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Kielce, 23.09.2019

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UNESCO Global Geoparks Secretariat  
Section on Earth Sciences and Geohazards Risk Reduction  
Division of Ecological and Earth Sciences  
Natural Sciences Sector  
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Subject: Evaluation of new UNESCO Global Geopark application „Geoland of the Holy Cross Mountains” – response to comments and recommendations of UNESCO Global Geoparks Council from 3<sup>rd</sup> Session, 8-9 September 2018, Madonna di Campiglio Italy

Dear Madam,

On 13/03/2019 as a candidate UNESCO Global Geopark „Geoland of the Holy Cross Mountains” we received through the Polish UNESCO Committee an official report from the UNESCO Global Geopark Council 3<sup>rd</sup> session (8-9 September 2018, Madonna di Campiglio, Italy) containing information on the evaluation of our application. Due to the fact that it was the first document with the summary of the evaluation mission report, which we received via the official path, we would like to refer to the comments and recommendations contained in this document.

#### **Pt 61 Summary and discussion**

First of all, we would like to refer to two key issues indicated in points a) and b), which decided to defer our candidature to the UNESCO Global Geoparks Network:

*a) The name of the area is problematic. The term ‘Geoland’ implies some kind of ‘theme park’ and should be avoided. It is recommended to reconsider the aUGGp name in a way that the UGGp Council can endorse.*

As the Board of the „Geopark Świętokrzyski” Association, we understand the essence of the problem related to the name of the geopark indicated during the UNESCO Global Geopark Council discussion. We would like to emphasize that the intention of the Geopark Board, the name "Geoland of the Holy Cross Mountains Geopark" is that it does not refer to the „theme park”, but to the specific nature and culture of the area in which geological heritage is the basic element of the environment determining distribution and a variety of other elements, including animate nature, cultural heritage and contemporary human activities. We would also like to emphasize that the choice of the name of our geopark is not only the effect of the decision of the geopark board, but along with other alternative proposals was put to discussion and voting during special meetings of municipal councils included in the geopark and consisting of representatives of local communities.

On the other hand, we understand the arguments of UGGp Council and the need to change the name of the geopark to a version fully consistent with the idea and assumptions of UGGp. In connection with the above, as the Board of Geopark Geoland Świętokrzyski, we have implemented, in consultation with the municipalities included in the geopark, the following corrective actions:

- changing the name of the association and geopark from „Geoland Świętokrzyski” („Geoland of the Holy Cross Mountains Geopark”) to "Geopark Świętokrzyski" („Holy Cross Mountains Geopark”), through the resolution of the General Assembly of the Association consisting of representatives of municipalities included in the Geopark
- changing the geopark logo to a new one taking into account the changed name (Annex 1)
- logo and name exchange on banners, roll-ups, information boards (Annex 1)

We are in the process of making changes to the name and logo on the website and Geopark profile on Facebook.

*b) The area is also selling geological material, something that contravenes one of the essential criteria of being a UGGp (criterion (vii))*

In criterion (vii) indicated by UGGp Council it is clearly stated that: ***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 “rockshops” within the UNESCO Global Geopark (regardless of their origin) and should actively discourage unsustainable trade in geological materials as a whole.***

In connection with the problematic issue of the sale of geological specimens indicated in the Report on the evaluation mission and in the report from the UGGp Council meeting, we kindly inform you that **the Association of Communes managing the Geopark Świętokrzyski does not directly participate in the sale of geological specimens or does not directly support such activities. Within the area of Geopark, there are also no stores specialized in the sale of geological specimens, referred to in the guidelines as "rockshop", "fossilshop" or "mineralshop".**

The sale of individual souvenirs made of geological materials was indicated by evaluators in two geosites: "Kadzielnia" and "Raj (Paradise) Cave". In the case of „Kadzielnia” geosite, the geological materials on sale were the property of a private person who was selling them through an NGO - „Speleoklub Świętokrzyski”. Both the person and the organization are not members of the geopark association or members of the geopark board. The "Speleoklub Świętokrzyski" is a geopark's partner with whom we have signed a letter of intent regarding cooperation, but we do not support the organization's activities related to brokerage in the sale of geological materials in any way. In the case of the "Raj „Paradise Cave" geosite, the sale of individual souvenirs made of geological materials is carried out by a private company „Przedsiębiorstwo Łysogóry” that is not a member of the Association. This company is a partner of Geopark but has no recommendation or any other form of support from the Geopark in selling souvenirs made of geological materials.

