

## Largest exposures of Petrified Woods in Southern Africa

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Recently a team of the National Museum of Geology from Mozambique visited the Petrified Forest National Heritage Site, the site is situated 45 km west of Khorixas, Namibia. The work visit, was carried out under the auspices of the Geoheritage project, funded by the Fundo Nacional de Investigação de Moçambique (FNI). The work visit aimed at analysing and learning some strategies policies, and have a critical view on how the Petrified Forest National Heritage Site (KPF) is protected, managed and benefit the local community. The site was declared as a National Monument on the 1st March 1950. The National Heritage Council of Namibia (NHC) is the custodian in accordance with the National Heritage Act of 2004 (Act No.27 of 2004).



During the guided tour to the main area, scientific aspects of these Permian petrified woods lying in the ground were carefully analysed extending from: closely spaced growth rings, distorted rings displaying the so called S-type rings characteristic of the woods from Karoo sequences, and varied colours (greyish, yellowish to reddish). At touristic point of view, spectacular, coloured and outstanding big logs reaching up to 40 meters in length are the main attractions of the area. In addition to the beauty of the petrified wood, endemic plant called *welwitschias mirabilis* with a capacity to survive under dry conditions is also an attraction to be highlighted and is somehow been used as a local brand. Aside the spectacularity of the logs, the site has facilities to accommodate its visitor's needs such as; ablution facilities, a Kiosk where visitors can purchase refreshments, spacious parking area that can accommodate both cars and buses, souvenir shop that sell various products that are locally produced and a sitting area for the guests. The site can be accessed through C39 gravel road from Khorixas. There are clear signboards on the C39 indicating the turn off to the site. There is a big signboard at the entrance stipulating the rules and regulations of the site. Interestingly, there is a community of approximately 200 people living immediately outside the boundary of the site. Several community members work as tourist guides, cleaners, cashiers at the Petrified Forest National Heritage Site. Others are employed at tourism establishments in the near vicinity. Nevertheless, challenges do exist in the site, however, the Petrified Forest combined with other heritage sites in the region such as the Organ pipes, Burnt Mountain, and Twyfelfontein /Ui - //Aes World Heritage Site are undoubtedly some of the preferred destinations in Namibia. Thus, should also be highlighted that Mozambique offers similar potentialities in the Tete Province, and that the Mozambican government is starting to make considerable efforts to protect the Tete Fossil Forest for scientific purposes, educational and touristic activities safeguarding the concept of sustainable development.



The 10th international ProGEO symposium was held between 7 and 10 of June 2021. Due to the worldwide epidemic situation caused by the COVID-19 virus, it was organized fully online. The organizers ensured free-of-charge access to all conference sessions as well as workshops, simultaneously enabling all the participants to interact freely. The people who took this challenge and ensured that the event ran smoothly and with maximum efficiency are as follows: National Organizing Coordinator: Juana Vegas Salamanca (Executive chair), Enrique Diaz Martinez (Secretary coordinator) as well as Ana Cabrera Ferrero, Luis Carcavilla Urqui, Andres Diez Herrero, Gonzalo Lozano Otero, Javier Luengo Olmos and Angel Salazar Ricon (Organizing Committee members).

The organizers of the symposium were Instituto Geológico y Minero de Espania (IGME, the Geological Survey of Spain). The patronage over the conference was held by: International Union of Geological Sciences (IUGS), International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN Member), Word Commission on Protected Areas (IUCN WCPA) Geoheritage Specialist Group, Comision de Patrimonio Geologico (SGE), Sociedad Espanola Para La Defensa del Patrimonio Geologico y Minero (SEDPGYM) i Asociacion de Servicios de Geologia y Minería Iberoamericanos (ASGMI).

The symposium was held under the banner of „Building connections for global geoconservation.” The opening ceremony of the 10th ProGEO conference took place on June 7 at 9.30 am Central European Summer Time (UTC+2). Due to the fact that the conference was held online, some participants took part in sessions in the morning, while others joined in when in their countries it was noon, evening or even the middle of the night. Such a challenge should be met by organizing an online conference and in this area the organizers did a spectacular job.

The plenary lecture was given by Asier Hilario (President of the IUGS International Commission on Geoheritage). The lecture was entitled: “GEOLOGICAL HERITAGE AND UNESCO GLOBAL GEOPARKS, MEMORY OF THE EARTH, FUTURE FOR THE PEOPLE”. In his lecture Asier Hilario introduced the audience to the subject of geoheritage and all the dangers associated with it around the globe. The lecture emphasized the importance of geoheritage nowadays and its significance for future generations.

