



**UNITED NATIONS EDUCATIONAL, SCIENTIFIC AND CULTURAL
ORGANIZATION**

UNESCO Global Geoparks Council

5th Session, 8– 9 December 2020

held virtually via the Zoom Platform from UNESCO Headquarters, Paris.

REPORT

In accordance with the Statutes of the International Geoscience and Geoparks Programme (Article 2, paragraph 2.7 and 2.10), the present document represents the report prepared by the UNESCO Global Geoparks Council (UGGpC) to the Bureau on its decisions to be circulated to Member States and Associate Members of UNESCO.

- i. The 5th session of the UNESCO Global Geoparks Council (hereafter referred to as UGGpC) of the International Geoscience and Geoparks Programme (IGGP) was held virtually and hosted by UNESCO's headquarters, Paris, France, from 8 to 9 December 2020.
- ii. A total of 77 participants including 12 voting members of the UGGpC and 4 non-voting members, as well as 61 observers attended this UGGpC session. Representatives of the following Members States attended the session: Argentina, Belgium, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Brazil, Cameroon, Canada, Democratic Republic of Congo, Ecuador, Finland, France, Georgia, Germany, Italy, Indonesia, Japan, Kenya, Kuwait, Mexico, Nicaragua, Paraguay, Portugal, Poland, Republic of Korea, South Africa, Spain, Thailand, United Kingdom, Uganda, Uruguay, Russian Federation, and the Holy See as non-member observer state.

Staff from UNESCO present: Ozlem Adiyaman Lopes (UNESCO HQ), Margarete Patzak (UNESCO HQ), Charlotte Besombes (UNESCO HQ), Denise Gorfinkiel (UNESCO Montevideo Office), Sérgio Esperancinha (UNESCO HQ).

- iii. Council members present (voting): Enas ABD ELHADY AHMED, Alexandru ANDRASANU, Asfawossen ASRAT, Helga CHULEPIN, Marie-Luise FREY, Soo Jae LEE, Guy MARTINI, Martina PASKOVA, Ana RUIZ CONDE, Gabriela SCHNEIDER, Van TRAN TAN, Jianping ZHANG.

Other members present (non-voting): Kristof VANDENBERGHE (representative of UNESCO), Asier HILARIO (representative of IUGS - International Union of Geological Sciences), Nickolas ZOUROS (representative of GGN - Global Geoparks Network), Tim BADMAN (representative of IUCN – International Union for Conservation of Nature).

- iv. The full list of participants is attached to this report in Annex 1.
- v. Apologies for absence: No apologies - all members of the Council and non-voting members were present.

Introduction of the meeting by the representative of UNESCO

Member States clearly asked the Secretariat to work further on the transparency and consistency of the application and monitoring process and on the overall governance of the Programme. The Secretariat has worked hard on this in the last months and will continue to do so, in consultation with Member States, National Commissions and the partners under the IGGP. The Secretary highlighted as well that Member States clearly asked the Secretariat to work further on a better geographic distribution of UNESCO Global Geoparks and the promotion of the concept as well as building capacity for it remains high on the agenda of the Secretariat. The Secretary reminded that it has been difficult to plan the months ahead in view of the COVID 19 pandemic and that the Organization was monitoring the situation and how this will impact international travel, in particular regarding the pending evaluation and revalidation missions, and that the Secretariat remains in contact with partners, site managers and evaluators. The Secretary also recalled household rules for Observers during the virtual Council meeting, and that the meetings will be recorded for facilitating the drafting of the Report. He also reminded that it was a closed session, and that recordings will not be made available online. In that sense Observers were requested not to record the meeting. The Secretary also mentioned and thanked the Member States that had registered for an Observer position.

I Opening by the Chairperson of the UNESCO Global Geoparks Council

Guy Martini, outgoing Chairperson of the UGGpC officially opened the meeting welcoming the observers and Council members. He went on to thank the UNESCO/UGGp Secretariat team and the outgoing Council members for their huge contribution and extensive work over the last years. He shared the results of last years, mentioning the previous Council meetings of 2017, 2018 and 2019 and the Geoparks that were approved/deferred. The Chairperson highlighted the several documents that were revised during that period:

- a. Document A: Self-Evaluation Form
- b. Document B: Progress Evaluation Form

- c. Revalidation, extension, reduction and name changes templates
- d. Revision of the Application Form

The revision was undertaken in cooperation between the Council and the UNESCO Secretariat with the aim to make these documents coherent with the Statutes and Operational Guidelines for UNESCO Global Geoparks and to provide more and better tools and guidance to site managers to assess the quality of the work undertaken in their territories.

II. Election of the new Bureau members

Kristof Vandenberghe, in view of the upcoming election of the UGGpC Bureau asked if the Chairperson would like him to read the text that regulates the voting process. The Chairperson replied that it was not necessary as everyone had previously received the documents and was therefore expected to be aware of these rules. The Chairperson asked if anyone would like to nominate themselves or to propose someone to the positions of Chairperson, Vice-Chair and Rapporteur.

Marie Luise Frey presented the following proposal: continuation of Guy Martini as Chairperson, Jianping Zhang as Vice-Chair and Helga Chulepin as Rapporteur of the Council.

At this stage, the Vice-Chairperson took over the lead of the session.

Jianping Zhang asked if anyone had an objection for the election of Guy Martini as Chairperson.

Asfawossen Asrat agreed with the proposal, considering that it was a good way for ensuring a swift transition and continuity to the Council work.

Ana Ruiz Conde expressed her concern with the proposal. She considered that it would have been better to have new members as Chair and Vice-Chair. She also considered it was not recommendable for the General Secretary of the GGN to serve as the Chairperson of the UGGpC.

Asfawossen Asrat requested that it would be good to give Ana Ruiz Conde the opportunity to nominate other names.

Ana Ruiz Conde replied she did not have an alternative but that it would have been good to have different people.

Gabriela Schneider seconded and supported Marie-Luise Frey's proposal in the name of continuity.

The voting members then voted on the proposal. Accordingly:

Abd Elhady Ahmed, Enas: approved the proposal

Andrasanu, Alexandru: approved the proposal

Asrat, Asfawossen: approved the proposal

Chulepin, Helga: approved the proposal and accepted the position as Rapporteur

Frey, Marie-Luise: approved the proposal

Lee, Soo Jae: approved the proposal
Martini, Guy: approved the proposal and accepted the position as Chairperson
Paskova, Martina: approved the proposal
Ruiz Conde, Ana: abstained
Schneider, Gabriela: approved the proposal
Tran Tan, Van: approved the proposal
Zhang, Jianping: approved the proposal and accepted the position as Vice-Chairperson

III. Opening remarks of the incoming Chairperson of the UGGpC

Elected members declared acceptance and the incoming Chairperson thanked the Council members for their confidence and support, ensuring that the goals would be met.

He also mentioned that Observers will be asked for comments, and that they will be considered.

IV. Adoption of the Agenda and timetable

The Chairperson asked if everyone agreed with the Agenda and timetable or if anyone wanted to make changes.

Ana Ruiz Conde proposed an item on the IOS evaluation and decision of the 209th session of the Executive Board of UNESCO under AOB as well as *Tim Badman* for his statement from IUCN.

The amended Agenda and timetable were then unanimously approved by the Council.

V. Discussions on evaluation and revalidation missions' postponement

This point was treated after item VII during the meeting.

