



## Terms of Reference

# IUGS International Commission on Geoheritage

### Commission Name

International Commission on GeoHeritage (ICG)

### Type

ICG is a scientific Commission established by and acting under the auspices of the International Union of Geological Sciences (IUGS). The Commission comprises two Subcommissions:

Heritage Sites and Collections Subcommission (HSCS) (<http://geoheritage-iugs.mnhn.fr>)

Heritage Stones Subcommission (HSS) (<http://globalheritagestone.com/>)

The ICG and its Subcommissions aim to actively collaborate with and seek partnerships with other Commissions, organisations and networks at all scales, from local to regional to international, which are active within the field of geoheritage and related disciplines.

### Background

Although the concept of conserving natural heritage has been well-established since the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century, it has historically focused on ecological features and living species. This has partly been a consequence of a lack of public appreciation of geological and geomorphological aspects of the natural environment, but is also a result of an all-to-common institutional separation between geosciences and Society. The concept of geological heritage – or ‘Geoheritage’ – is, however, beginning to become established

internationally as an appreciation of the contribution of geological and geomorphological features and processes to a natural and a cultural heritage, as well as to ecosystem function, is slowly being realised by societies and governments alike. As with ecological features and species, an appreciation of an intrinsic 'value' to society leads to a process of conservation, in which exceptional and representative aspects of the diversity of features are identified as a 'heritage' to be safeguarded for future generations. The concept of 'biodiversity' in this context is well-established through international conventions, but for geodiversity, the nature of the resource is less well understood. Although many definitions of 'Geodiversity' exist, in the context of the ICG, the following is appropriate:

*"The term 'geodiversity' encompasses all aspects of the natural non-living materials and processes that formed our planet and continue to shape both its interior and surface today. This broad definition not only includes geological materials (such as modern sediments, rocks, minerals, meteorites and fossils), the processes that formed them (including by rivers and volcanic activity) and the landforms created by such processes (for example cliffs and glacier-cut valleys), it also includes Earth materials removed from a natural to a cultural context, for instance to museums or used as building stones or in jewelry."*

Geoscientists work, learn, research, collaborate and contribute globally, often across international boundaries and the health of the discipline of geoscience, as well as society, is fundamentally dependent on raising public awareness of the need to support the Earth sciences. Some of the most important direct interfaces between society and the Earth Sciences are conserved and appropriately managed geoheritage sites, public buildings constructed of natural heritage stones and museum displays and collections. Such sites provide excellent opportunities for outreach, including education, and 'geotourism'. However, attitudes to and measures for the conservation of such features can differ radically between across national borders and very little international agreement currently exists about processes for the selection and management of such sites and material, as well as how best to utilize them for the benefit of global societies.

The establishment of an International Commission on Geoheritage at the 35th International Geological Congress (Cape Town, South Africa) in 2016, however, will enable the Union to take a true leadership role in addressing such issues. In addition, the ICG and its component Subcommissions will enable the IUGS to actively collaborate with and contribute to other global initiatives, such as UNESCO's World Heritage and Global Geoparks programmes and IUCN's (International Union for the Conservation of Nature) activities and recommendations in the context of geoheritage. The ICG can also provide a much-needed umbrella for coordinating activities related to geodiversity and geoheritage within IUGS, including the development of active links and collaborations with other Commissions. Crucially, however, the ICG can lead in the development of procedures and processes to identify those geological, geomorphological and heritage stone sites – and collections derived from them -

that are truly of international importance to both the Earth sciences and global societies – a concept already established within IUGS in the early 1990s as ‘Global Geosites’.

## **Objective**

The objectives of the ICG include the development and dissemination of information and guidelines for good practice in the selection and management of geoheritage sites, institutional collections and culturally significant geological resources such as Heritage Stones. In addition, through its component Subcommissions, the ICG will continue to develop inventories of internationally important geosites and natural materials, including Global Geosites and Global Heritage Stone Resources.

The ICG will endeavour to promote and co-ordinate these activities at the international, national and regional level through promoting research, workshops, conferences and publications, as well as through training and other educational activities.

Crucially, the ICG intends to actively collaborate with and seek partnerships with other commissions, organisations and networks at all scales, from local to regional to international, which are active within the field of geoheritage and related disciplines to achieve such aims.

## **Scope**

The role of the IGC is to oversee and coordinate the activities of its two component Subcommissions, the Heritage Sites and Collections Subcommission (HSCS) and the Heritage Stones Subcommission (HSS) and promote collaborative activities. This role will also include providing recommendations to IUGS on matters of policy in the broad field of Geoheritage, through approval of the proposals of each Subcommission, before submission to the IUGS executive for ratification. The ICG Executive and its Voting Members will also coordinate other strategic activities between the Subcommissions and IUGS, including concerning budgetary matters.

In addition, the ICG, through the HSCS, will manage the scientific assessment of proposals for new UNESCO Global Geoparks as framed in the statutes of the IGGP.

## **Membership and Governance**

1. The Commission comprises two Subcommissions, the Heritage Sites and Collections Subcommission (HSCS) and the Heritage Stones Subcommission (HSS), each governed through its own approved statement of Terms of Reference (ToR).
2. The formal executive positions of the Commission will comprise a Chair and a Secretary General and will be elected by majority vote of the Voting Members of both Subcommission

every 4 years, immediately prior to each International Geological Congress. As with any other Executive positions, all nominations for these posts should be proposed, in writing, and seconded by existing Voting Members. In addition, executive posts of Vice-Chair and Vice-Secretary General will be established, to ensure that the Commission fully represents the interests of both Subcommissions, e.g. should the overall majority vote select a Chair from the HSCS, the Vice-Chair position will be appointed from the HSS (and corresponding to the candidate from that Subcommission with the highest number of votes). Any proposed expansion of the executive of the Commission will be subject to the approval, through majority vote, of the Voting Members of each Subcommission. All members of the Executive will have the right to vote on any proposals submitted to the Commission by the Subcommissions.

