



GLOBAL GEOPARKS NETWORK

International Association on Geoparks

CELEBRATING EARTH HERITAGE – SUSTAINING LOCAL COMMUNITIES

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UNESCO GLOBAL GEOPARKS

Dear Colleagues of the Japanese UNESCO Global Geoparks

It is a great pleasure and honor, to greet in the name of the 120 UNESCO Global Geoparks, which form the Global Geoparks Network, this splendid event on February 2nd 2016 in Tokyo organized by the 9 Prefectures in Japan which host UNESCO Global Geoparks to commemorate the approval of the new UNESCO site designation!

November 17th, 2015 is a very important moment for all the Global Geoparks, as the UNESCO General Conference ratified the statutes of the new International Geoscience and Geoparks Programme. In doing so, it has legally endorsed the new UNESCO label of "UNESCO Global Geopark" and the endorsement of all the existing 120 Global Geoparks to become UNESCO Global Geoparks with immediate effect. Thus a new milestone achieved for the Global Geoparks Network which was seeking for this international recognition since its creation in 2004.

I wish to express my congratulations to the 8 Japanese UNESCO Global Geoparks for their strong contribution to the operation and activities of the Global Geoparks Network, to the Asian-Pacific Geoparks Network as well as to the Japanese Geoparks Network.

Japan is among the countries with the bigger number of Global Geoparks, that reflects the reach geodiversity of the country and the strong geoconservation efforts made by the geoscientists and the local communities.

I would like to express special thanks to the Japanese local authorities, Prefectures and Municipalities for embracing the Geopark idea and for supporting Global Geoparks development and activities. The variety of activities and initiatives currying out by the UNESCO Global Geoparks in Japan for the protection and rational management of the Japan's reach Geological Heritage, the geotourism development, the education of the society at large on Earth processes and resources as well as the

sustainable development of local communities became best practice to follow for other Global Geoparks all over the globe.

The Japanese Geoparks Committee and the Japanese Geoparks Network facilitate spreading of information on Global Geoparks and support the Japanese Global Geoparks commitment to work together and exchange ideas of best practice, to raise the quality standards of their products and services to the public, to develop geotourism activities and to promote themselves as "green" tourism destinations, supporting local economy and their communities.

The Japanese Global Geoparks activities and results at the local level, their recognition from the local communities, their promotional activities, their contribution and host of International Geopark Conferences and their active networking in the frame of GGN had a significant contribution in strengthening of the Global Geopark image worldwide which led to the approval of the UNESCO Global Geoparks by the UNESCO General Conference last November.

I am sure that the UNESCO Global Geopark label is the best guarantee for the quality of our Global Geopark activities and will contribute significantly to raise the visibility of our territories with concrete results on Earth heritage protection and the sustainable local development of the Geopark territories , in the near future.



Professor Nickolas Zouros
President
Global Geoparks Network Executive Board