VI. Deferred UNESCO Global Geopark applications from UNESCO Global Geoparks Council 2018

a. Holy Cross Mountains, Poland

The applicant is located in the western part of Świętokrzyskie (Holy Cross) Mountains in the central highlands of Poland, covering an area of 526km² and 5 communities. Lithospheric features caused the incomparable landscape of the area where geomorphological structures show denudation ridges and hummocks contrasting with the usually modest elevation. The complex geology and geomorphology are covered by dry-ground forests and xerothermic communities with numerous protected plants. The area is situated within the great disruption zone of the crust called the Trans-European Suture Zone, which is a boundary between three large geological units of the European crust: Variscan West-European Platform, Precambrian East-European Platform and orogenic belt of Alpine structures. The region of the Świętokrzyskie Mountains is the only segment of this zone where the sedimentary rock record represents outcrops of all geological periods from the Cambrian to the Quaternary. The

diversity of the sedimentary rocks and related mineral deposits, soils and vegetation are used by humans for nearly 60,000 years.

No conflicts of interest were declared by Council members for further participation in this application and its discussion.

Asfawossen Asrat presented the deferred application, recalling the major reasons for deferral and a synthesis of the progress report:

- The name « Geoland » has been changed and products are being updated to Holy Cross Mountains;
- General guidelines on sale of geological materials are prepared and distributed;
- Consultations are ongoing to rebrand the “Geopark Kielce”-a brand within the Geopark-brand;
- Cleaning, monitoring and conservation on selected sites are ongoing;
- Actions are taken to address the on-site interpretation; new panels have been added;
- A partnership strategy has been developed and the Geopark is planning to sign agreements with the tourism industry. Certification of local products is also planned;
- The Geopark is establishing cooperation with Muskau Arch, Oki Island and Bohemian Paradise UNESCO Global Geoparks, but also with the Ice Age Center in Vooreema and ProGEO in the fields of geotourism.

Discussion and voting:

Asfawossen Asrat: both IUGS reviews strongly support the application and the progress report shows that all the reasons for deferral have been addressed or are being addressed by the applicant.

Martina Paskova: the applicant has addressed all the issues identified and is ready to move forward.

Nikolas Zouros: agreed.

The *Chairperson*: asked if anyone had an objection to raise their hands. If not then the Geopark would be considered approved. All the Council members voted for the integration of Holy Cross Mountains as a UNESCO Global Geopark. The Chairperson suggested to draft recommendations encouraging the improvement process.

Asfawossen Asrat and Martina Paskova: agreed that more efforts are needed on the development of local partnerships in the Geopark’s region and also regarding the interpretation panels.

Ana Ruiz Conde: agreed with the points as well and highlighted that it was important to make sure that the Geopark sees the difference between encouraging the work already implemented and recommendations on issues that still need to be addressed. *Ana Ruiz Conde* also stressed that the recommendations should be linked to the criteria of the Operational Guidelines.

Following the review of the **Holy Cross Mountains (Poland)** implementation report on the UGGpC recommendations from 2018, the UGGp Council decided that the candidate **does** fulfil the UNESCO Global Geoparks criterion (vii) (Operational Guidelines for UNESCO Global Geoparks, Section 3), which was the main reason for its past deferral to become a UNESCO Global Geopark. The Council acknowledged the improvements made and proposed that the Executive Board **endorse** this candidate as a UNESCO Global Geopark for **four years** with the following recommendations:

1. The Geopark is encouraged to further develop its partnerships with local stakeholders in tourism and local economy;
2. Improve the quality of the interpretation panels content;
3. Use the new name of the Geopark on all communication media, certified local products, and more generally on the territory.

b. Thuringia Inselsberg - Drei Gleichen, Germany (deferred from UGGpC 2017)

The area lies in the heart of Germany, in the federal state of Thuringia. It covers an area of approximately 688 km² with a total population of approximately 72,000. The external boundaries are clearly defined by the boundaries of the 18 member municipalities. The biggest municipalities are Bad Liebenstein, Ruhla, Floh-Seligenthal, Friedrichsroda and Tabarz. Five large towns are in the vicinity: Gotha (5 km), Arnstadt (2.5 km), Schmalkalden (3 km), Bad Salzungen (4.5 km) and Eisenach (7 km). Two of the natural landscape types found in the Geopark are low-lying mountains (Thuringian Forest) and areas of loess (Thuringian Basin). Typical landscape forms include Wachsenburg trench (an example of topographic inversion), the karst landscapes near Bad Liebenstein and Thal, the hemispherical hills and wide basins that form on the weathering-prone metamorphic slate, the flat upland areas crisscrossed with deep V-shaped valleys in Permian volcanic rock and conglomerates and the foothills of the Thuringian Forest with their Bunter sandstone outcrops. The geological history of the region starts with the amalgamation of the supercontinent Pangaea during the Variscan Orogeny and has a continuous record until the breakup of Pangaea in the Late Triassic. The Variscan basement is exposed in the Ruhla Crystalline Complex (RCC) which is composed of mid to high degree metamorphic rocks. During the Upper Permian the RCC formed a small island in the Zechstein Sea surrounded by reefs. The Thuringian Forest Mountain Basin (TFMB) is an intra-montane extraordinarily fossiliferous basin filled with a 4500 m thick sequence of Late Carboniferous and Early Permian terrestrial sediments and volcanic rocks. The sequence is well exposed in the mountainous region and serves as reference section of the Lower Permian in Europe. The youngest rocks (Triassic to Lower Jurassic) are exposed in the Drei Gleichen area where Cretaceous inversion tectonics has formed a landscape with remarkable morphological features like the colorful badlands. The region has some stratigraphic type localities of European significance and the only outcrop of the Triassic/Jurassic boundary in Central Germany.

Marie-Luise Frey presented herself as having a conflict of interest and was moved to the waiting room.

Ana Ruiz Conde presented the progress report that addressed each recommendation:

- Installation of prohibition signs at important research excavation sites, additional prohibition signs in preparation; publication of a conduct code for Geopark visitors on the website and on Geopark publications;
- Renewal and exchanges of 93 “InfoPanels“, creation of new maps for the Geopark (geo-touristic map, geological map), updating of printed material, bilingual version of the website (English/German), bilingual content for 3 Infocentres, bilingual content for 6 GeoRoutes, with 81 InfoPanels and 37 overview panels (English/German), preparation and production of English leaflets for 6 GeoRoutes, production of 3 bilingual audio guides (English/German), publication of an English hiking map;
- Creation of a social media concept for the Geopark, creation of a Facebook account, preparation for creating an Instagram account;
- Continuation of research activities on an International Fossil Site (research budget of 6 million € over 5 years, cooperation of 3 research institutes with the Geopark) and preparation for a new GeoInfoCentre focusing on transferring research results to the general public);
- Categorization of Geopark partners and development of a partnership strategy;
- New cooperation agreements between the UNESCO World Heritage Site Messel Pit and the UGGp Bergstraße-Odenwald, collaboration with the German Geoparks Forum, participation in International Conferences of the GGN, establishing contacts with UGGps in Hungary, Romania and Ireland;
- Agreements with Geopark partners banning trade with geological materials, reaching a trade ban agreement in the Municipal Working Group, that is the Geopark’s sponsoring organization. On the basis of this agreement, a separate, legally binding contract was concluded with each of the “GeoInfocentres” and “GeoInfopoints”, prohibiting the trade with geological materials.

Discussion and voting:

The Chairperson reminded that the Geopark had faced strong challenges mainly with the collecting of geological objects, but it seemed that they had found a good solution. Regarding the remaining points, they had addressed all.

Helga Chulepin made a remark on the great professionalism of the Geopark having addressed all the recommendations made by the Council. She was very pleased with the work done.

