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Geoethics and the Global Geoparks of UNESCO: the necessary link for the assertion of Geoparks worldwide

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In the framework of the International Geoscience and Geoparks Programme (IGGP) established by the 38th General Conference of UNESCO, in November 2015, a new dynamic was given to Geosciences inside this Organization of the United Nations. Through the implementation of the IGGP, it was possible to reinforce the objectives of the International Geoscience Programme of UNESCO (IGCP) and to create a new label - "UNESCO Global Geoparks" (UGG) under the umbrella of this innovative UNESCO Scientific Programme, in close cooperation with the International Association "Global Geoparks Network".

The IGCP, as part of the IGGP, fosters interdisciplinary geoscientific research among researchers internationally, through joint research work, meetings and workshops. Regarding the UGG, its statutes declare that they have become the "mechanism of international cooperation by which areas of geological heritage of international value, through a bottom-up approach to conserving that heritage, support each other to engage with local communities to promote awareness of that heritage and adopt a sustainable approach to the development of the area" [1]. In this sense, through the IGGP, these areas can apply to UNESCO, for designation as a "UNESCO Global Geopark". Given these circumstances, the role of the geoscientists involved in these new applications or acting as evaluators is crucial for the success of this UNESCO Programme globally. This also stresses the role of Global Geoparks concerning the promotion of scientific research and the cooperation and sharing of knowledge inside the network within the framework of "*universal respect for justice, for the rule of law and for the human rights and fundamental freedoms*", as expressed in Article 1 of UNESCO's constitution [2]. The ethical aspects of scientific research therefore need to be one of the pillars of the UGG. Based in this reality, the evaluators for UGG must follow strict guidelines for new applications and revalidation missions and they have to ensure that they have no conflict of interest in these activities. That is the reason why it is important to formally include Geoethics inside the UGG as a vital link to ensure the development of new Geoparks worldwide.

References:

[1] <http://www.unesco.org>

[2] <http://portal.unesco.org>

