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Consolation Letter from the GGN Executive Board and the Reply of China

Dear Mr. Lee,

We would like to extend our deepest and sincerest condolences to the families of the GGN Executive Board members who lost their lives during the COVID-19 pandemic. The recent surge in cases across China has been extremely difficult for our global geopark network and the world at large. The Global Geoparks Network will continue to support the development of geoparks in China and globally.

For the President,

[Signature]

President of the GGN Executive Board

Dear President of the GGN Executive Board,

I wish to express our deepest condolences to the families of the GGN Executive Board members who lost their lives during the COVID-19 pandemic. The recent surge in cases across China has been extremely difficult for our global geopark network and the world at large. The Global Geoparks Network will continue to support the development of geoparks in China and globally.

For the President,

[Signature]

President of the GGN Executive Board

February 17, 2020
Dear colleagues and friends of the Global Geoparks Network,

Dear UNESCO Global Geoparks teams,

The GGN Executive Board discussed on Tuesday 24th March at an extraordinary meeting the situation concerning the spread of the COVID-19 pandemic during the last weeks in relation with the UNESCO Global Geoparks.

There is no doubt that humanity is facing the most serious crisis after the 2nd World War.

To slow the spread of COVID-19, many countries have introduced unprecedented measures, at significant social and economic costs – closing schools and businesses, museums and parks, cancelling cultural and sporting events and asking people to stay home and stay safe.

The GGN Executive Board would like to express its sympathy and solidarity to all our colleagues in all the UNESCO Global Geoparks and their partners, to their families and their communities.

Especially to our colleagues in Italy and Spain, the countries with the biggest number of Geoparks in Europe facing the most difficult and unprecedented situation.

We know that many of our colleagues have been already affected by the COVID-19 outbreak. Many Geoparks stopped their activities and nobody knows when they will be able to restart. Many colleagues are working from home, but there are also Geopark’s collaborators and partners who face even greater challenges.

We wish courage, strength and energy to overpass all together this extremely difficult period and to prepare for the restart!

The GGN in close collaboration with UNESCO Section on Earth Sciences and Geo-Hazards Risk Reduction monitors closely the situation regarding COVID-19 pandemic in the 147 UNESCO Global Geoparks around the world on a day to day basis and the measures taken in different countries to fight COVID-19.

For as long as the epidemic continues, the GGN Executive Board will be meeting every second week in order to have a close overview of the problems that the Geoparks are facing and to find ways for support.

UNESCO’s senior management also called for special measures, in line with the restrictions in France.

The UNESCO Executive Board session and several other planned activities are canceled or postponed. Thus the endorsement of the proposal of the UGGp Council regarding the new UNESCO Global Geoparks has also been postponed.

All the UNESCO officers based in Paris HQ have to stay home and operate through tele-work arrangements.

UNESCO Global Geoparks Secretariat extended the deadline till 15th of April 2020 for the active Calls for the UNESCO Global Geoparks Council and for the UNESCO Global Geoparks Evaluators.

Should you believe that you meet the requirements, please don’t hesitate to apply. https://en.unesco.org/news/call-candidates-renew-six-members-unesco-global-geoparks-council-2020

UNESCO Global Geoparks Secretariat announced that for the time being, they are putting evaluation- and revalidation missions on hold, until further notice. They keep on preparing for these missions though and hope that by June, we will have the worst behind us.

In the light of the current situation, the GGN Executive Board examines new ways of communication among GGN members as we will have to reconsider our way of working together in the coming weeks.

We do think that keeping in contact and exchanging of information is essential for our network.

The GGN Executive Board notes that:

• all the Geoparks related meetings, conferences and activities originally planned during April and May should be postponed.

• the International Intensive Course on Geoparks 2020 which was expected to take place in June 1-10, should be postponed.

In December the GGN Executive Board announced our 1st International Geoparks Film Festival, an effort to promote Geoparks in a new dynamic way.

All the UNESCO Global Geoparks are welcome to participate and we are expecting more than 140 entries! We are going to announce in May a distinguished panel of jurors who will judge the entries, with the winners to be announced in September 2020, at the 9th International Conference on UNESCO Global Geoparks in Jeju. We will be showing videos in the coming weeks on the 1st Geoparks Film Festival website and GGN social media channels.

In these difficult times, film and other social media are a powerful way not only of communicating our Geoparks, but of administering one of the most powerful medicines – hope.

STAY SAFE and Keep in touch!

