# Global Geosites: an active, partially-achieved geoheritage inventory initiative waiting to regain official recognition

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The compilation of a preliminary Global Indicative List of Geological Sites (GILGES) by the Working Group on Geological and Palaeobiological Sites was a joint cooperative effort between UNESCO and IUGS as a contribution to the works of the World Heritage Committee [1]. The first invitation to participate in GILGES was widely circulated in 1990. Under the guidance and with the involvement of governmental representatives of UNESCO, the IGCP, IUGS and IUCN, a task force was convened in Paris to work on the refinement of a list of suggestions and the UNESCO criteria for selection that was then in use [1]. The IUGS Secretariat, then based in Trondheim, Norway, started the work on a geosite list, frequently referred to as the Trondheim database.

One of the first organizational aims of ProGEO, the European Association for the Conservation of the Geological Heritage, was the creation of a European inventory of geosites. Evolving from all those preliminary works came the Global Geosites Working Group (GGWG) of IUGS, which started the development of a database of global geological sites (IUGS GEOSITES) following definition of an initial global methodology and principles [2, 3, 4, 5]. This IUGS project had the support of ProGEO, IUCN and UNESCO. The selection of internationally-important localities of special significance to the geological sciences was intended to contribute towards the furtherance of international geoscience as well as towards site conservation. Since then, the Global Geosites inventory project has already been implemented in several European countries, mostly thanks to the involvement of both individual and institutional members of ProGEO. As a result, during the last two decades, several countries have published their results, identifying the corresponding geological frameworks and geosites of international relevance. In accordance with the Global Geosites methodology, these national proposals are later expected to be compared with those from other countries in their natural regional geological context, in order to identify the common geological frameworks that exemplify Earth's history, and the most globally-representative geosites. However, several problems resulted in the delay of the process, notably the diversion of IUGS support towards different related initiatives (GEOSEE, GeoHeritage, GeoParks).

There is a need to maintain and further develop the Global Geosites project as described by [3, 4, 5]. Whether economic or political decisions may temporarily affect the process, the principles still remain binding and effective. The huge human and economic resources already contributed by those countries that have already completed their inventory, and the experience acquired and results so far published, must not be wasted. Furthermore, there is ongoing work with several countries currently developing their Global Geosite inventory or revising it. We herein encourage national governments, institutions and NGOs to maintain their interest on and contribute to the objectives of the Global Geosites project, so that they can be accomplished irrespective of temporary vicissitudes.

*References:*

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