Following the review of the **Thuringia Inselsberg - Drei Gleichen (Germany)** application dossier and evaluation report, the UGGp Council decided that the candidate **does** fulfil the UGGp criteria (v) and (vi) (Operational Guidelines for UNESCO Global Geoparks, Section 3) to become a UNESCO Global Geopark and proposed that the Executive Board **endorse** this candidate as a UNESCO Global Geopark for **four years** with the following recommendation:

1. Recommendations on the trading and collecting of geological objects. The Geopark should do monitoring and continue to develop more awareness on this issue

c. **Vestjylland, Denmark**

The applicant territory is located in the Central Denmark Region, includes 3 municipalities, a part of the Limfjord and extends about 50 kms offshore into the North Sea to include part of the Jutland Reef. The total area is 4,759 km², with 3,200 km² of

marine area and 218 km of coastline. During the Quaternary period of Earth history, enormous ice sheets sculpted the impressive ice age landscapes that form the core of Geopark West Jutland. These landscapes mark the final period when the Scandinavian Ice Sheet extended from the mountains of Norway down to Denmark. In addition to the ice age landscapes there is a series of other landforms that developed after the end of the ice age by rivers and coastal processes, as well as by the powerful westerly winds that characterize the west coast of Denmark. There are also remains of older geological deposits from the Tertiary and the Quaternary in some of the cliffs.

No conflicts of interest were declared by Council members.

Asier Hilario, representative of IUGS stated he was one of the evaluators but as he was not a voting member, he was allowed to follow the discussion.

Jianping Zhang presented the progress report: the applicant had paid much attention to all the recommendations given by the UGGp Council and took actions to reply to all related issues in their report.

- A geologist has been hired on a full-time position and a scientific committee with eleven members has been formed and approved;
- A new information center has been built and 4 new Geopark corners have been designed and installed in June 2020 in the 4 museums and information centres of the territory. Three Geopark corners have been planned and are expected to be installed in the near future;
- 10 movies have been developed in three languages and subtitled;
- A large UNESCO Global Geopark sign for the motorway near Holstebro has been prepared and awaits the decision on the future status of the geopark. Signs were put at major roads to guide guests to Geopark sites using the approved signs allowed for public roads in Denmark. Forty one new information panels have been set up at various sites with Geopark information in Danish, German and English. Digital information is available both in the Digital Outdoor Guide and a new Geopark Vestjylland app. Printed information leaflets have been distributed widely in the whole Geopark;
- The Main Stationary Line (MSL) is being highlighted at specific sites along the route and in the printed map. It is not possible nor desirable to erect signs at places where roads cross the MSL;
- Geopark Vestjylland in cooperation with VIA University Teachers Training College has designed a three-year project aiming at developing a school programme in cooperation with local schools;
- Geopark Vestjylland and the Climatorium are working together on promoting awareness on climate change. The new Climatorium building is due to open in August this year with an exhibition on climate and the geopark is preparing a climate route showing effects of climate change in the past and possible impacts of climate change in the future along the coast;
- Networking: Geopark Vestjylland has made a very rewarding study tour to the UGGps De Hondsrug and Terra vita and has also started a cooperation with Gea Norvegica UGGp. Cooperation between the 3 Geoparks is well established and ongoing; and

- A partnership strategy and a strategy for volunteers have been developed and approved. The partnership strategy describes criteria for partners in different categories: accommodation and catering providers, shops, activity and transport providers, local producers, educational institutions.

Following the review of the **Vestjylland (Denmark)** application dossier and evaluation report, the UGGp Council decided unanimously that the candidate **does** fulfil the UGGp criteria (v) and (vi) (Operational Guidelines for UNESCO Global Geoparks, Section 3) to become a UNESCO Global Geopark and proposed that the Executive Board **endorse** this candidate as a UNESCO Global Geopark for **four years** with the following recommendations:

1. The council members agree that Vestjylland submitted a very good progress report. They encourage it to continue the good work following the recommendations done by the previous Council;
2. Enhance the work on geological conservation and education.

d. Saimaa, Finland

The applicant is an extensively fragmented archipelago of thousands of islands covering 6,063 km² (2,031 km² water and 4,032 km² island area). The area is located in the provinces of South Karelia and South Savo and there are nine municipalities. In the deeply fractured bedrock areas in the northern part, Saimaa splinters into a network of watercourses. In the southern part, where the Salpausselkäs and related feeder eskers occur, the lakes and scenery are characterized by low sandy shores, and chains of esker islands which break the wide-open waters. The highest point is Neitvuori hill at 184 m above sea level. The geological development of Lake Saimaa can be seen at the ancient shorelines at various altitudes, there are also rock paintings, prehistoric dwelling sites, and particularly the Vuoksi and Imatrankoski rapid potholes. The area's deeply fractured bedrock is of Paleoproterozoic age. Two-mica gneiss is the most common type of rock. The internationally known bedrock is the rapakivi granite, considered to be the type area for this type of rock. Visible remnants of the last glaciation deposited around 12,300-11,600 years ago can be seen on the margin of the melting ice sheet include ice-marginal deltas and end moraine ridges with feeder esker systems and drumlins.

Tran Tan Van stated a conflict of interest and was placed in the waiting room.

Soo Jae Lee presented the progress report of the applicant: the 10 recommendations from the previous Council had been addressed in the report.

- As the UGGp is a large area, both the awareness of the Geopark and the involvement of local communities should continue to be pursued;
- The links between geology and natural and cultural heritages should be further improved in the Geopark.

The Chairperson considered that it was a good report but that there were still some weaknesses regarding the visibility of the Geopark territory particularly due to its large dimension. They had improved the connection between the geological and natural, cultural and intangible heritage and were on the right track in that sense.

Enas Ahmed mentioned that only one visitor centre for such a large area may not be enough to cover the region.

Following the review of the **Saimaa (Finland)** application dossier and evaluation report, the UGGp Council decided unanimously that the candidate **does** fulfil the UGGp criterion (ii) and criterion (v) (Operational Guidelines for UNESCO Global Geoparks, Section 3) to become a UNESCO Global Geopark and proposes that the Executive Board **endorse** this candidate as a UNESCO Global Geopark for **four years** with the following recommendations:

1. Encourage the Geopark to continue to follow the previous council's recommendations;
2. Further continue to improve the connection between geological heritage and other types of heritage;
3. Strengthen the visibility of the Geopark and explore the possibility to develop other visitor centers and points on the territory.

e. Aspromonte, Italy

The applicant territory coincides with the Aspromonte National Park and covers an area of 656 km² in the province of Reggio Calabria, southern Italy. The highest peak of the Aspromonte Massif is Montalto (1956m above sea level), which enjoys an extraordinary 360° view of unique panoramas and scenery embracing the Straits of Messina, Mount Etna, and the Aeolian Islands, among others. The geology is limited by an important tectonic line, which separates the Massif of Aspromonte from the Massif of the Serre, two crustal blocks with very different geological histories. The main geological interest lies in the southern peninsular fragment of the Orogene (Arco) Calabrian-Peloritano (OCP). The OCP represents an alien element along the Apennine mountain chain and is the result of a rare orogenic process. It corresponds to a fragment of the alpine chain detached from Spain, North-West Italy, Sardinia and Corsica area by the opening of the Ligurian-Piedmontese Basin and the Tyrrhenian Sea, now located east-southeast and overwhelmed entirely in the lower Miocene by the nascent Apennine Chain. The territory contains a unique geological system, yet still in formation, whose main geological heritage components consist of crystalline-metamorphic Palaeozoic rocks.

Alexandru Andrasanu stated conflict of interest and was placed in the waiting room.

The Chairperson presented the application of Aspromonte and asked the Council to postpone the discussion to the next day, considering that the information from IUGS was not complete and therefore a decision could not be taken at this stage. The Council members agreed with the proposal.

Asier Hilario, representative from IUGS explained that IUGS still did not have all assessment reports from their evaluators and that they needed an extra day to give a comprehensive review.

