

# OPERATIONAL GUIDELINES FOR UNESCO GLOBAL GEOPARKS

## 1. INTRODUCTION

The Geopark concept arose in the mid-1990s as a response to the need to conserve and enhance the value of areas of geological significance in Earth history. Landscapes and geological formations are key witnesses to the evolution of our planet and determinants for our future sustainable development. From the outset, Geoparks adopted a “bottom-up” or community-led approach to ensure that an area’s geological significance could be conserved and promoted for science, education and culture, in addition to being used as a sustainable economic asset such as through the development of responsible tourism. In 2004, with the support of UNESCO, 17 members of the European Geoparks Network and eight Chinese Geoparks came together to create the Global Geoparks Network (GGN) which, with then more than 100 Global Geoparks as members, acquired legal status in 2014.

A UNESCO Global Geopark must contain geology of international significance. It is independently evaluated by scientific professionals in the relevant discipline of Earth Science. UNESCO Global Geoparks are living, working landscapes where science and local communities engage in a mutually beneficial way.

Education at all levels is at the core of the UNESCO Global Geopark concept. From university researchers to local community groups, UNESCO Global Geoparks encourage awareness of the story of the planet as read in the rocks, landscape and ongoing geological processes. UNESCO Global Geoparks also promote the links between geological heritage and all other aspects of the area’s natural and cultural heritage, clearly demonstrating that geodiversity is the foundation of all ecosystems and the basis of human interaction with the landscape.

UNESCO Global Geoparks contribute to achieving UNESCO’s objectives by promoting geology and science in general through a wider contribution to UNESCO’s mandate while cutting across education, culture and communication.

## 2. THE BASIC CONCEPTS

### 2.1 UNESCO Global Geoparks within UNESCO’s International Geoscience and Geoparks Programme

UNESCO Global Geoparks, within UNESCO’s International Geoscience and Geoparks Programme (IGGP), encourage international cooperation between areas with geological heritage of international value, through a bottom-up approach to conservation, local community support, promotion of heritage and sustainable development of the area. Through the IGGP, these areas apply to UNESCO as the only United Nations organization with a remit in the Earth Sciences to designate as a “UNESCO Global Geopark”, which draws upon the broader mandate of the Organization.

### 2.2 UNESCO Global Geoparks

UNESCO Global Geoparks are single, unified geographical areas where sites and landscapes of international geological significance are managed with a holistic concept of protection, education and sustainable development. The international geological significance of a UNESCO Global Geopark is determined by scientific professionals, as part of a “UNESCO Global Geopark Evaluation Team”, who make a globally comparative assessment based on the peer-reviewed, published research conducted on geological sites within the area. UNESCO Global Geoparks use geological heritage, in connection with all other aspects of that area’s natural and cultural heritage,

to enhance awareness and understanding of key issues facing society in the context of the dynamic planet we all live on.

### **2.3 Use of logos**

UNESCO Global Geoparks will be entitled to use a “linked logo” to be developed for UNESCO Global Geoparks. This use will be governed under the 2007 “Directives concerning the use of the name, acronym, logo and Internet domain names of UNESCO” or by any subsequent directive.

### **2.4 Geographical representation**

As part of UNESCO, the IGGP is committed to promote balanced global geographical representation for UNESCO Global Geoparks.

## **3. CRITERIA FOR UNESCO GLOBAL GEOPARKS**

- (i) UNESCO Global Geoparks must be single, unified geographical areas where sites and landscapes of international geological significance are managed with a holistic concept of protection, education, research and sustainable development. A UNESCO Global Geopark must have a clearly defined border, be of adequate size to fulfil its functions and contain geological heritage of international significance as independently verified by scientific professionals.
- (ii) UNESCO Global Geoparks should use that heritage, in connection with all other aspects of that area’s natural and cultural heritage, to promote awareness of key issues facing society in the context of the dynamic planet we all live on, including but not limited to increasing knowledge and understanding of: geoprocesses; geohazards; climate change; the need for the sustainable use of Earth’s natural resources; the evolution of life and the empowerment of indigenous peoples.
- (iii) UNESCO Global Geoparks should be areas with a management body having legal existence recognized under national legislation. The management bodies should be appropriately equipped to adequately address the area of the UNESCO Global Geopark in its entirety.
- (iv) In the case where an applying area overlaps with another UNESCO designated site, such as a World Heritage Site or Biosphere Reserve, the request must be clearly justified and evidence must be provided for how UNESCO Global Geopark status will add value by being both independently branded and in synergy with the other designations.
- (v) UNESCO Global Geoparks should actively involve local communities and indigenous peoples as key stakeholders in the Geopark. In partnership with local communities, a co-management plan needs to be drafted and implemented that provides for the social and economic needs of local populations, protects the landscape in which they live and conserves their cultural identity. It is recommended that all relevant local and regional actors and authorities be represented in the management of a UNESCO Global Geopark. Local and indigenous knowledge, practice and management systems should be included, alongside science, in the planning and management of the area.
- (vi) UNESCO Global Geoparks are encouraged to share their experience and advice and to undertake joint projects within the GGN. Membership of GGN is obligatory.
- (vii) A UNESCO Global Geopark must respect local and national laws relating to the protection of geological heritage. The defining geological heritage sites within a UNESCO Global Geopark must be legally protected in advance of any application. At the same time, a UNESCO Global Geopark should be used as leverage for promoting