The organizers of the symposium prepared seven oral sessions and poster sessions, intensive course on conservation and the workshop of IUCN WCPA GSG.

Several meetings of working groups were also held:

- Meeting of the Geoheritage Commission of the Association of Iberoamerican Geological and Mining Surveys (ASGMI);
- 1st Workshop of the EuroGeoSurveys Geoheritage Expert Group;
- 9th Meeting of ProGEO's SE Europe Regional Working Group;
- 4th Meeting of ProGEO's SW Europe Regional Working Group;
- Virtual Workshop: Key Geoheritage Areas Initiative (KGA) IUCN-WCPA Geoheritage Specialist Group (GSG);
- Meeting of the International Commission on Geoheritage (ICG) of the International Union of Geological Sciences (IUGS);
- Meeting of the IUCN WCPA Geoheritage Specialist Group (GSG) steering committee.

The thematic sessions were held during four days of the conference at specifically defined times whereas the poster session was available online at all times. The posters had traditional forms such as that of a scientific poster in PDF format or a brief recorded presentation. Among all the presentations delivered during the conference, the majority concerned the conservation of the geological heritage, promotion of geodiversity by means of creating geoparks, validation of geolocalities as well as application of modern technologies for conducting research and presenting research findings.



The first thematic oral session entitled Geotourism, UG Geoparks and Local Development included 7 papers and 23 posters. Management and Conservation were the leading subjects during the 2nd oral session, in which the symposium participants listened to 9 papers and saw 10 posters.

The third session combined papers thematically connected with the second session with new ideas concerning Geoconservation in protected areas. During this session 7 papers were delivered and there was a possibility to get acquainted with the subject matter of 4 posters.

The fourth and the sixth sessions had two subjects in common: Geoheritage and cultural heritage / Education and public outreach. The participants had a chance to listen to 14 oral presentations and 12 posters concerning the former subject matter along with 18 posters dealing with the subject of Education and public outreach were presented.

The fifth and seventh scientific sessions discussed the topics of inventories and research, and included 17 oral presentations and 14 posters.

Together with the opening lecture during the 10th International ProGEO Symposium 55 oral presentations were delivered and 63 posters were presented. The summaries of all the papers and posters can be found in the book of abstracts, which is available online. It is entitled „Building Connections for Global Geoconservation“, and it is edited by Gonzalo Lozano, Javier Luengo, Ana Cabrera and Juana Vegas z Instituto Geológico y Minero de España. The book of abstracts consists of 286 pages.

Intensive short course on geoconservation prepared by Enrique Díaz-Martínez

Geological Survey of Spain consisted of two parts: (1) basic concepts and (2) geoheritage inventories. The first part of the course focused on the explanation of basic notions which are most frequently used in geoconservation and provided diverse examples from all over the world. The second part of the course concerned the methodology of conducting the inventory of the geological heritage, and simultaneously discussed the ways of determining geological features in our countryside as well as the ways of their better conservation management.

During the Virtual Workshop: Key Geoheritage Areas Initiative (KGA) IUCN-WCPA Geoheritage Specialist Group (GSG), in which all the registered members of the Symposium were eligible to participate, 4 speeches concerning the vision and activities of the Key Geoheritage Areas in the area of geoheritage and Global Geosites were delivered. They also discussed the great opportunity for the international recognition of geological heritage sites.

400 participants from 58 countries took part in the symposium.

The Closing ceremony of the 10th ProGEO symposium was held on June, 10 in the afternoon Central European Summer Time (UTC+2).

In the evening of the same day the ProGEO General Assembly was held. Among the issues discussed were current affairs, publishing release plans, ProGEO's state of finances as well as organization plans for the foreseeable future. All the changes concerning the membership level both worldwide and in particular member countries that had occurred over the past 4 years were presented. Particular attention was paid to the efforts of ProGEO to support the initiative concerning the the establishment of the Geodiversity World Day and the covering letter concerning the matter, signed by ProGEO members from 68 countries, was read. Another important event involved discussing the ProGEO board election results. The final outcome of the online voting on the vote. electronicrunner.com was as follows: the President of the association for the next term in office is Lars Erikstad from Norway, who received 91 % of all the votes, the Executive Secretary is Ewa Główniak from Poland who was elected by 89% of all the members who took part in the voting. The newly-elected Executive Committee consists of Adil Neziraj (Albania), Sven Lunqvist (Sweden), João Rocha (Portugal), Kevin Page (United Kingdom), Tapio Kananoja (Finland) and Anette Peterson (Denmark). At the same time, it was decided that Sven Lunqvist would remain the Treasurer whereas Tapio Kananoja would still perform the function of the Second Secretary. Margaret Brocx (Australia) and Maria da Glória Garcia from Brazil became substitute candidates to the Executive Committee. All the members present enthusiastically received the results of the election to the association authorities.