Ana Ruiz Conde took the floor to request more information on the process and evaluation of IUGS.

The Chairperson explained that the IUGS evaluation had been conducted by a number of evaluators but needed the review of additional evaluators with complementary expertise to come to a comprehensive review. IUGS has therefore asked for another day.

Asier Hilario confirmed that this was the case and that a comprehensive assessment report would be ready in time for consideration by the Council members.

Discussion on Aspromonte was reported to the next day.

f. Grevena Kozani, Greece

This 2,486 km² area has an altitude from 380 to 2,300 m and expands through the high rugged mountains and foothills of the Pindos Range, a broad Cenozoic peneplain, the Vourinos-Vounassa Mountain Range and Kamvounian Hills of the Pierian Range. Human history including Neolithic sites with small copper deposits, Hellenistic sites and hilltop fortresses, trade routes and battle fields from Byzantine to modern times are closely connected to the applicant's geological and geographical features. The plate tectonic history of the Tethyan Ocean, from its rift-zone birth to collision and destruction, is documented. The oldest rocks in Greece (~1 billion years old) are found here; the rifting of "Pangaea" and European plate tectonics is recorded within the rocky exposures of Mount Vounassa; the site of the Vourinos Ophiolite representing Tethyan lithosphere of 12 km thick has hosted pioneering research, recognized as critical to the original development of plate tectonic theory. Other features exhibit the ancient African-European collision zone. All these ancient plate motions have shaped today's astonishing landscape. The Plio-Pleistocene history of the area is marked by remnants of some of the world's most important proboscidean fossils, including those with the longest tusks of the world (at over 5 m).

No conflicts of interest were declared by Council members.

Helga Chulepin presented the progress report of the applicant

- The three IUGS reviews are positive;
- The application addressed and implemented the recommendations, especially the one regarding the conduct of an independent geological study: the Centre for Research and Technology-Hellas has conducted the technical report, comparing the existing Vikos-Aoos UGGp and the applicant territory. This report states that the applicant presents clear and solid borders and exhibits significant differences in terms of geological, geographical and cultural heritage;
- A stronger visibility has been given to the Geopark on the field, even if formal partnerships and a renewed website need further attention.

Chairperson: considered that the main problem, which was the potential conflict between the nearby geological heritage of Vikos-Aoos UGGp and the applicant had been solved and that other pending issues are being addressed.

Asfawossen Asrat: agreed with the Chairperson's remarks and reminded that there had been similar precedents in the past from similar situations. However, he stressed that several issues need further attention and he asked the Council to make clear recommendations to the applicant.

Marie-Luise Frey: supported previous comments from Council members.

Helga Chulepin: called the attention of the Council to the fact that the last evaluators had given a positive review of the applicant who confirmed that the territory was fully operating as a Geopark during their field visit. She further considered that the application should be approved with further encouragement to follow up on the recommendations. *Helga Chulepin* raised questions on the recommendations regarding the development of partnerships stating that the applicant was working strongly on that point and that the council recommendation should be to ask for formalization of these partnerships.

Alexandru Andrasanu: agreed with the previous remarks from Council members.

Following the review of the **Grevena-Kozani (Greece)** application dossier and progress report, the UGGp Council decided unanimously that the candidate **does** fulfil the UNESCO Global Geoparks criteria to become a UNESCO Global Geopark and has, in addition, provided an independent study on the area. The UGGp Council proposes that the Executive Board **endorse** this candidate as a UNESCO Global Geopark for **four years** with the following recommendations:

1. Improve the visibility of the Geopark within the Geopark area and develop the communication tools, in particular to update the website, according to the plans raised in the Progress Report;
2. Encourage the Geopark to work more intensively on its intangible cultural heritage, to produce an inventory on it and actively make connections between intangible cultural heritage and other heritages;
3. Even if partnerships with local actors and the local community are in place, the Geopark should formalize these partnerships through an official chart of partnership agreements.

VII. Deferred UNESCO Global Geopark application from UGGpC 2019

a. Belitong, Indonesia

Belitong aspiring UNESCO Global Geopark is a part of the Bangka Belitung Province, located approximately 400 km to the North of Jakarta, the capital of Indonesia and is surrounded by the Karimata Strait to the north, Java Sea to the east and south, and Gaspar Strait to the west. The world-class geological heritage in the Belitong Geopark is the tor granite landscape. These massive granite formations (bedrock towers) are free-standing rock outcrops that rise abruptly from the surrounding smooth surface. The morphology of the tor granite is directly related with the weathering conditions within a sea environment. The weathering effect of the sea when the Belitong Island was below sea level is reflected in these granite formations. These tor formations can be found in the northwest Belitong Island throughout the coastal plains and form the small islands which can be visited by boat. The significant geological feature of the Nam Salu primary tin deposit in Kelapa Kampit is another attraction, offering opportunities for underground adventure and education and showcase the history, and local culture to visitors and locals alike. The open pit ramp can be used for education purpose whereby the visitors can trace the exposed rocks that capture the oldest rock

on Belitong Island. Belitong is also known for its tektites, small rounded and pitted bodies of silicate glass. They are most likely a result of a meteor blast or impact that melted terrestrial sand into molten glass that was ejected into the atmosphere and cooled on the way down. They are considered very rare geological features with international geological significance.

The *Chairperson* raised a conflict and interest and was put in the waiting room for the time of the deliberation.

Martina Paskova presented the progress report:

- The boundaries of the Belitong Geopark territory have been clarified. It covers two administrative districts (Belitung and East Belitung Regency) with boundaries derived from their administrative limits – both terrestrial and maritime. It has a total area of approximately 4,800 km² of land and 22,886 km² of sea area and represents now a single unified area;
- Terrestrial: it consists of Belitung mainland surrounded by 241 small islands including Mentawai, Sumedang, Gresik, Seliu, and Batun Island;
- Maritime: According to the Indonesian Law concerning Management of Coastal Areas and Small Islands, the regulation of the Coastal Areas and Small Islands comprises transitional areas between terrestrial and marine ecosystems affected by changes in land and sea. In the direction of the land covering the administrative areas of the sub-district and towards the sea it reaches as far as 12 nautical miles measured from the coastline;
- The sea has become part of Belitung culture for decades. The maritime-based community groups are spread along the coast of the island. One of the distinguished minor maritime tribes in Belitung Geopark is called Sawang tribe. The tribe testifies of the unique cultural heritage and the ancient people migration in Southeast Asia.

Asfawossen Asrat agreed that the major problem (lack of inclusion of the maritime area) was solved. He reminded that by including the new area the aspiring Geopark should also explore including new geosites. He expressed a concern with the shape of the boundary of the Geopark. He recommended that this issue should be addressed.

Helga Chulepin explained that this was related to the administrative boundaries of the territory.

Marie-Luise Frey supported the acceptance but stressed that recommendations include a harmonized concept for geoscience interpretation to the broad public.

Jianping Zhang reminded the reasons for the previous deferment and that this was now solved. One of the issues raised was the question of the connection between the other types of heritage.

Martina Pásková confirmed that the shape of the boundaries was following the administrative boundaries.

Kristof Vandenberghe took the floor and read the document of the application where it is clearly stated that the boundaries are following the administrative boundaries, stating that this is what we would expect from the applicant.

Tim Badman explained that in offshore situation this is a normal situation and he does not see this as a problem.