The GGN Executive Board on March 27th, 2020
Dear colleagues and friends of the Global Geoparks Network,

Dear UNESCO Global Geoparks teams,

We are contacting you again as we are all managing our way through the COVID-19 pandemic, unlike anything we have seen till the end of the World War II, hoping that all our Geopark colleagues and their families stay safe and well.

As many communities are losing significant individuals, as many more people become sick from the virus in many countries around the globe, while others start to see the successful results of the fight against the virus, as millions of people are suffering the economic hardship and billions are living in confinement we want to send you a message of solidarity and encouragement, we want to tell you that you are not alone!

Now is the time for all of us to help where we can and be there for each other.

The GGN Executive Board in close collaboration with UNESCO’s Section on Earth Sciences and Geo-Hazards Risk Reduction is following the spread of the COVID-19 pandemic and the effects to the Geoparks and their local communities.

The health and safety of all the staff and local people of the Geoparks around the world is for the GGN Executive Board primary concern.

Although most of the Geoparks are closed for the public due to the pandemic, their operation has changed but not stopped. Despite this difficult time many Geoparks continue their work and utilize their creativity to realize activities and support local communities.

During the last weeks we have seen plenty of examples on how Geoparks and their staff are contributing and building resilience to their communities especially in this extremely difficult period, as we have made since the beginning following our principals, safeguarding and promoting heritage as a tool for sustainable local development.

- M’Goun UGGp in Morocco is taking initiatives to help their local communities.
- Itoigawa in Japan is using the Geopark mascots to rise sensitization on the use of face masks.
- North Pennines UGGp in UK is taking the initiative to prepare educational activities in order to help children and their parents to have creative hours from home.

The GGN Executive Board taking into account the current situation but also the willingness of the Geoparks to help their communities with innovative activities, encourages all Geoparks to communicate their initiatives and best practices during the fight of COVID-19, but also encourages all the GGN Working Groups to become hubs of creativity for the Geoparks to utilize sharing of experiences and boost activities to serve local communities.

As we are passing one of the most difficult times the GGN is taking new activities in order to support Geoparks communication

- Launched a new communication site: www.visitgeoparks.org
- Launched a new promotional video for the new site. Please find here the link of the website promotional video in youtube: https://youtu.be/YmW0UhRnad8
- Launched a new site for the GGN Film Festival. This is an excellent platform to host UNESCO Global Geoparks Promotional Videos. The platform is ready to receive videos. https://filmfest.globalgeoparksnetwork.org/

For as long as the epidemic continues, the GGN Executive Board will be meeting every second week in order to have a close overview of the problems that the Geoparks are facing, the initiatives for the support of the local communities and to find ways for support.

STAY HOME and STAY SAFE.

The GGN Executive Board
Lushan UGGp makes online popularization videos of COVID-19 prevention and control—Let’s keep solidarity in the battle against the epidemic

From February 10, 2020, Lushan UGGp makes series of online popularization videos of COVID-19 prevention and control—Let’s keep solidarity in the battle against the epidemic. Lushan UGGp distributed online short videos of epidemic prevention reminders, video encouragement and support from the local families to the front-line medical and epidemic prevention and control service workers, photos, Chinese paintings, calligraphies, paper cutting exhibitions, and online art appreciation courses. Lushan UGGp uses multiple ways to pay lofty respect to the front-line medics and workers fighting against the epidemic and make contributions to the battle against the novel coronavirus epidemic.

Shennongjia UGGp Helps Local Communities Fight against COVID-19

The year of 2020 started with an outbreak of the COVID-19 in Wuhan, Hubei Province. The epidemic spread fast in China. Faced with a severe situation of the epidemic control, Shennongjia UNESCO Global Geopark took timely measures and effectively prevented the spreading of the epidemic within its territory.

Located in southwestern Hubei, Shennongjia UGGp is about 500km away from Wuhan. However, since there were many visitors from Wuhan in the ski season, Shennongjia UGGp was under great pressure of epidemic prevention and control. In order to prevent the epidemic from spreading into its territory, Shennongjia UGGp closed all its scenic areas and ski resorts on January 23rd and started strict traffic control on January 25th.

The official media of Shennongjia also released epidemic control progress and useful information every day to promote the public awareness.

89 employees of Shennongjia UGGp joined volunteers to help the local communities carry out epidemic control by watching at main streets and residential compounds, sterilizing residential areas and public places.
registering the local people who had returned from Wuhan, monitoring the health status of the residents, educating the people on epidemic prevention and control, and buying daily necessities for the residents, etc.

