perspective for identifying new possible main lines of action. A local dynamism of thought and discussion could involve the entire population which would facilitate local acceptance for the planned national geopark.

The following section of the form has been designed to guide the proposer in preparing a detailed description and analysis of the territory. While there are no constraints on layout or length, proposers are asked to respect the headings given there. Proposers are welcome to attach any additional information they may consider essential for the evaluation. The Division of Earth Sciences of UNESCO reserves the right to request complementary information whenever appropriate. Only when it considers the submission to be complete shall the evaluation process be started. The application will remain at the Division of Earth Sciences, passing-on to another person is allowed only by permission of the applicant.

The proposal should be typed in English and submitted in three copies duly signed, together with supporting documents, through and with the support of the **National Commission for UNESCO** in each country concerned, to:

**Division of Earth Sciences
UNESCO
1, rue Miollis
75732 Paris Cedex 15
France**

1. Identification of the territory

1.1 Country where the geopark is situated:

1.2 Size of the geopark (in km²):

1.3 Geographic region in which the geopark is situated:
 Africa Europe and North America
 Arab States Latin America and the Caribbean
 Asia and the Pacific (incl. Australia)

1.4 Management
Please identify the administrative entity or authority in charge of the geopark.

Status/Organization:
Street or P.O.Box:
City and postal code:
Country:
Telephone: Fax:
E-mail:

Please give also the name of the main contact person to whom all correspondence is to be addressed.

Title, name:
Organization:
Street or P.O.Box:
City and postal code:
Country:
Telephone: Fax:
E-mail:

1.5 Administration
Please give the name(s) of the privileged administrative contact person(s) who is (are) involved in the geopark project at national (governmental) level.

Title, name:
Organization:
Street or P.O.Box:
City and postal code:
Country:
Telephone: Fax:
E-mail:

2. Scientific significance

2.1 Geoscientific significance of the geopark

- | | |
|--|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> economic geology and mining | <input type="checkbox"/> palaeontology |
| <input type="checkbox"/> engineering geology | <input type="checkbox"/> petrography |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Earth history | <input type="checkbox"/> sedimentology |
| <input type="checkbox"/> geomorphology | <input type="checkbox"/> soil science (pedology) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> glacial geology | <input type="checkbox"/> speleology |
| <input type="checkbox"/> hydrogeology | <input type="checkbox"/> stratigraphy |
| <input type="checkbox"/> mineralogy | <input type="checkbox"/> structural geology / tectonics |
| <input type="checkbox"/> volcanology | |

others.....
.....

2.2 Broader significance of the geopark, other assets

Besides its geological features, does the site or area contain other assets such as archaeological, ecological and/or historical/cultural values? If so, please specify.

The geopark is also significant for:

- | | |
|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> tourism | <input type="checkbox"/> biology |
| <input type="checkbox"/> local history | <input type="checkbox"/> ecology |
| <input type="checkbox"/> culture | <input type="checkbox"/> hydrology |
| <input type="checkbox"/> geography | <input type="checkbox"/> teaching, education and research |
| <input type="checkbox"/> archaeology | <input type="checkbox"/> special reference or type locality |
| <input type="checkbox"/> anthropology | <input type="checkbox"/> home to protected or endangered species (flora and fauna) please specify: |

other (World Heritage site or Biosphere Reserves shall provide clearance)
.....
.....

2.3 Enclosures:

- | | |
|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> location map of the geopark | <input type="checkbox"/> slides |
| <input type="checkbox"/> general territory map (1/100.000) | <input type="checkbox"/> aerial photo(s) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> geological map | <input type="checkbox"/> video cassette(s) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> geological section(s) | <input type="checkbox"/> analytical data |
| <input type="checkbox"/> photos | <input type="checkbox"/> literature |
| <input type="checkbox"/> statement by the Geological Survey(s) concerned | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> other | |

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.....

3. Territorial analysis

3.1 Identification of the territory

3.1.1 Description of the territory

Please describe the territory of the geopark and identify its geographic characteristics (location, size, latitude, longitude, climate, etc.).

3.1.2 Protection status

Please specify the protection level (operational or planned) and the specific considerations for the protection of the geological heritage sites (geotopes, geosites) situated within the boundaries of the geopark; refer to legal texts, cartography, different regulations, etc., and attach a map of each site, photos, etc.

3.2 Scientific description

3.2.1 Geological context

Please present the global geological context of the geopark and of each of the geological heritage sites included within it (including location map). Please summarize the main information on e.g. geological setting, age, lithology and history of formation and define clearly the different geoscientific disciplines reflected by the geopark and its sites.

3.2.2 Earth heritage relevance

What is the particular relevance of the geopark and its sites for geological heritage?

3.2.3 Potential threats

Threats to a site might lead to its degradation or sometimes even partial or total loss. Please describe the potential threats to the sites (plundering of sites, taking away of fossils, damage to buildings, etc.), judge the possible evolution of these threats, propose solutions and recommend conservation measures to neutralize these threats.

3.2.4 Annexes

Please attach a geological bibliography of the territory and all documents which can lead to a better understanding of the geological heritage interest of the territory.