Following the review of the **Belitong (Indonesia)** application dossier and evaluation report, the UGGp Council decided unanimously that the candidate **does** fulfil the UGGp criteria (v) and (vi) (Operational Guidelines for UNESCO Global Geoparks, Section 3), criteria (i) to become a UNESCO Global Geopark and proposes that the Executive Board **endorse** this candidate as a UNESCO Global Geopark for **four years** with the following recommendations:

1. To advance in generating new geosites in the islands included in the new expanded territory and to link them to the main island geotourism;
2. To maintain the efforts to prevent the sale of geological material (tektites)

b. Majella, Italy

The proposed Geopark corresponds to Majella National Park, which covers 740 km² in the central Apennines (Italy) and comprises amongst others 2 national parks. It is made up predominantly of carbonate reliefs separated by valleys and karst plateaus and presents a wide altitudinal range (130–2793m a. s. l.). The aspiring UGGp is made mostly by fossil-bearing limestones, recording a long-lasting period of sedimentation in warm, shallow-marine environments: from 140 to 7 Ma ago the Majella Massif looked like the present-day Bahamas archipelago. The orogeny involved the platform during the Pliocene, taking Majella to be one of the youngest reliefs of the Apennines. Hence, a still active Quaternary normal fault system is responsible for the recent and historical seismicity of the area. The presence of other lithology's as gypsum and clays, representing a changing in the depositional system, and landforms resultant from the combination of karst, glacial and fluvial processes increase the geological diversity. The Majella hydrogeological system is one of the most prominent in Italy. There are 95 geo sites identified in the area (22 are of international importance), about half of them are geomorphosites while around 20 have stratigraphic or structural-tectonic interest. The greater part of them have educational and/or geotouristic value, as the site of Capo di Fiume that opened to the public in 2001. The first human presence, dating back to the Lower Paleolithic (600,000 years ago), makes Valle Giumentina one of the oldest archeo-geosites in Europe.

No conflicts of interests were declared by Council members.

Enas Abd Elhady Ahmed presented the progress report:

- Most of the recommendations have been addressed, especially those regarding visibility;
- The Geopark has made a good effort to strengthen the links between the community and the geological heritage, but they need to improve further on intangible heritage.

Chairperson: proposed to accept this dossier with some recommendations.

Asfawossen Asrat: recalled that there were a number of important recommendations that led to the deferment last year, but the main ones have been addressed so he proposed accepting.

Jianping Zhang: stated that clarification is needed to distinguish the activities and management between the National Park and the Geopark.

Helga Chulepin: confirmed that they are ready to become a UGGp, but that she would maintain the recommendations on visibility, especially because they have a lot of panels with the National Park logo only.

Marie-Luise Frey: supports Jianping's comments. On the website, the Geopark seems to be just a part of the National Park, so she thinks they have to clearly indicate that the Geopark is working also separately and is not only a part of the National Park.

Martina Paskova: supported the same comments, especially on the National Park and the identity of the Geopark; the Council should stress this point for the next revalidation, and ask them to report on what they are doing for the National Park and what they are doing for the Geopark.

Chairperson: recalled that this is a recurrent challenge where National Parks overlap with Geoparks, as is the case in many places in Europe, and that further attention is needed to assume, with time, a clear identification of a Geopark inside a National Park's management, providing separate visibility for the Geopark.

Following the review of the **Majella (Italy)** application dossier and evaluation report, the UGGp Council decided unanimously that the candidate **does** fulfil the UGGp criteria (v) and (vi) (Operational Guidelines for UNESCO Global Geoparks, Section 3) to become a UNESCO Global Geopark and proposes that the Executive Board **endorse** this candidate as a UNESCO Global Geopark for **four years** with the following recommendations:

1. Encourage to continue following the different recommendations from the previous Council;
2. Provide more visibility to the Geopark and its actions inside the National Park management;
3. Follow the process of the development of partnerships;
4. Develop actions related to intangible heritage;
5. Provide networking actions inside and outside the Geopark.

c. Aspromonte, Italy

Alexandru Andrasanu declared a conflict of interest and has been placed in the waiting room.

The Chairperson presented the progress report:

- The Geopark is a small area which is also a National Park and both have clear separate boundaries;
- The first recommendation that the previous Council has made was to ask for more information on the geological heritage on this area. The complementary dossier was transferred to IUGS for a new assessment. IUGS extended the consultation to other

experts and all Observers and Council members received the additional information this morning.

The Chairperson gave the floor to Asier Hilario, IUGS representative, to provide more details.

Asier Hilario explained that the first application of Aspromonte aspiring Geopark did not provide sufficient information to assess the international value of the geological heritage, which led to the deferral by the Council. The progress report provided more information in that sense, and included now also a list of scientific publications. IUGS had conducted a preliminary assessment based on the newly provided information, but that did not come to a conclusive position. For that reason, the four previous evaluators were asked for their assessment of the new information. Based on this information and other scientific publications on the territory that have been issued, three evaluators out of four agreed that the territory meets the geological requirements.

In order to come to a comprehensive and evidence based conclusion, IUGS contacted seven other IUGS geoheritage experts for their view and all of them agreed that, while the applicant could have sent more scientific evidence in support of the recognized international geological value, the provided information supports the geological significance of the region.

Asier Hilario, proposed to include a recommendation that the Geopark further improves the description of the region's geological sites, clearly demonstrating their international significance. A reference was also made to the heterogeneous quality of the geological descriptions of the geosites in the application dossier.

Asier Hilario drew lessons from this case:

- This is a situation where, although the application does not provide a complete description of the geological heritage and therefore does not make a good case to demonstrate its value and international significance, IUGS experts experience and knowledge has been able to provide that.
- With that in mind, IUGS recommended that the template for applications must be improved so that the aspiring Geoparks clearly understand what they need to provide, in order to justify the value of the geoheritage present in their territory. Apart from that, IUGS also considered that it should be the applicant's duty to provide the arguments that justify the geological significance of the region. IUGS experts can search more information on the geoheritage, but the initial information should come from the applicant in the original application dossier.

Helga Chulepin praised IUGS for their work and mentioned that all the work was done the right way to assure that the evaluation is thorough. She supported the integration of the aspiring Geopark as a UGGp with the recommendation that the Geopark improves the clarification of the geoheritage and its connection with other important aspects of the region, like the risk related to geohazards.

Nikolas Zouros stressed the importance of IUGS' work and recognized that the applications should be very clear connecting geoheritage to other aspects of the territory. He considered that this case demonstrated the difference between assessing the importance of individual geosites and being able to understand and assess the geological significance of a territory as

a whole. He also stressed the importance of the presence of a geoscientist in the management of the Geopark particularly for the understanding of what international value means for geoheritage and develop further work.

Asrat Asfawossen underlined the request by IUGS that the international significance of the geoheritage should come from the applicant and be very well explained. He raised the concern that the new application submitted still has issues regarding the justification of the international value of the geoheritage, as it was also highlighted by the new IUGS experts. He accepted the integration of the aspiring Geopark as a UGGp, but with a strong recommendation on the geoheritage significance.

Jianping Zhang considered that the management team of the aspiring Geopark did not understand the international value of the geoheritage of their territory and that this should be improved, in order to promote adequate geoconservation.

Marie-Luise Frey agreed with Asfawossen Asrat's considerations and added that it was important that Geoparks must build their own identity apart from National Parks.

Martina Paskova supported the previous comments and added that in situations where the Geoparks have the same management body as National Parks, it is important to make a distinction between these two entities and that the identity of the Geopark should be enhanced. It is particularly important that, in case of a joint management, the management has staff that are 100% dedicated to the Geopark.