With the unremitting efforts, Shennongjia UGGp has effectively prevented the spreading of the epidemic within its territory. Up to February 17th, 10 confirmed cases of the novel coronavirus infection, which were all imported cases, have been cured. Up to February 19th there had been no new confirmed cases for 16 successive days.

Shennongjia UGGp will continue to make efforts to minimize the impact of the epidemic, maintain the momentum of its development, and achieve the development goals for this year. Following the Operational Guidelines for UNESCO Global Geoparks, Shennongjia UGGp will continue to reinforce the conservation of its geoheritage, improve its geoscience education and promote the sustainable development of the local community.

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Wuhan was in an emergency! Huanggang was in an emergency! Since the outbreak of the novel coronavirus in Wuhan at the beginning of 2020, Huanggang, the city next to Wuhan, was once second in severity. When the epidemic came, all the staff of Huanggang Dabieshan UNESCO Global Geopark acted fearlessly and quickly, and took the initiative to win the battle of epidemic prevention and control, which manifested the responsibility of geopark workers.

**Fighting against coronavirus: United as one**

After Wuhan announced closing all public ways of departing from the city on January, 23rd, Huanggang did the same on January 24th.

On February 10th, Huanggang Dabieshan UNESCO Global Geopark received the greeting letter from Professor Nickolas Zouros, President of the GGN Executive Board. In the letter, he wrote: "We do understand the difficulties you are facing and we will be next to you in the next period, taking initiatives to express our solidarity and support. And our thoughts and our hearts are with you!"

Greatly inspired by the warm care from the GGN, the staff of Huanggang Dabieshan UNESCO Global Geopark increased the confidence to win the battle. After Huanggang closed the city, the residential community was the front line of epidemic

Fighting against coronavirus: United as one.

Huanggang Dabieshan UNESCO Global Geopark helping local people on standby
prevention and control, as well as the most effective line of preventing spreading. All the staff of Huanggang Dabieshan UNESCO Global Geopark responded actively to the call and worked in their residential community as a “goalkeeper” of the city epidemic line. In February 2020, the most intense phase of the epidemic prevention and control, Huanggang city actively launched an epidemic investigation to find the source of infection and close contacts of the infected persons, to identify the transmission chain, and then took targeted isolation measures to cut off the transmission route, which is the key to control the spread of the epidemic. The staff of Huanggang Dabieshan UNESCO Global Geopark attended the “flow” group, making contributions to the epidemic prevention and control. Regardless of their own safety, they worked on the front line of fighting against the epidemic. They took on a series of community management work, for example, registration, verification by taking the temperature, and control knowledge. They even bought daily supplies for the community residents to ease their inconvenience by the publicizing epidemic prevention and control measures. In the battle against the novel coronavirus in Huanggang, the staff of Huanggang Dabieshan UNESCO Global Geopark fighting on the front line was a group of elite “detectives”, who investigated, connected the seemingly unrelated pieces, and finally cut off the chain of epidemic spread. While working, they endured the exhaustion and even risked being infected. However, there was no complaint on their face but more of firmness.

Managing the park: building the fortress

With the fast spreading speed of the novel coronavirus and the increasing number of people returning home during the Spring Festival, Huanggang Dabieshan Geopark Museum affiliated to Huanggang Dabieshan UNESCO Global Geopark closed right away to cut off the spreading of the epidemic. All the scenic spots involved, such as Tianzhangzhai in Luotian and Bodao Mountain, issued the park closure notice to the world and did not receive tourists. Tourists who had planned to visit during the Spring Festival were quickly persuaded to return and for those who had already paid for tickets and hotels, all the money were refunded. All the roads in and out of the core scenic area were closed, and all the residents around the scenic area stayed at home for isolation. Farmhouses, supermarkets and hotels were not allowed to open to serve guests. Meanwhile, under the leadership of Huanggang Dabieshan UNESCO Global Geopark and with the cooperation of local government, Luotian Park implemented the most stringent wildlife control measures. The local authorities announced the ban of all kinds of trading of wild animals, and launched the action of “Protect wild animals and Refuse eating wild animals”. The forest public security department, where Huanggang Global Geopark is located, cracked down on hunting and trafficking of wild animals, rescued a large number of national and provincial key protected wild animals, and released them into the nature.