the protection of geological heritage locally and nationally. The management body must not participate directly in the sale of geological objects such as fossils, minerals, polished rocks and ornamental rocks of the type normally found in so-called “rock-shops” within the UNESCO Global Geopark (regardless of their origin) and should actively discourage unsustainable trade in geological materials as a whole. Where clearly justified as a responsible activity and as part of delivering the most effective and sustainable means of site management, it may permit sustainable collecting of geological materials for scientific and educational purposes from naturally renewable sites within the UNESCO Global Geopark. Trade of geological materials based on such a system may be tolerated in exceptional circumstances, provided it is clearly and publicly explained, justified and monitored as the best option for the Global Geopark in relation to local circumstances. Such circumstances will be subject to approval by the UNESCO Global Geoparks Council on a case by case basis.

(viii) These criteria are verified through checklists for evaluation and revalidation.

## **4. THE INSTITUTIONAL STRUCTURE AND FUNCTIONS**

### **4.1 UNESCO Global Geoparks Council**

The Council is the decision-making body for new UNESCO Global Geopark applications and revalidations and it is responsible for advising the Director-General on the strategy planning and implementation of the Global Geoparks activity of the IGGP. The Council is composed of 12 ordinary members, with the right to vote, who are individuals appointed by the Director-General of UNESCO on recommendation of GGN and Member States. In addition, the Director-General of UNESCO, the President of GGN, the Secretary-General of IUGS, the Director-General of IUCN or their representatives shall be *ex officio* members of the Council without the right to vote. Ordinary Members appointed to the Council shall be high-profile experts chosen for their proven experience, scientific or professional qualification in relevant fields, taking into account an equitable geographical distribution and gender equality. Ordinary members will serve in their personal capacity, not as representatives of their respective States or any other affiliated entities. Council members will have to agree in writing that they will abstain in cases of conflict of interest regarding new UNESCO Global Geopark applications or those requiring revalidation.

### **4.2 UNESCO Global Geoparks Bureau**

The Bureau will consist of five members: the Chairperson, the Vice-Chairperson and the Rapporteur of the Council of the UNESCO Global Geoparks. The Director-General of UNESCO and the President of the Global Geoparks Network (GGN) or their representatives shall be *ex officio* members of the Bureau without the right to vote.

Its main duty will be to prepare with the secretariat the necessary documentation for the Executive Board of UNESCO to provide a final endorsement of new UNESCO Global Geopark nominations based on decisions of the Council. The UNESCO Global Geoparks Bureau will hold joint coordination meetings with the Bureau of the International Geoscience Programme (IGCP).

### **4.3 UNESCO Global Geoparks Evaluation Team**

UNESCO Global Geoparks will be evaluated – both during the initial application and during revalidation – by an independent team composed of desk-top advisors and evaluators carrying out field missions.

The international significance of the geological heritage of each new UNESCO Global Geopark application will be assessed by desk-top advisors following specific and publicly available scientific criteria. IUGS will be asked to coordinate this role and to ensure that all statements on the scientific value and international significance of the geological heritage of an aspiring UNESCO Global

Geopark are available annually in time so that evaluators can access them ahead of the field evaluation mission. Other organizations may also be involved as appropriate.

The UNESCO Secretariat in conjunction with the GGN will establish and maintain a roster of evaluators who will undertake field evaluations of new applications for aspiring UNESCO Global Geoparks. These evaluators will have combined and proven professional experience relevant for Global Geopark development (geological heritage, conservation, sustainable development, tourism development and promotion, and environmental issues). These evaluators will also conduct revalidation missions.