As the Geopark Board, however, we would like to emphasize that we do not underestimate the problem of selling geological materials in the geopark's territory. In connection with the above, the Geopark Board asked organizations conducting or intermediating in the sale of geological materials in the above-mentioned positions to withdraw these materials from sale. We would like to inform you that the result of these consultations is positive and we have obtained assurance supported by a statement from both organizations, on withdrawal from sale of



**souvenirs made of geological materials (copies of the statements of both organizations – Annex 2 and 3).**

In addition, it should be emphasized that the Geopark Board has developed and published on the official Geopark website the Code of Principles and good practices related to the collection of geological specimens (Annex 4). This document contains the following points dedicated to the collecting and sale of geological specimens:

***5. Geopark Świętokrzyski does not run, mediate or support associated activities with the acquisition and sale of specimens of rocks, minerals and fossils. This rule applies to both specimens from the territory of the Geopark as well as from other areas outside of the Geopark.***

***6. In the case of persons or companies not formally associated with the Geopark, but trading in specimens of rocks, minerals and fossils in the Geopark area, the Geopark Board sends a special written appeal requesting the change of specifics of commercial activities and replacement of original geological specimens with replicas or other materials which usage is not contrary to the idea of protection and preservation of local geological, natural and cultural heritage.***

***7. In the event of a positive response by a person / company trading in specimens of rocks, minerals and fossils, Geopark offers substantive support and consultations on the development of a new marketing strategy related to the replacement of natural geological specimens with souvenirs made of other materials, non-hazardous towards the protection of the geological, natural and cultural heritage.***

Considering the above information and arguments, as the Geopark Board, we would like to emphasize that we do not underestimate the problem of small-scale sales of geological materials carried out by companies or private individuals at individual points in the area of Geopark. Please be noticed that appropriate actions have been taken to withdraw geological materials from sale. In both cases, these actions were successful.

**Pt. 62 A number of recommendations were provided for aspiring UNESCO Global Geopark**

*a) Much confusion is created by the 'Geopark Kielce' branding for the management team for the aUGGp and its use at a range of sites and places. It is recommended that the areas is rebranded to focus on the entire area of the Geoland of the Holy Cross Mountains. In practice this means changing the team/organisational name to reflect an organisation that covers the whole aUGGp and removing references to Geopark Kielce in literature, on geosites, in/on museums and other related buildings and on corporate clothing etc. and replacing it with the new identity.*

In connection with the functioning of the institution called „Geopark Kielce” in the „Geopark Świętokrzyski” area, the Geopark Board submitted relevant explanations during the evaluation mission. It should be emphasized that "Geopark Kielce" is the proper name of the institution being part of the Kielce Municipality, which is a member of the „Geopark Świętokrzyski” - association applying to the UNESCO Global Geopark Network. Geopark Kielce as a municipal institution manages selected geological objects in the Kielce Commune and does not constitute a "geopark" within the meaning of UNESCO guidelines. However, as the Board of the „Geopark Świętokrzyski” applying to the UNESCO Global Geopark Network, we are aware of the problem of brand clarity and identification of the aspiring geopark when two identifications with the name "geopark" do operate in the same area.

In connection with the above, the „Geopark Świętokrzyski” board already at the stage of the evaluation mission began consultations with the Directorate of „Geopark Kielce” regarding the

change of the name of this organization. The result of these activities would be replacement of the logo and visual signs used on buildings, promotional materials, information boards and corporate clothing. The director of „Geopark Kielce” positively welcomed the idea of introducing these changes, but their implementation requires time and a number of formal actions, which also require the approval of the Kielce Commune Council. At this stage, the "Geopark Świętokrzyski" board tries to inform the local community and tourists through promotional and educational activities about the "Geopark Świętokrzyski" as an aspiring UNESCO Global Geopark, which covers the entire area of five municipalities, including selected positions managed by the municipal institution called "Geopark Kielce".

*b) Avoid the use of the word 'Geoland' in the aUGGp name to avoid misrepresentation of what a UGGp is.*

In connection with this remark / recommendation, the Geopark board took appropriate actions related to the change of the name, logo and visual signs on all materials and objects promoting the geopark initiative and located in geopark's territory. The new name of the geopark is: „Geopark Świętokrzyski” (in eng. „Holy Cross Mountains Geopark”).