Following the review of the **Aspromonte (Italy)** application dossier and evaluation report, the UGGp Council decided unanimously that the candidate **does** fulfil the UGGp criteria (v) and (vi) (Operational Guidelines for UNESCO Global Geoparks, Section 3) to become a UNESCO Global Geopark and proposes that the Executive Board endorse this candidate as a UNESCO Global Geopark for **four years** with the following recommendations:

1. Encourage the Geopark to continue to follow the previous recommendations from the Council;
2. Improve the geological description of the territory and pass that information to the public, explaining its specific values;
3. Enhance the visibility of the Geopark. This should be done at two levels: externally for the general audience; internally, in finding a unique identity of the Geopark inside the management structure (Nature Park/Geopark);
4. Improve the link between the geological heritage and the other types of heritage existing in the territory;
5. Strengthen the information and actions relative to geohazards that exist in the Geopark;
6. Strengthen the formal partnerships between the Geopark and local stakeholders;
7. Develop and promote a unified identity on the territory, which the Geopark can then transmit to an external audience.

d. Bohol, Philippines

Bohol Island Geopark belongs to Region VII located at the central portion of the Philippines. Bohol's scenic landscape is testament to its geologic history as evidenced

from its varied landforms and structural features. Examples are the famous Chocolate Hills, Loon-Maribojoc Geological Monument, Inabanga Rupture Site, Hinagdanan Cave in Dauis, Alicia Schist, Alicia Panoramic Park and Cagongcagong Cave System in Alicia, Baclayon Ancient Uplifted Marine Terraces, Can-umantad Falls and Canawa Cold Spring in Candijay, Trinidad Cave System, Lamanok Island and Cave Pools in Anda, and Danajon Bank, one of the 6 double barrier reefs in the world and the only barrier reef in Southeast Asia. Bohol also boasts of highly diverse flora and fauna due to its dynamic geologic and tectonic history. Presently, the local government prioritizes conserving its endemic species through protected areas such as Rajah Sikatuna Protected Landscape for the rainforest trees of the family Dipterocarpacea and animal sanctuaries such as the Philippine Tarsier and Wildlife Sanctuary. Just as the island has its rich biodiversity and highly diverse geologic features, its traditions and culture are proof of how its people adapted to its natural environment as seen from its only living intangible heritage, the Eskaya Tribe of Bohol in Taytay, Duero. The Boholanos' respect and pride in their heritage treasures are main driving force in its bid for recognition as a Global Geopark as it pursue learning and sharing experiences through its network.

The Chairperson presented the case and highlighted that this was the first time in the history of the Council that a Geopark presented its candidature before the two years deadline of the deferment period. He considered that from the report it was obvious that the Geopark should wait another year to address all the issues identified in the recommendations sent by the last Council. He proposed to allow Bohol aspiring Geopark to use next year to submit a new dossier that will be examined by the next Council meeting, and the possibility to send a support mission there to assist in that process.

Helga Chulepin agreed that this was the first time this was happening and that it was the responsibility of the Council to encourage the territory to keep on working on the recommendations to become a UGGp.

Ana Ruiz Conde said that this decision was in line with the Statutes and Operational Guidelines because a deferment is given for a maximum period of two years, and that the Geopark was still inside this time-frame. According to the Operational Guidelines the Council should do the same if this kind of situation should happen again in the future.

The Chairperson suggested that an advisory mission with colleagues from the region could be organized for early 2021 with the objective of helping the Geopark to improve its application, if the applicant desires such support.

Following the review of the **Bohol (Philippines)** application dossier the UGGp Council decided unanimously that the candidate **does not** yet fulfill the necessary criteria to become a UGGp and proposes that the Geopark makes full use of its deferment period, until 9 July 2022. The Geopark should submit a new progress report that will be examined by the next Council. The Secretariat will look into the possibility to send a support mission, if so desired.

The Chairperson asked if some Observers wanted to take the floor. No questions or comment from Observers.

V. Discussion on postponed evaluation and revalidation missions – planning 2021 mission

The Chairperson introduced the next point on the Agenda: the situation concerning evaluation and revalidation missions and gave the floor to *Kristof Vandenberghe*, UNESCO representative.

Kristof Vandenberghe explained the reasons why all the 2020 missions were postponed, and that the Secretariat had tried to organize some of the missions depending on local situations and international travels, in particular in European countries, but finally decided to postpone all the missions, as it would have been unfair for the other sites. He stressed that all the missions postponed from 2020 (19 planned evaluation missions and 35 revalidation missions) had to move to 2021 and that it will be a challenge for next year's Council in terms of the amount of time needed for discussions. He added that no decision could yet be taken and that it depended on how the COVID-19 situation evolved, particularly in light of the vaccination campaigns.

The UNESCO Secretariat looked into alternatives and also consulted with colleagues from the World Heritage Convention working with IUCN and ICOMOS as advisory bodies to see how they were dealing with the situation: some of the missions had been done, but it is different for them, as their missions are shorter, and they also have a larger roster of evaluators from the region which facilitates international travel and sanitary restrictions.

Paula Valcarce, Observer from the Spanish National Commission took the floor and asked two questions:

- Is the evaluators' roster public?
- Has the postponement of the mission been discussed during the meeting of the Bureau? The National Commissions have not received any report from the Bureau as it is stated in the Guidelines (report 8 weeks after the meeting of the Bureau).

Kristof Vandenberghe explained that there is no reason to keep the roster secret even if for now it is not placed online. The decision regarding the postponement had been taken indeed during the Bureau meeting, and involved sites and evaluators had been contacted. The decisions of the Bureau had been placed on the website in a transparent manner.

The Chairperson confirmed that the Secretariat could think about how to share information regarding missions in 2021 with the National Commissions and National Geopark Committees in full transparency.

VIII. Discussion on UGGp boundary modification requests (reductions/extensions)

a. Bohemian Paradise UNESCO Global Geopark, Czechia

Martina Paskova declared a conflict of interest and has been placed in the waiting room.

The Chairperson presented the request. The extension is less than 10%, around 9% of the total area of the Geopark, which corresponds to 73km², and the UGGp has submitted a detailed dossier for the integration of 3 new areas (East, North and West):

- The Eastern area has several old gold mines, and the remains of this activity are still visible; there are also remains from hydrothermal activity from the end of the Palaeozoic;
- The Western part is rich in Cretaceous deposits, historical sites (castles, gothic churches...);
- The Northern area concerns mainly quarries of phyllites from the Palaeozoic, and the traditional buildings of the area (roofs) have been made from the material of these quarries.

Asfawossen Asrat mentioned the difference between the ways Geoparks calculate the new areas to be added and stressed the importance of receiving the shapefiles and not only pictures format for the maps, so that the Council can verify the calculations easily.

Ana Ruiz Conde agreed with the previous comment regarding geographical locations and shapefiles.

Helga Chulepin made a remark about what kind of boundaries the Geoparks are choosing for the extension. Is it administrative or geographical? She stressed that the UNESCO template should be clearer on this issue.

Following the review of **Bohemian Paradise (Czechia)** extension request report, the UGGpC decided unanimously to **ACCEPT** the request.

b. Vulkaneifel, Germany

Marie-Luise Frey declared a conflict of interest and has been placed in the waiting room.

The Chairperson presented the new areas to be included in the Geopark. This request corresponds to a 5.7% increase in the southern part of the Geopark, including now a Municipality that would like to be part of the Geopark. This demonstrates the success of the Geopark. The new region will include several relevant geoheritage sites.

Following the review of **Vulkaneifel (Germany)** extension request report, the UGGpC decided unanimously to **ACCEPT** the request.

IX. Discussion on IUGS – Guidelines for Geoheritage assessment

The Chairperson introduces the subject: a revised IUGS assessment methodology was brought to the attention of the last UGGp Council meeting, but after due consideration the Council proposed to continue improving it on specific points and come back in March 2020 with an updated version.