3.3 Sustainable regional development

It is indispensable for the evaluation of the geopark to provide complete information on the present situation of the territory and planned actions for sustainable development.

To prepare this, the proposer is advised to follow as closely as possible the outline below, starting with the collection of data and information on the territory. (The more details and different components of the geopark are known, the easier it will be for the proposer to get a global vision of a sustainable development concept for the territory.)

On the basis of these data, in close co-operation with the different partners contributing to the project geopark, the proposer should be in a position to proceed with the preparation of a territorial diagnosis and action plan for entire territory's socio-economic development. He should identify local resources which are insufficiently valued, social categories and geographic sectors which might need, and profit most from, a development impetus, problems the developmental approach has to address as a priority.

3.3.1 Collection of data and information

- cartography:
 - ⇒ geographic cartography of the geopark's territory
 - ⇒ geological cartography (main geological sites)
 - ⇒ cartography of human settlements
 - ⇒ cartography of heritage (including geological, cultural, etc.)
 - ⇒ cartography of modern comfort (restaurants or refreshment facilities, overnight accommodation, etc.)
 - ⇒ cartography of traffic flow and the links of the territory with peripheral zones
- data on the territory:
 - ⇒ surface
 - ⇒ population density
 - ⇒ presence of villages, towns or cities
 - ⇒ geographic constraints and advantages
 - ⇒ historic and cultural specificities
 - ⇒ actual demographic situation and trends
 - ⇒ infrastructure facilities and local accessible services
 - ⇒ environmental advantages and constraints
 - ⇒ structure, organisation and evolution of the local economy
 - ⇒ evolution of the job market
 - ⇒ existing social problems
 - ⇒ developmental projects already planned or carried out by local entities
 - ⇒ dynamism and weight of associations, trade unions, etc.
 - ⇒ economic wealth of the territory in comparison to the country's average
 - ⇒ advantages of the territory
 - ⇒ weak points (principal handicaps, hindrances to development, etc.)
 - ⇒ local resources which seem to be insufficiently valued

3.3.2 Territorial diagnosis (*interpretation of 3.3.1*)

- In which global direction must the main local economic sectors develop their activities?

- Which problems the developmental approach has to address as a priority?
- Which social categories and geographic sectors might need and would profit most from a developmental impetus?
- How is the institutional framework of the concerned region and territorial competencies defined?
- How evolved the sector of tourism in the territory in recent years? How important was it?
- What is the impact on the environment through the geopark (environmental impact assessment)?

3.3.3 Territorial action plan

*The proposer should begin by describing a hypothetical scenario of how it is hoped the territory of the geopark will look like in ten years' time. This futuristic vision helps to establish long-term objectives. (It could additionally be enriched through the elaboration of alternative scenarios, since it is also very useful to describe what the territory should **not** become!) From this point onward, it becomes clear what should be done in order to realize this vision.*

The territorial action plan is the strategic framework within which basic directions are identified and the suitable path defined for realizing the above-mentioned scenario. The proposer should determine what actions are feasible, bearing in mind that regional development should strive to maintain an equilibrium between economic interests and preservation of the environment.

For the success of the entire project, the planned actions should be integrated in a global dynamic of discussion and co-operation, by creating links and synergies among the different socio-economic and geographic sectors.

Essential parts of the territorial action plan:

- territorial vision of the geopark ten years hence (hypothetical scenario)
- potential for commercial innovation
- defined strategic objectives for development of the entire territory
- operational objectives
- means of realizing development specifying:
 - ⇒ the resources available (financial, human, technical, etc.)
 - ⇒ partners already participating or willing to join the project
 - ⇒ timetable for the activities
 - ⇒ budget showing investment and implementation for the next three years

Please attach maps localizing the priority zones where the above-mentioned actions will be centred.

4. Signature section

4.1 Management

Signature by the body in charge of managing the geopark, certifying that the body in charge of the management of the geopark acknowledges its responsibility to pursue the objectives laid down by the present guidelines and to elaborate and implement corresponding managing principles.

Full Name:

Title:

Address (Organisation, street, city, telephone, fax, e-mail):

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.....

Date: Signature:

4.2 Geological Survey(s) or other relevant geoscientific institutions

Signature approving the geoscientific quality and significance of the geopark.

Full Name:

Title:

Address (Organisation, street, city, telephone, fax, e-mail):

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.....
.....
.....

Date: Signature:

4.3 Governmental Entity (Ministry, etc.)

Signature certifying the geopark remains under the sole jurisdiction of the State in which it is situated. It is the State's responsibility to decide how to protect the particular sites or areas, in conformity with its national legislation or regulations.

Date of endorsement:

Full Name:

Title:

Address (Organisation/Ministry, street, city, telephone, fax, e-mail):

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Date: Signature:

4.4 National Commission for UNESCO

Signature by the representative of the National Commission for UNESCO supporting the proposal.

Date of endorsement:

Full Name:

Title:

Address (Organisation, street, city, telephone, fax, e-mail):

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.....
.....
.....

Date: Signature:



Shilin Geopark of China



Yuntaishan Geopark of China

For more information, contact:

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e-mails: w.eder@unesco.org; s.laryea@unesco.org

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