Evaluators for UNESCO Global Geoparks must follow strict guidelines provided by the Council for new application and revalidation missions. These evaluators will serve in their personal capacity, not as representatives of their respective States or any other affiliated entities. GGN will be required to ensure that evaluators have no conflict of interest regarding new UNESCO Global Geopark applications or those requiring revalidation. Evaluators will not seek or accept instructions from governments or other authorities and will not conduct missions in their own country. If any National Geopark Committee seeks to observe an evaluation or revalidation mission, it will be fully up to the evaluators which observations and information provided they will include into their final reports. They are expected to submit their reports to UNESCO in a timely manner. Evaluators will not have the status of “experts on mission” pursuant to the Convention on the Privileges and Immunities of the United Nations of 1946.

#### **4.4 National Geopark Committees**

Member States should play an active role in the development of their UNESCO Global Geoparks. As such, and only if the Member State wishes to do so, the creation of a National Geopark Committee is recommended. These “National Committees” could be named differently, for example, National Forum, National Task Force or Task Group. These committees may be created by the competent entity in charge of Geoparks in that Member State. The committees must be recognized by that Member State’s National Commission for UNESCO or the relevant government body in charge of relations with UNESCO. These committees should also liaise with existing national committees for the IGCP where applicable.

Possible balanced National Geopark Committee composition:

- Representative(s) of the National Commission for UNESCO and/or the relevant government body in charge of relations with UNESCO;
- Representative(s) of the national geological organization or survey;
- Representative(s) of the national environmental/protected area organization;
- Representative(s) of the national cultural heritage body;
- Representative(s) of the national tourism organization;
- Representative(s) of the national committee for IGCP;
- Representatives from UNESCO Global Geoparks, where they exist, in that Member State (possibly rotating in countries with many UNESCO Global Geoparks); and
- Different and additional members may be included as seen appropriate to fit the particular national context.

Its work at national level may consist of:

- Coordinating the national contribution to UNESCO Global Geoparks within the IGGP;
- Identifying the geological heritage and raising public awareness of its importance;
- Promoting the development of new UNESCO Global Geoparks, assessing and endorsing applications, revalidations and extensions;
- Observing any evaluation or revalidation mission in that Member State should they wish to;
- Presenting to that Member State's National Commission for UNESCO or the relevant government body in charge of relations with UNESCO all UNESCO Global Geopark applications, which will then be forwarded to UNESCO.
- Ensuring the proper withdrawal of the area as a UNESCO Global Geopark within the IGGP, should the area so wish or should they fail the revalidation process;
- Promoting international cooperation between UNESCO Global Geoparks;
- Providing information at the national level about the global and regional networks of UNESCO Global Geoparks;
- Initiating and supporting strategies and actions for sustainable development in and among UNESCO Global Geoparks.

These Operational Guidelines for UNESCO Global Geoparks represent best practice. Member States through their National Geopark Committees are entitled to formulate additional, more specific guidelines on a national basis to fit a particular national context.

The UNESCO Secretariat will liaise closely with National Geopark Committees and Member State's National Commission for UNESCO or the relevant government body in charge of relations with UNESCO at all stages during the evaluation and revalidation processes of aspiring and existing UNESCO Global Geoparks.

All applications and revalidations must be accompanied by a letter of support from the National Commission for UNESCO or the relevant government body in charge of relations with UNESCO.

#### **4.5 Regional and Global Geopark networks**

From the start of the development of the concept, networking has been one of the core principles of Geoparks. Networking strongly contributes to the success of the Geoparks movement and plays a valuable role in facilitating the sharing of experience, quality management, formation of joint initiatives and projects and capacity-building. UNESCO encourages the strengthening of regional Geopark networks and the GGN. UNESCO, inspired by the work of Geopark networks, will continue to offer its support and assistance to such networks, will coordinate capacity-building for UNESCO Global Geoparks and will encourage exchange of best practice between UNESCO Global Geoparks.

### **5. THE APPLICATION PROCEDURE**

#### **5.1 Introduction**

An aspiring Global Geopark can apply to UNESCO for designation through a rigorous procedure, the precise details and deadlines of which are available on the UNESCO website.

## **5.2 Nomination**

Ahead of any formal application, any aspiring UNESCO Global Geopark should submit an expression of interest via the official channel as defined by the National Commission for UNESCO or the government body in charge of relations with UNESCO, involving, if applicable, the National Geoparks Committee.