Kristof Vandenberghe explained that the recommendation to improve the IUGS assessment methodology is also aligned with the recommendations made by the IOS evaluation of the Programme, related to the transparency and consistency of the application process. He explained that the Secretariat has started improving the methodology together with he dedicated working group under IUGS, but that COVID-19 and internal changes in IUGS

delayed the process. UNESCO Secretariat submitted its view on the methodology with recommendations on points to improve in a letter to the Secretary-General of IUGS.

Asier Hilario agreed with the recommendations regarding the methodology.

1. It needed to be simpler. The responsibility to provide the justification of the international value of the geoheritage lies with the applicant Geopark, but this requires clarity on the elements to be provided.
2. The nature of the information to be provided should not exclude areas where less scientific research has been conducted – while respecting the scientific standards, the methodology should be inclusive.
3. IUGS also agrees with the recommendation to not only look at individual geosites but consider the overall landscape value of the territory.

He agreed that IUGS redefines the guidelines and mentions that these can be ready for the next council meeting.

Asfawossen Asrat agreed with the IUGS concern regarding the guidelines for applications and that the justification for the international geoheritage value must be coming from the applicants. He stressed that IUGS should focus only on evaluating the international geoheritage value but abstain from assessing whether similar ones are already present in other parts of the world. He suggested also agreeing on a minimum number of IUGS reviewers, for example three, for every application.

Asier Hilario confirmed that the role of IUGS was to validate the geological significance of international value in the regions.

Ana Ruiz mentioned that it is urgent to have clear guidelines from IUGS to validate the international value of geological heritage, according to criterion I. She suggested that the Council Members be involved in the preparation of the guidelines.

Tim Badman recalled that IUCN have shared some thoughts previously on this document, and based on their experience in evaluating World Heritage Sites (including geological WH sites) he noted the following points:

- a) The IUGS methodology would need to provide further guidance on the information needed from applicants. This can be an annex, explaining clearly the required elements in order to ensure that minimum standards are met.
- b) It is important to clearly separate the guidance to applicants on what should be included in the dossier, from the guidance to the IUGS reviewers on how they should assess that material. At present these are overlapping, and in that sense the current template is confusing.
- c) The IUGS evaluators should have a standard form with guiding questions to help the reviewers provide the information needed, but also so that applicants can see what the evaluators are asked to look for.
- d) The evaluator's forms should include "meta-data" such as the relevant background of the evaluator, their nationality, and a declaration that they are not involved in the application. There should also be a clear statement for evaluators on how their review

will be treated after submission and also ensure that they understand the role the review plays in the larger evaluation process.

- e) All of these guidance and questionnaire formats should be in the public domain so that applicants can see them.
- f) Agreement on the number of evaluations needed is important (for instance, World Heritage Convention dossiers are assessed by up to 10 evaluators)

IUCN is involved in similar processes and is happy to assist IUGS and other earth science networks, to harmonize or share lessons learned. IUCN would also be happy to consider how to collaborate regarding building a network of reviewers to support both World Heritage and Global Geopark processes.

Gabriela Schneider said that for developing countries it may be difficult to obtain information on geological heritage or inventories of geosites.

Nickoals Zouros agreed that we should be aware of the fact that in some countries geological sites of important value are not necessarily studied or have been subject of international research as might be the case elsewhere and that the criteria should be inclusive in that sense, by promoting an open, simple and transparent process. He recalled that for UNESCO, Africa and the SIDS are a priority and the methodology and guidelines should be flexible enough as not to exclude sites for lack of inventory or international research.

Regarding the IUGS methodology, he expressed his support to the proposal to have it improved in spring 2021 to have it adopted by the 6th UGGP Council.

Alexandru Andrasanu supported this proposal and suggested that the Council participate in the review process, as to assure adherence to the UNESCO Statutes and Operational Guidelines. He considered this as evidence of the importance for aspiring UGGp to engage with a geoscientist either under direct contract or with a partner institution.

Martina Paskova supported the previous comments and added that a focus on the involvement and importance of indigenous communities is important in this process.

Asier Hilario responded that IUGS is open to recommendations to make the methodology more simple, flexible to different contexts and allowing a holistic view of the landscape value, keeping focus on the international scientific value. Asier Hilario confirmed that IUGS will create a collaborative working group that will include geoheritage experts from IUGS, UGGP Council, UNESCO Secretariat and GGN in order to review the document and create new and agreed guidelines in spring 2021. IUGS is open to enlarge its pool of evaluators and seek cooperation with the IUCN roster of evaluators

X. Update on new documents

a. Checklist + b. Explanatory note

The Chairperson introduced the item by explaining that the checklist and the accompanying explanatory note have been drafted to provide further guidance for applicants and avoid

confusion on the process or elements to provide. These documents have been widely consulted and the feedback was positive. He confirmed that these were living documents and would be updated when relevant.

Asfawossen Asrat recalled that the actual checklist had been adopted already by the past Council session and that the explanatory note was an addition requested by that same council. In that sense, he clarified that the agenda should make clear that these documents don't need to be voted again by the Council.

Kristof Vandenberghe confirmed that the checklist had already been voted at the last Council, and the Explanatory note was indeed an addition to it, providing further guidance and examples on each of the different criteria. He informed the meeting that these documents are already available on the UNESCO website.

Helga Chulepin said that she received only positive feedback, and that these documents were fantastic tools for aspiring Geoparks, even if they could continuously be improved over time.

Alexandru Andrasanu confirmed that these documents are excellent tools, especially with the explanations. The documents have been used on 2 aspiring Geoparks in Romania.

Ana Ruiz Conde noted that these documents needed to be more adapted to the criteria and the Operational Guidelines, because in her view there were red boxes that did not correspond to the criteria. She also asked further clarification on the consultation process and on who decided to integrate proposals from the Members of the Council. She believed that Council Members did not receive a final document and that the process was difficult to follow. She also asked clarification on when the documents will be used and who would decide about the changes to make in them.

The Chairperson responded that an enormous preparation preceded these documents and that all this happened in a transparent and consultative process.

Kristof Vandenberghe explained that the actual checklist had been already adopted by the Members of the Council at the last session, including the red boxes. The Secretariat and GGN had focused particularly on the explanatory note, providing further explanations for the reader, including good examples and visual materials. Because UNESCO wanted to consult broadly, the documents have also been sent to the National Commissions and the Geopark National Committees in June 2020 from whom the Secretariat received comments that were integrated.

Ana Ruiz Conde highlighted that her concern was not so much on the checklist and explanatory notes, but more on the Form A which was mandatory and relevant for the evaluation and revalidation process.

Martina Paskova intervened saying that this was important material to translate the criteria into concrete evaluation, but that this kind of process needed transparency even if the discussion had been open with the National Commissions and Geopark National Committees. She asked a question on Question 7 of the document related to the co-management of different designations.

Marie-Luise Frey noted that it would be helpful to have a feedback from applicants on how they can concretely use these documents. Transparency is important, and all the comments are important, but getting a practical response from the territories is the priority before changing the document.

The Council members agreed to collect recommendations and any possible changes will be discussed and approved during the next UGGp Council meeting.

b. Form A

The Chairperson said that for Form A the process has been different: there was a long preparatory work done by the Council, Bureau, the GGN and the Secretariat.

Kristof Vandenberghe explained the process and the work carried out: the Secretariat put a lot of efforts in this work, because the former document needed an update as it was giving space to interpretation, but also to better highlight the contribution of Geoparks to sustainable development. The *Secretary* explained the changes that were made on the Form and highlighted that the new version stays closer to the criteria and Operational Guidelines. Regarding the scoring system, it seemed important to keep one because it is the only way to evaluate and measure progress over time, but the scoring system had been adapted to make sure that if some questions are not applicable for some sites, the territory is not penalized. Even with the comments from National Commissions, National Committee and experts, the Secretariat wanted to extend the consultation and decided to present this document at the GGN Digital platform meeting and to all the UNESCO Global Geoparks and received further comments. The Secretariat would like to suggest to the Council that this document is considered as a pre-final document that can be introduced for a test period for applying territories, on a voluntary basis in 2021. After the test in real circumstances, the final draft could be submitted for approval by the next Council meeting in Jeju.