In Yingshan area where the park is located, forest fire prevention and control of human fire source are their priority. The local authorities established in time epidemic prevention and control and forest fire prevention group to make sure each area were covered and subject to each person. Since the outbreak of the epidemic, there was not a single confirmed case of novel coronavirus or a single suspected case. Moreover, no one has used coronavirus or a single suspected case. The city has gradually opened up and people’s life has returned to normal. The outbreak of the epidemic makes us reflect on human behaviors and realize the importance of harmonious coexistence between human and nature.

Huanggang Dabieshan UNESCO Global Geopark staff’s anti-epidemic action is the epitome of the Chinese people’s fight against the epidemic. At present, the epidemic situation in the seriously-hit areas of Huanggang is improving. All the confirmed patients have been cured and discharged from hospital. The city has gradually opened up and people’s life has returned to normal. The outbreak of the epidemic makes us reflect on human behaviors and realize the importance of harmonious coexistence between human and nature.

Huanggang Dabieshan UNESCO Global Geopark, China

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Langkawi UNESCO Global Geopark, Malaysia

COVID-19 was first identified in early December 2019, and the first confirmed case in Malaysia was detected in late January 2020. Malaysia has recorded 5,182 (as of 17 April 2020) positive cases. Government of Malaysia has taken preventive measures drastically by imposing Movement Control Order (MCO) starting on 18 March 2020 in order to break the pandemic chain. Langkawi was in the center page of media coverage since the outbreak COVID-19, due to the arrivals of charter flights and transit of luxury cruise passengers from the affected countries. Since January 2020, authorities
2) **LANGKAWI TAILORS PRODUCE PERSONAL PROTECTIVE EQUIPMENT (PPE) FOR HEALTHCARE WORKERS IN LANGKAWI**

A tailor shop belonging to Madam Long Lee Ket, 68, was used as a hub for the initiative, where 48 tailors divided tasks of cutting and sewing the non-woven fabric, the essential material to produce head covers, gowns and shoe covers of the PPE. Once completed, three of Madam Leong friends would sort the fabric to facilitate the distribution process. “The material is supplied by Sultanah Maliha Hospital and the Kuah Health Clinic. We will then cut the material and divide it into 500 pieces to produce head covers, gowns and shoe covers.”

The initiative was mooted by Madam Norhayati Hassan, 39, who posted about her search for tailors on Facebook to undertake the endeavour. “I had no idea it would receive such a great response. I also created a WhatsApp group for tailors in Langkawi to get together and contribute for this purpose, I believed this is how Langkawi Geopark shows our close-knit community and strong solidarity during a crisis like this. Thank God, the response has been great although most of us do not really know each other,” said Norhayati.

3) **PUBLIC SANITATION OPERATIONS**

Langkawi Municipal Office in collaboration with the Langkawi Fire & Rescue Department have carried out Public Sanitation Operations (disinfection works) at selected area of Langkawi residential. This activity is a precautionary measure to prevent the COVID-19 as an old adage of an ounce of prevention worth a pound of cure. Local authorities in LUGGp also distributed free gloves and face masks to more than 60,000 locals.

4) **FOOD BANK CARE**

The Food Bank Care project is one of the Kedah State Zakat Authority (LZNK) initiatives launched on March 26, 2020 to assist the needy during the duration of the Movement Control Order. Panorama Langkawi Sdn. Bhd. (PLSB), a Geopark Partner, presented zakat donation to Food Bank Care. Destitution families from rural village that are unable to find any income during MCO, can call Food Bank Care for assistance in term of food. The centre will provide food for the whole family.

5) **LANGKAWI TOURISM SURVEY**

Langkawi Tourism Association, a Geopark Partner of LUGGp, has initiated a survey looking at the impact of the Movement Control Order especially for tourism front liners, and designed possible actions that should be taken in order to assist Langkawi industry players ready for the new norm. This is the first time for Langkawi to shut down after 33 years being operated as one of the best destinations in the world.
Hongkong UGGp Adjusted Visitor Service in Response to the Coronavirus Outbreak

Hong Kong UNESCO Global Geopark, China

To fight against the coronavirus outbreak at its onset, Hong Kong UNESCO Global Geopark (“Hong Kong Geopark”) announced the temporary closure of all seven visitor centres to prevent crowds from gathering. Nevertheless, many people still wish to enjoy fresh air and exercise in the less crowded countryside. We have been doing site inspections during this period and have noted a rise in the number of visitors to the countryside. This increase translates into higher demand for visitor services in Hong Kong Geopark.

