

# *GEOPARKS AND GEOETHICS: A FRUITFUL ALLIANCE TO GUARANTEE THE WHOLESOME DEVELOPMENT OF GEOPARKS IN THE WORLD*

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The proposed creation of the "Global Geoparks of UNESCO" Programme, currently under way at UNESCO, confirms the importance and timeliness of this issue among member states, in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century. Moreover, the holistic approach developed in the territories classified as Global Geoparks (GG), implies attitudes able to address the social, environmental and economic dimensions of sustainable development, reaffirming the founding principles of UNESCO. In this context, the role of GG concerning the promotion of scientific research and the cooperation and share of knowledge inside the network, implies that the advances of science and technology will take place 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. In this sense, the ethical aspects of scientific research therefore need to be considered by the GG once helps to create social awareness about the value of the geological heritage and geodiversity. But what is geoethics? Why is it need? Geoethics consists of the research and reflection on those values upon which to base appropriate behaviours and practices where human activities intersect the Geosphere. It deals with the ethical, social and cultural implications of geological research and practice, providing a point of intersection for Geosciences, Sociology and Philosophy. Geoethics also represents an opportunity for Geoscientists to become more conscious of their social role, responsibilities and values in conducting their activity and it is a tool to influence the awareness of society regarding problems related for example with natural resources. As the GGN is growing all over the world, it will be required guidelines for ethical conduct regarding concrete problems and how to find socio-economic solutions compatible with the respect for the environment and the protection of Nature and land. More than ever and in the future, the social role played by Geoscientists and their responsibilities inside the GG have ethical, cultural and economic consequences and therefore repercussions in the lives of the local communities. Implementing geoethics inside GG will encourage a critical analysis of the use and management of natural resources and how to deal with problems related to the risk management and the mitigation of geohazards. It will also allow to organize effective teaching tools to develop awareness, values and responsibility, especially amongst the young people. In this sense, it is vital to implement a policy that can promote geoethics inside the territories classified as GG.





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