The Chairperson added that the new Form A is allowed to provide more information to assess the quality of the actions undertaken in the Geoparks. He asked the Council members to adopt Form A as a pre-final draft to be put in a test phase.

Martina Paskova appreciated the improvements but had some issues on the scoring system. She thought that it will be better to have a semaphore system (red, yellow, green).

Asfawossen Asrat confirmed that every question was clearly related to the criteria and this is positive. For the scoring system he believed it would be better to opt for an on/off system (either full points for that criterion or zero). Some questions are also complicated to apply in some parts of the world, like for example the one related to the geological surveys. In Africa for example, Geological Surveys are mostly engaged in supporting mining activities in their respective countries, and their inventories are drafted with that purpose, not necessarily for geoheritage conservation. The question about research is also challenging for developing countries, as some potential sites may not have been sufficiently studied. In addition, questions about indigenous people may need to be reformulated considering political and cultural sensitivity.

Ana Ruiz Conde said that it had been difficult to work on the different versions and the Excel document. She asked to defer the decision. She also asked the Secretariat to send the document one month in advance.

Marie-Luise Frey agreed with the proposed test phase.

Van Tran Tan suggested that the territories could use both of the Forms, the current one and the draft version of the updated form A and comment on points of improvement.

Tim Badman reacted on the discussion, saying that from a technical point of view, delaying the testing period will not achieve anything.

Alexandru Andrasanu said that, as each Geopark is unique, we will never have a perfect tool, the time of testing is good for improving the document.

Martina Paskova said she is also in favor of the testing period.

Kristof Vandenberghe proposed to organize an open meeting at the end of the test phase to present the changes on the Form A, before consolidating a final version.

Helga Chulepin added that the testing process has to be clear for the aspiring Geoparks and the revalidations.

Ana Ruiz Conde added that the problem is not the process followed by the Secretariat, but the fact that the Council did not get the time to check the new document.

The Chairperson proposed to the Council to adopt this document as a test document for one year per vote. The proposal was adopted by the majority with one vote against and with no abstention.

The question of a working group was raised by an Observer. Germany wondered if a working group with a wide range of stakeholders, including Member States, would not be appropriate for such a process.

Kristof Vandenberghe responded that the IOS evaluation of the IGGP had already considered this and not retained it, as to respect the expert driven nature of the programme and the Operational Guidelines (5.3 and 5.6.ii which state that templates are prepared by the Council). Nevertheless, the Secretariat takes great importance in providing clarity and transparency on the process. The work on the documents is conducted by a core team of the Secretariat, GGN and UNESCO Global Geoparks Council, but widely consulted with National Commissions and National Committees, in addition to the actual Geoparks. This does not exclude that for future exercises such working group can be considered.

c. Templates for extension, reduction, name changes

The Chairperson asked the Council if they had questions or comments on the three templates decided upon by the past Council and prepared by the Secretariat: template for extension, for renaming and for reduction.

Marie-Luise Frey raised a question on the term “public consultation” for the template for renaming an existing UGGp. She also highlighted that Geoparks wanting to change their name would have to explain why.

Asfawossen Asrat added that some points need further explanation, but that these documents were good and could be validated.

Ana Ruiz Conde told that it should be clarified when a territory proposed at the same time an extension and a reduction. Geoparks would also have to explain the history of modifications. This could come at the end of the template.

Van Tran Tan said that the Secretariat has to clarify how many times a territory can have a <10% extension.

The Chairperson proposed to adopt the templates, integrating the remarks from Council members. The three templates were unanimously adopted by the Council.

Under Any Other Business, *Ana Ruiz Conde* had proposed an item on the IOS Evaluation and the decision by the 209th session of the Executive Board.

Ana Ruiz Conde raised issues related to the IOS evaluation and the rules of procedure for UGGp Councils. She also made a reference to the revised IUGS methodology asking for UGGp Council involvement as to ensure transparency and alignment. Lastly, she asked for continuous attention to keep a clear division of roles between GGN and the Secretariat.

Asfawossen Asrat asked if the Council members can have the report of the IOS evaluation.

In response to the IOS evaluation, the *UNESCO representative* explained that this report is public and online. He informed the meeting that the UNESCO Secretariat is responsible to inform the Member States on progress made against the different recommendations and that this is an ongoing process, on which Council members will be updated.

Regarding the different roles of Secretariat and GGN, he explained that this is indeed a point of attention, but that in line with the responsibilities described in the Operational Guidelines and Statutes of the programme, both GGN and the Secretariat act within their respective mandates. There is a strong cooperation on capacity building events and outreach. It is, however, the Secretariat that sees to it that the statutory obligations and the transparency and consistency of the governance process are respected, while GGN will be more engaged in fostering networking and providing personalized guidance.

Regarding the IUGS methodology, the Representative of the Secretariat explained that there may be a misunderstanding and that the IUGS methodology that was shared with the Council was shared for information purpose only, as it is the same that was deferred by the past Council. The IUGS representative confirmed that they are currently engaged in a consultation process, and while the assessment of the geological value is the prerogative of IUGS, they made efforts

to include a wide range of experts from different fields, to make sure that the revised methodology and guidelines respond to the needs of the programme.

Tim Badman updated and informed the Council on IUCN's involvement in the assessment of Geological heritage:

With funding of the Republic of Korea, IUCN has been working on the revision of its guidance to the IUCN network on Geheritage, including through a newly published IUCN Best Practice Guideline on Geoconservation in Protected and Conserved Areas, published by the IUCN World Commission on Protected Areas (WCPA). This includes several references to the UGGp concept and can be downloaded here: <https://portals.iucn.org/library/node/49132>. This guideline publication is principally aimed for the use by protected area managers and staff and their advisors. The volume spells out why geoh heritage conservation is needed in protected areas.

He also informed that, while the IUCN World Conservation Congress <https://www.iucncongress2020.org/> has been postponed to September 2021 (Marseille) due to COVID 19, the IUCN Members adopted online two IUCN Motions concerning Geoh heritage (both are now IUCN Resolutions). WCC-2020-Res-074-EN: Geoh heritage and protected areas (<https://www.iucncongress2020.org/motion/089>)

WCC-2020-Res-088-EN : Conservation of the natural diversity and natural heritage in mining
Lastly, he informed the Council that IUCN is entering the last stages of reviewing the Thematic Framework for Geological World Heritage, as requested by the World Heritage Committee document. This document is aimed to help States Parties, including their protected area managers and local authorities decide whether their territory qualifies for WH, and to clarify the alternatives to consider the option of UGGp. Several Geopark experts are involved in the process, and there is also cooperation with IUGS to align the related review methodologies. Members of UGGpC are welcome to make contact with any questions or suggestions on all of these above points.

Before the closing of the session, *Nikolas Zouros* asked the Secretariat about the possibility to publish a short note about the Council decisions and announcements on the UNESCO website. The Secretariat confirmed that, as was the case last year, a webnews will be issued soon after the closing of the Council, informing Member States on the outcome of the meeting.

The Chairperson of the UGGp closed by thanking the Council members and the Secretariat for the successful meeting and the Observers for their participation and interest and expressed the hope to meet everyone in Jeju Island, Republic of Korea, for the 6th UNESCO Global Geoparks Council meeting in September 2021.