A comprehensive and carefully formatted application dossier (including supporting material to demonstrate that the area has already been functioning as a *de facto* Global Geopark for at least one year) should be submitted through the official channel as defined by the National Commission for UNESCO or the government body in charge of relations with UNESCO to the UNESCO Secretariat involving, if applicable, the National Geoparks Committee. This should be accompanied by an explicit endorsement of any relevant local and regional authorities and a letter of support from the National Commission for UNESCO or the government body in charge of relations with UNESCO. The UNESCO Secretariat shall involve the main national contact point in all communication with the aspiring Global Geopark, including the findings of the field evaluation mission, the outcome of the decisions of the Council, and the endorsement by the UNESCO Executive Board.

In order to ensure a balanced geographical representation of UNESCO Global Geoparks, the number of “active” applications is limited to two per Member State. An application is considered “active” upon receipt of the dossier by the UNESCO Secretariat and ceases to be active once a final decision is made regarding its designation as a UNESCO Global Geopark, or if the application is suspended. Only applications from UNESCO Member States will be considered for designation as a UNESCO Global Geopark.

## **5.3 Evaluation**

The UNESCO Secretariat will check the completeness of each new application. If incomplete or incorrectly formatted, the UNESCO Secretariat will ask for a revised application. Once an application is considered complete, the UNESCO Secretariat will send the geological section of each new application to IUGS for a desk-top assessment.

At the same time, the Global Geoparks Bureau will assign a maximum of two evaluators to undertake a field mission. The costs of travel and accommodation for the evaluators must be borne by the management body of the applying area. Additional participants to these missions, including representatives of National Geopark Committees, may participate as observers and without a role in the compilation of the mission report. Observers will be responsible for funding their participation in the mission.

Upon completion of the field evaluation mission, a report must be prepared by the evaluators and submitted to the UNESCO Secretariat, which will then make the report available to the Council for review. The report must follow a template prepared by the Council.

Documentation related to a UNESCO Global Geopark application, including the reports of the desk-top assessment and the evaluators, will be made publicly available on the UNESCO website.

## **5.4 Applications review**

Only applications from UNESCO Member States will be considered for evaluation as UNESCO Global Geoparks. As a designation of an intergovernmental organization, applications and revalidations for UNESCO Global Geoparks will be subject to a series of checks to enable Member States to exercise their oversight responsibility:

- (i) At the national level, any application from an aspiring UNESCO Global Geopark must be reviewed and submitted to the UNESCO Secretariat through the official channel as

defined by the National Commission for UNESCO or the government body in charge of relations with UNESCO involving the National Geoparks Committee, if applicable.

- (ii) Upon receipt of complete applications, the UNESCO Secretariat will prepare a summary document describing all aspiring UNESCO Global Geopark applications (one page summary per application including a detailed map) received and make it available online for Member State review in the two working languages for a 3-month grace period.
- (iii) At the annual open meeting of the International Geoscience Programme (IGCP), the UNESCO Secretariat will make a brief public presentation describing the applications received from aspiring UNESCO Global Geoparks.
- (iv) In the event that a written objection by a Member State is received concerning a proposed Global Geopark during the periods or events mentioned under (ii) and (iii) above, the nomination will not proceed to scientific evaluation and it will be up to the Member States concerned to seek a resolution to the issue.

## **5.5 Recommendations and decisions**

The Council will review each application, the desk-top assessment of the geological heritage and the field evaluation report on the basis of criteria as explained on the website.

The Council may recommend to accept an application, reject an application or defer it for a maximum of two years to allow for improvements to be made to the quality of the application. In case of deferral, there is no need to repeat the field evaluation during this time.

Decisions of the Council are not open for appeal.

After positive assessment of the applications by the evaluation teams and the decision of the Council, the Bureau will recommend to the Director-General to include an item on the agenda of the Executive Board of UNESCO. This item will propose that the Executive Board endorse the nominations decided upon by the Council. The details of nominations will be contained in an Information Document for the Executive Board.

The UNESCO Secretariat shall notify the applicant and the responsible national authority of the Executive Board decision.

Upon acceptance as a UNESCO Global Geopark, the management body of all new UNESCO Global Geoparks will be asked to sign a legal disclaimer removing UNESCO from any legal or financial responsibilities over the territory of the UNESCO Global Geopark or associated activities within it.