4. The formal executive positions of each Subcommission will comprise a Chair and a Secretary, any other positions created being at the discretion of each Subcommission. Each Chair and Secretary will be elected by a majority vote of the Voting Members of the respective Subcommission every 4 years, immediately prior to each International Geological Congress. As for the Executive of the Commission, all nominations for these posts should be proposed, in writing, and seconded by existing Voting Members of the relevant Subcommission.

5. The Commission will have the following structure:

(a) Executive (as defined above). Note that only members of the Executive may claim to represent the Commission as a body established under the auspices of IUGS.

(b) *Voting Members*: A *Voting Member* of the Commission and/or its component Subcommissions can be any individual, including representative of any institute, national committee, society or other organization, national or international, with an established profile in the geosciences, and relevant experience linked to geodiversity and geoheritage issues.

The panel of Voting Members of the Commission shall, initially, number no more than 20 persons, selected by majority vote of each Subcommission with up to 10 members appointed from each and with a membership from neither Subcommission outnumbering that from the other. The composition of the panel of Voting Members shall be reviewed by each Subcommission every 4 years, following the appointment of their new Executives in accordance with Item 4, above. As for the Executives of the Commission and Subcommissions, any nominations for replacement posts should be proposed, in writing, and seconded by existing Voting Members of the relevant Subcommission.

It would normally be expected that Voting Members should spent no more than two consecutive terms on the panel for the Commission, although the Executive reserves to right to extend this term should no suitable alternative candidate be available, for instance within the scientific discipline, geographical experience or institutional links of the existing Voting Member. In addition, former members of the Executive of the Commission and its component Subcommissions, may, should they wish, continue to contribute to the development of the Commission as Voting Members, without requiring re-election.

All Voting Members will be expected to express opinions on and/or vote on any proposals submitted to the Commission by its Working Groups by its component subcommissions.

Each Subcommission will be responsible for the appointment/ re-appointment of its own panel of Voting Members, and any voting/ approval mechanisms considered appropriate, including to select representatives as Voting Members of the full Commission.

6. Any mid-term vacancies which may arise *within* the established 4 year appointments cycles, shall be filled at the discretion of the Executives of the Commission and Subcommissions. In addition, the Executives of the Commission and Subcommissions reserve the right to de-select any Voting Member or other affiliate of the Commission – or veto their initial appointment - should their activities be considered in any way inappropriate or in opposition to the ethos and aims of the Commission and its Subcommissions, or they consistently fail to respond to consultations (e.g. to appropriately defined timescales).

7. Proposals from each Subcommission for formal ratification by IUGS (for instance on policy matters or Global Geosite/ Global Heritage Stone Resource nomination), should be submitted to the Commission in an appropriate format for consideration also by IUGS (but noting that any proposals formulated within any Working Groups of either Subcommission, should only be submitted to the Commission after approval to do so has been established within that Subcommission).

The Voting Members of the Commission and its Executive will then assess the proposal and, following a formal vote, either approve the proposal for submission to IUGS for ratification, return the proposal with recommendations for changes, or reject the proposal. However, to ensure that the interests of one Subcommission are not allowed to overrule those of the other, all Voting Members of the Commission must have returned a vote (including abstentions), to ensure that a 55% overall level of approval is achieved (e.g. a minimum of 11 positive votes from a Voting panel of 20 persons). Note that if members of any voting board consistently do not vote, the Executive reserves the right to appoint a replacement.

The Executive of the Commission also reserves the right to make a casting vote, should no clear decision be forthcoming from any voting process.

Proposals approved by the Commission will then be passed to the IUGS Executive Committee for further consideration leading, if appropriate, to formal ratification.

## **Meeting arrangements**

Executive members of the Commission and its component Subcommissions will aim to meet at least once a year, preferably in connection with a major international conference event and/or at IUGS Executive Committee meetings.

Other Subcommission and Working Group meetings will be at the discretion of those groups, but are likely to coincide with major international conferences, or during appropriate thematic meetings. Although it is likely that many meetings and/or meeting sessions will be organised in collaboration with partner organisations, it is envisaged that, ultimately, the ICG, the HSCS and the HSS will organize and lead their own thematic meetings.

## **Deliverables**

The terms of reference of each Subcommission, and their annual work plans and budgetary proposals, will define the key deliverables of the Commission. The Commission, itself, will respond to and support the delivery of such materials, proposals and designations through the approval processes detailed in this ToR.

## **Dissemination**

The Commission will initially communicate through the websites of each its Subcommission (e.g. [www.globalheritagestone.com/](http://www.globalheritagestone.com/) and <http://geoheritage-iugs.mnhn.fr/>). Through these linked sites, information about its aims, objectives and activities will be disseminated, as well as those of its Subcommissions and their Working Groups. An Annual Report will be published and newsletters and circulars will be posted as appropriate.

## **Resources and budget**

The Secretary General of the Commission will prepare an annual budgetary proposal, to be submitted to IUGS, based on the proposed annual work plan of each Subcommission. Initially these activities will focus on the consolidation of the position and role of the ICG and its component Subcommissions in the context of other global and international programmes with initiatives including participation in key fora and direct liaison/ discussion with key global players. In addition, the ICG and its component Subcommissions will seek sponsorship for specific projects and activities.

## **Review**

The Terms of Reference of the Commission and its component Subcommissions shall be reviewed every 4 years, on appointment of a new executive, to ensure that they remain appropriate and effective in the context of the aims and objectives of the Commission. Any proposed amendments will be subject to endorsement by the IUGS Executive Committee and approval by the IUGS Council.

1/2018