

For IAG records

The First 100 IUGS Geological Heritage Sites – Zumaia conference, 25–28 October 2022

On 25–28 October 2022 a conference was held in Zumaia (Basque Country, Spain) to conclude the first phase of an IUGS project focused on designation of geoheritage sites of global relevance. The project commemorates the 60th anniversary of IUGS and is primarily aimed to increase visibility of geosciences and to increase awareness of geoheritage sites, which require conservation, protection and proper management. IAG was one of the IUGS-affiliated scientific organizations invited to take part in the project. The special committee was set up within IAG in January 2022, chaired by Piotr Migoń, involving also Paola Coratza, Emmanuel Reynard, Ghislain Zangmo Tefogom and Zbigniew Zwoliński. The committee, acting on behalf of IAG, submitted five proposals of localities of outstanding geomorphological values and three of them were included into the “First 100” as an outcome of voting by more than 30 experts (including two representing IAG – M. Soldati and P. Migoń). They were presented at the conference by Paola Coratza (Vajont landslide), Isabelle Gärtner-Roer (Rockglaciers of Engandine) and Piotr Migoń (Namib Sand Sea). In addition, Ghislain Zangmo Tefogoum presented the Cameroon Volcano. Mauro Soldati, past President of IAG, was invited to give a keynote lecture entitled “Geomorphological landscapes: valuable hosts of remarkable geoheritage”. The conference was also attended by Zbigniew Zwoliński, co-author of the Namib Sand Sea nomination.

The conference itself was organized by the Basque Country UNESCO Global Geopark, under the leadership of Asier Hilario, and included plenary lectures and addresses, presentation of 65 sites (out of 100 designated), boat field trip to the Zumaia flysch coastal section spanning the interval from the Cretaceous to the Eocene (including K/T boundary and two globally recognized boundary stratotypes within the Paleocene, and social events. More than 150 people from more than 40 countries attended, including the IUGS President (John Ludden) and Secretary General (Stanley Finney). Site presentations were arranged into 10 sessions, including two focused on geomorphology. 12 geomorphological sites were presented, among 22 designated (many proposals from different participating countries also highlighted landforms and geomorphological processes). However, in reality around 50 out of 100 sites presented have very strong geomorphological component. All sites are presented in a lavishly illustrated book “The First 100 IUGS Geological Heritage Sites”, prepared specially for the conference and available in electronic version from the web address <https://iugs-geoheritage.org/> Participants of the conference received hard copies as part of the conference materials.

The IUGS project has not been closed and will continue in the next year(s). It is envisaged that further sites will be designated as of global relevance. Organizational details have not yet been revealed, though. However, there is clearly a general awareness among project leaders that geomorphology is among the key components of global geoheritage.

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Piotr Migoń

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