## **5.6 Revalidation process**

In order to ensure the continuing high quality of UNESCO Global Geoparks within the IGGP, including the quality of the management of each UNESCO Global Geopark, the status of each UNESCO Global Geopark shall be subject to a thorough revalidation every 4 years as follows:

- (i) One year prior to the revalidation, a one-page summary of the UNESCO Global Geopark undergoing revalidation shall be submitted to the UNESCO Secretariat, to be checked and forwarded to the Council.
- (ii) A progress report is prepared by the management body of the UNESCO Global Geopark undergoing revalidation and submitted three months prior to the field inspection to the UNESCO Secretariat through the official channel as defined by the National Commission for UNESCO or the government body in charge of relations with

UNESCO involving, as applicable, the National Geopark Committees. The reports should comment on actions taken to address recommendations made after a previous revalidation; they must conform to a template prepared by the Council.

- (iii) The UNESCO Global Geoparks Bureau will send up to two evaluators on a mission to revalidate the quality of the UNESCO Global Geopark. All costs associated with this mission will be paid for by the UNESCO Global Geopark that is subject to the revalidation.
- (iv) Additional participants to revalidation missions including representatives of National Geopark Committees may participate as observers and without a role in the compilation of the mission report. Observers will be responsible for funding their own participation in the revalidation mission.
- (v) A report from this mission is submitted to the UNESCO Secretariat for distribution to the Council, to be considered at its annual meeting.
- (vi) If, on the basis of this report, the Council considers that UNESCO Global Geopark continues to fulfil the criteria set-out in Section 3 of these guidelines, in particular that the quality and management of the area have improved or at least continues to be satisfactory since designation or last revalidation, it may decide that the area will continue as a UNESCO Global Geopark for a further four-year period (so-called "green card").
- (vii) If, on the basis of this report, the Council considers that the UNESCO Global Geopark no longer fulfils the criteria, it may decide to inform the management body of the UNESCO Global Geopark to take appropriate steps within a two-year period to ensure that the criteria will be met and maintained. In such instances, the status of the area as UNESCO Global Geopark will be renewed only for a two-year period after which a new revalidation report and a new field mission will be undertaken with the same conditions referred to in (ii), (iii) and (iv) above (so-called "yellow card").
- (viii) Should the UNESCO Global Geopark not fulfil the criteria within two years after receiving a "yellow card", the Council will decide as appropriate that the area concerned should lose its status as a UNESCO Global Geopark and all relevant entitlements (so-called "red card").
- (ix) The Council can revoke the status at any time to any UNESCO Global Geopark if that UNESCO Global Geopark is unable, for whatever reason, to undergo the revalidation process according to the rules specified here or if a UNESCO Global Geopark is in clear breach of the criteria of UNESCO Global Geoparks.
- (x) Should an existing UNESCO Global Geopark wish to change its size, provided that any change amounts to less than 10% of the existing area, then the Council may be informed about the change by a letter through the official channel as defined by the National Commission for UNESCO or the government body in charge of relations with UNESCO to the UNESCO Secretariat involving, if applicable, the National Geoparks Committee outlining the reasons for the change and outlining how the new area still fulfils the criteria for a UNESCO Global Geopark. The Council can approve or reject the change.
- (xi) Should an existing UNESCO Global Geopark wish to change its size, but the proposed change amounts to more than 10% of the existing area, a new application must be made following the procedure described above. The same applies where new international boundaries cross a UNESCO Global Geopark. Such applications are



exempt from the restriction on the number of “active” applications per Member State at any one time.

(xiii) All extensions are subject to the intergovernmental check as described in Section 5.4.

(xiv) Decisions of the Council are not open for appeal.

Should a Member State wish to withdraw a UNESCO Global Geopark, it shall notify the UNESCO Secretariat who will forward the intention to the Council. Upon notification of receipt of the intention by the Secretariat, the UNESCO Global Geopark will then cease to benefit from all relevant entitlements and be free from relevant obligations.

The Criteria and Application Guidelines as part of the Operational Guidelines are subject to change by the General Conference upon the recommendation of the Council.

## **6. FINANCING**

UNESCO’s Global Geoparks will be financed primarily from extrabudgetary sources with no additional financial costs to UNESCO.

The GGN will make a voluntary annual contribution to UNESCO equivalent to at least US \$1,000 per Global Geopark to allow UNESCO to promote UNESCO Global Geoparks and to organize, facilitate and support capacity-building activities, especially in regions of the world where none or few UNESCO Global Geoparks exist. These funds will be placed in a UNESCO Special Account.