During the meeting the transformation of ProGEO into an international association was also accepted by the members by voting. Until then ProGEO had been an European Association and since the symposium it has been called International Association for the Conservation of Geological Heritage. Relevant amendments in the status, which had previously been sent to all the members of ProGEO association, were introduced.

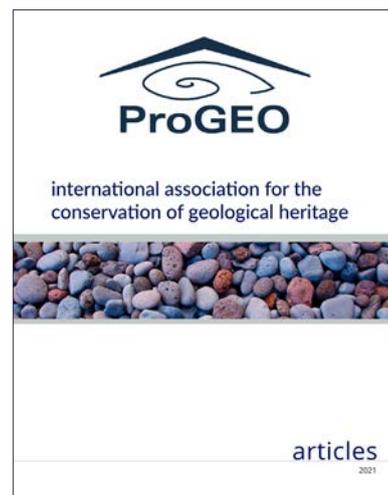
We would like to express our gratitude to all those wonderful persons who contributed to making our conference possible. It was a great challenge, both in terms of technology and logistics, with which the organizers coped perfectly. We would like to thank them very much for all the effort they put into organising the symposium. We strongly hope that the next ProGEO conference will be residential and we will be able to thank this year's organizers personally.

ProGEO was established in 1993 as a European Association – “The European Association for the Conservation of Geological Heritage”

In June 2021, the General Assembly decided to expand its geographical scope and now ProGEO is an International Association – “International Association for the Conservation of Geological Heritage”.

This change requires some adaptations about the management and functioning structure of the association, which will be made during the next months.

The ProGEO Articles with amendments agreed by the electronic General Assembly in 2021 are available at [http://www.progeo.ngo/downloads/articles\\_progeo\\_2021.pdf](http://www.progeo.ngo/downloads/articles_progeo_2021.pdf)



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## International Year of Caves and Karst

2021

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The International Union of Speleology-UIS, in partnership with 56 member countries and over 230 institutions and organizations around the world, has proclaimed an International Year of Caves and Karst 2021 (IYCK 2021). IYCK 2021 is a global initiative to educate people all over the world about karst and caves, why they are valuable, and how to protect them. Although awareness of the sensitivity of karst is increasing, it continues to be threatened by human activities in many parts of our planet. In fact, many of the world's unique hydrological, ecological, and culturally important cave and karst landscapes are being damaged or threatened daily. Due to the COVID -19 pandemic, the IYCK initiative has been extended into 2022. The slogan of IYCK 2021 is Explore, Understand, and Protect.



An event to present the IYCK 2021 has been organized under the patronage of the UNESCO Director-General by the UIS in partnership with the Permanent Delegation of the Republic of Slovenia to UNESCO. The event will take place on 13 September from 9.30 to 13.00 (Paris Time) in the UNESCO Headquarters in Paris.

Due to COVID -19 restrictions, the event will be limited to invited guests from UNESCO national delegations and UIS & IYCK partners: 100 people will attend in person, with an additional 500 people able to participate via Zoom.

For everyone else, live streaming of the event will be handled via UIS YouTube Chanel – you are welcome!

The program, September 13, Celebration of the UIS International Year of Caves and Karst 2021:

UNESCO Protected Areas and UN Agenda 2030

09:30-10:00. Coffee for participants.

10:00-10:15. IYCK 2021 video.

10:15-10:45. Welcome addresses.

10:45-11:15. Keynote presentation: A World of Karst, Caves and People

11:15-11:30: Break

11:30-13:00. Discussion panel. Panelists will give short presentations on karst and caves in the context of UN Sustainable Development Goals and UNESCO Protected Areas (World Heritage, Global Geoparks, Ramsar and MAB/Biosphere Reserves), followed by discussion and questions from the audience.



## Deadline next issue of ProGEO NEWS

September 10th, 2021

Please send contributions to ProGEO NEWS. Members are interested in things that happen all over the world, your experiences, activities, science, geosites, geoconservation and geotourism efforts!

september

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Please send your contributions (unformatted word file 500 – 2000 words). Photographs, maps and figures should be sent as separated files (preferentially not included in the word file).

If longer texts are needed, please contact the editor.

ProGEO: European Association for the Conservation of the Geological Heritage.

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