

Promotion of earth sciences through Geoparks and World Heritage Sites

WOLFGANG EEDER¹ AND PETER BOBROWSKY² - 1. *Department of Earth Sciences, University Munich, Luisenstrasse 37, 80333 München, Germany <w.eder-geo@hotmail.de>* ¶ 2. *Geological Survey of Canada, 601 Booth Street, Ottawa Ontario K1A 0E8, Canada*

One traditional challenge of many international organizations, including the 'International Union of Geological Sciences' (IUGS) and UNESCO, is the promotion of knowledge and understanding of our Planet Earth and to further elucidate the importance of earth sciences to society – thereby also fulfilling an educational mission. UNESCO's mandate (and privilege) is to integrate undertakings related to Education, Science, Communication and Culture – in cooperation with many partners; whereas IUGS's mandate (and privilege) is similar but with a strict focus on geosciences. Quite recently "Geoheritage" has been selected by these and other bodies as an excellent theme to meet the anticipated goals on an international agenda. "Geoparks", as a new 'brand', are best defined through the criteria and guidelines of the 'Global Geoparks Network' (GGN) – in length the 'ad hoc Global Network of National Geoparks supported by UNESCO' that seems to be well on its way to become the 'International UNESCO Geoparks Initiative'. Complementary to UNESCO's geological 'World Heritage Sites' 'Geoparks' have proven to be excellent tools to educate the public about "Earth Sciences" within a socio-cultural realm. Geoparks can also be shown to be areas for recreation and significant sustainable economic development mainly through geotourism. Apart from their important role of protection of geological resources, Geoparks address through their activities a holistic view of landscapes and society, and thus reflect a wider approach to 'Nature' than other protective designations, such as National Parks, Biosphere Reserves and World Heritage Sites. Herein we propose that the diverse and dispersed undertakings of all geoscientists should envisage a better coordination and synergy in the realm of promotion of Earth sciences. Through individual projects all geoscientists could contribute to an increase of appreciation and value of Earth Sciences, and thus support activities related to the overarching UNESCO Geoparks Initiative or the World Heritage Programme.

Presented in Theme 6