Gradually, Hong Kong Geopark is thus reopening its visitor centres to provide basic visitor services to meet rising public demand. To reduce the risk of infection and transmission, and to safeguard the health of visitor centre staff and the public, we have put in place the following special arrangements and preventive measures:

1. Stepping up cleaning and disinfection
   All visitor centres are required to display infection control guidelines posters. Cleaning of exhibition galleries and the surrounding areas are stepped up, with the visitor centres and exhibits disinfected with 1:99 diluted bleach before opening and after closing every day. At each entrance there is a doormat sprayed with disinfectant.

2. Temperature screening and hand sanitizing for all visitors
   Management staff take the temperature of every visitor at the entrance using a contactless thermometer, and only visitors with normal body temperature are allowed access. Visitors are also required to use the hand sanitizer provided by the centres.

3. Masks required for all staff and visitors
   All management staff and visitors are required to wear a mask before entering a visitor centre.

4. Making proactive health inquiries
   Before entering a visitor centre, all visitors must answer a few questions about their health to check whether they have had a fever or other health condition, and to confirm that they have not come into contact with any coronavirus patients or made any overseas visits in the past 14 days. Visitors suspected to be affected by the virus will not be allowed access.

5. Crowd control and capping the number of visitors
   Depending on the floor area, admission to visitor centres is limited to 10 to 20 people for each session.

   We also work closely with the ferry companies and local communities. On ferry routes between the urban districts and Hong Kong Geopark and at the entrance to villages in geopark, notices are put up to remind visitors to wear a mask in order to protect themselves and others.

   Recognising that visitors may put pressure on local communities, Hong Kong Geopark’s partner, Lions Nature Education Foundation, has generously donated a batch of protective gears such as masks to the geopark communities.

These measures have indeed caused some inconvenience. But our observations have shown that most visitors support these arrangements and are cooperative to fight against the coronavirus outbreak.

Hong Kong UGGp, China
Affected by the epidemic of novel coronavirus, Qinling Zhongnanshan UNESCO Global Geopark has temporarily closed down and strictly conducted closed management. During this period, to meet the needs of geology fans and visitors, the geopark has launched the One Minute Classroom—Visiting Qingling Zhongnanshan UNESCO Global Geopark on the Internet.

The One Minute Classroom is themed at “One City One Mountain, Qinling Zhongnanshan”, in which excellent geology interpreters have been invited to introduce the origin of Qinling, culture of Zhongnanshan, landslide knowledge and the development of Qinling Zhongnanshan UNESCO Global Geopark to visitors to let them feel the beauty of Qinling Zhongnanshan.

The One Minute Classroom provides the public with an efficient and interesting platform to learn knowledge and communicate, which prevents the gathering of people and the spread of the virus. Just scan the QR code, and visitors can participate in the classroom.

The One Minute Classroom enriches the spiritual life of the public, improves the theories and vocational skills of the geopark staff and ensures that the geopark science can be popularized to the public.

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Since the novel coronavirus epidemic broke out in China in January 2020, Lushan UGGp has been taking active prevention and control measures against the epidemic. She received letters of sympathy and support from her sister geoparks. On January 27, Dr. Gergely Horváth from Novohrad-Nógrád UGGp wrote a letter to Lushan UGGp to express his support and sympathy. He has been taking attention to the news of novel coronavirus epidemic in China, and wish many happiness...
in the Chinese Lunar New Year. He hopes the Chinese colleagues are well, and China will defeat the epidemic at last for not long. Mr. Misbahib Haraha of Rinjani-Lombok UNESCO Global Geopark contacted with Lushan UGGp to express his concern and support to Chinese colleagues.

Lushan UGGp has prioritized the prevention and control of the COVID-19. Since January 25, 2020, the geopark suspended the opening to the visitors. Since February 1, 2020, the geopark closed down. Until now, there has been no suspected and confirmed case in Lushan UGGp. Lushan UGGp achieved the goal of the “Double Zero Case” in the battle against the epidemic and protected the health and security of the geopark.

To promote the tourism recovery of the geopark, Lushan UGGp makes orderly and reasonable economy boosting under stringent and effective control and prevention measurements against the epidemic. On February 20, 2020, White Deer Cave Academy of the geopark was reopened to visitors. On February 28, 2020, outdoor area of the geopark resumed to open to visitors.

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