Additional extrabudgetary fundraising activities to assist with further capacity building will be actively pursued, with the aim to place funds raised also in the Special Account for UNESCO Global Geoparks.

All costs related to evaluation and revalidation missions for two evaluators will be borne by the management body of the applying area. Observers will be responsible for obtaining their own funding to participate in the field mission.

In exceptional circumstances, and for developing countries only, a request may be made to the UNESCO Secretariat for financial assistance to prepare an application dossier and/or the costs of an evaluation mission be covered by UNESCO from extrabudgetary sources. Similarly, and for developing countries only, a request may be made so that the costs of a revalidation mission are covered by GGN or UNESCO from extrabudgetary sources. No UNESCO Global Geopark will be entitled to more than two such requests to UNESCO.

All costs related to the meetings of the Council and the Bureau will be borne by the inviting UNESCO Global Geopark or any other conference organizers. In the event of no such conference coinciding with the annual meeting of the Council, holding the meeting by remote means will be considered. As an exceptional alternative, the Council may opt to have its meeting at UNESCO Headquarters, with costs borne by UNESCO subject to available funds in the Special Account, or the Council and Bureau may choose to defer the meeting.

As the number of UNESCO Global Geoparks rise, so will the level of income to the Special Account on UNESCO Global Geoparks. Furthermore, individual UNESCO Global Geoparks will be encouraged to make further contributions if the income they receive from being a UNESCO Global Geopark allows it. As UNESCO Global Geoparks will continue to fund all evaluation and revalidation missions with which they are concerned, the increased income from greater membership will release more funds for capacity-building. Furthermore, as the number of UNESCO Global Geoparks grows, more professional experts will fulfil the criteria for joining the Evaluation Team, which means a continuing and growing supply of experts to undertake evaluation and revalidation missions.

## **7. SECRETARIAT**

UNESCO shall act as the Secretariat for UNESCO Global Geoparks and be responsible for its functioning and promotion. The UNESCO Secretariat shall manage the applications process of aspiring UNESCO Global Geoparks and the revalidation process of existing UNESCO Global Geoparks. The UNESCO Secretariat shall liaise with IUGS and other organizations, as appropriate, to obtain independent, desk-top scientific assessments. The UNESCO Secretariat shall liaise with GGN and other organizations, as appropriate, to obtain independent, field evaluations. The UNESCO Secretariat shall prepare the agenda and the documentation of the Bureau and Council meetings and shall ensure follow up to their recommendations, including preparing the appropriate documents for meetings of UNESCO's Executive Board as outlined in Sections 4 and 5. The UNESCO Secretariat shall liaise with individual UNESCO Global Geoparks to facilitate activities towards sustainable development and international cooperation.

The UNESCO Secretariat shall keep UNESCO Global Geoparks, Member States, National Commissions for UNESCO, National Geopark Committees and the public informed of the activities of UNESCO Global Geoparks, individually and as a network, focusing on best practice with regard to UNESCO's objectives. This will include updating a list of UNESCO Global Geoparks published on the UNESCO website and regular reporting to the UNESCO governing bodies.

## **8. CAPACITY-BUILDING**

Networking and balanced geographical representation across all Member States are fundamental principles of Global Geoparks. Recognizing the very strong role networking has played in the success of Global Geoparks and recognizing the valuable role it plays in facilitating the sharing of experience, formation of joint initiatives and projects and the highly significant role it plays in capacity-building, UNESCO through its IGGP will encourage the strengthening of regional networks and of the GGN.

It is through working with these networks that the IGGP can fulfil its role in capacity-building at regional and national levels for UNESCO Global Geoparks, aspiring Geoparks and any other interested Member States, especially in those areas of the world where few or none exist. Specifically, UNESCO will seek to support at least one annual regional workshop for capacity-building in under-represented regions. This will be facilitated using funds in the Special Account for UNESCO Global Geoparks. Additionally, the IGGP will play an active role in nurturing partnerships and the sharing of best practice between existing UNESCO Global Geoparks and aspiring Global Geoparks and, where possible, help fund an exchange of expertise between them. In addition, the IGGP will seek to support one annual training course for new members of GGN's evaluator roster.

The IGGP may also operate or support other training courses, conferences and workshops relevant to the UNESCO Global Geoparks on a case-by-case basis and if sufficient funds exist. These initiatives may be organized in collaboration with relevant public or private organizations.

The IGGP will investigate the establishment of a web-based tool to document and exchange experiences and best practice of the Global Geopark community.