*c) Interpretation: Review and replace much of the on-site interpretation, including at (but not limited to) all sites visited during the mission. The development and use of brand guidelines might also be useful for partners developing their material within the aUGGp.*

The Geopark board began implementing a number of actions related to improving the quality of interpretation and identification at geo-sites located in the geopark area. The most important activities were indicated in the Management Plan document presented during the evaluation mission. The most important activities include:

- improving the quality of geological interpretation on selected representative geosites by replacement of existing tables or placing new ones containing content tailored to recipients who are not professional geologists (example: Annex 5)
- developing cooperation between the Geopark Board and municipalities - members of the Association with scientific institutions and non-governmental organizations in preparation and implementation of related projects with access to geo-sites and interpretation of geological content
- improvement of geopark identification in the field by placing the logotype on information / educational boards and direction signs

*d) Site Management and Maintenance: Several prominent geosites should be cleaned more regularly and better maintained.*

The Geopark Board as well as the Communes within the geopark undertake a number of actions in terms of improving the condition of selected, representative geosites. The most important activities that have been carried out so far are:

- cleaning of selected geo-sites located within the boundaries of the municipalities included in the geopark; as part of this action, cooperation was also undertaken with non-governmental organizations and representatives of the local community, and a number of activities related to the cleaning of geological reserves were organized,
- conservation of selected representative geosites in the scope of cutting vegetation overgrowing valuable geological profiles or causing bioerosion



- regular monitoring of the status of selected, representative geosites conducted by employees of municipalities - Geopark members

In connection with the activities mentioned, it should be noted that the funds for maintenance and conservation of valuable sites (including representative geosites) located in the municipalities belonging to the geopark, are included every year in the budgetary plans of these municipalities. In connection with the recommendations in this regard, the Geopark Board undertakes to pay more attention to the problem of proper maintenance of geo-positions by the municipalities - geopark members, in particular in the field of cleaning and conservation of greenery.

*e) Sale of Geological Material: Small amounts of original geological material are sold at a small number of locations promoted by the aUGGp management body. This sale should be stopped and the aUGGp should provide a letter from each relevant partner, confirming that they have permanently ceased selling original geological material.*

In connection with the indication of the problem of selling individual souvenirs made from geological materials in two locations on the geopark territory, the Geopark board took appropriate action and solved this problem by consulting with organizations selling or intermediating in sale of the souvenirs made of geological materials. A detailed description of the problem, corrective actions taken and results obtained is presented in response to the note in point 61 b)

*f) A clear partnership strategy should be developed with partners to include a methodology on the criteria required to become a partner with a formal agreement with the aUGGp. This is applicable to but not restricted to accommodation and catering providers, transport providers, activity providers and producers of local products.*

In connection with the above recommendation, the Geopark Board took appropriate actions to develop a strategy of partnership with companies from the tourism industry (gastronomy, hotels, tour operators). One of the elements of these activities is the development of models of formal agreements between Geopark and the above-mentioned entities. The Geopark Board plans to sign relevant agreements and formalize cooperation with selected representatives of the tourism industry. As part of the formalization of cooperation, it is planned to precisely define the principles of cooperation between Geopark and partner organizations / institutions. One of the planned activities under this strategy is also the development and implementation of facility certification and local products (local dishes, souvenirs, other local products) based on the local geological and cultural heritage and in line with the idea of a geopark and sustainable development.

*g) Active involvement in the activities of the Global Geoparks Network and the European Geoparks Network promoting the International value of the territory through the partnership with other UNESCO Global Geoparks.*

As part of international cooperation our Geopark undertakes various activities related to establishing contacts with the active UNESCO Global Geoparks, as well as aspiring geoparks and organizations working for the protection and conservation of geological heritage on an international scale. The most important activities that have been undertaken in this regard and will be continued in the forthcoming years are as follows:

- establishing long-term cooperation with Muskau Arch UNESCO Global Geopark: participation of children and youth from Geoland of the Holy Cross Mts. Geopark in the international geopark camp organized in Muskau Arch

- establishing cooperation with Oki Island UNESCO Global Geopark: as part of cooperation in the Geopark of the Holy Cross Mts. Geopark took place study visit of Mr. Kazuhiro Nobe - director of the Oki Island UNESCO Global Geopark Promotion Committee, as well as long-term cooperation on the exchange of experiences between both geoparks
- establishing cooperation with the Ice Age Center operating within Vooremaa Geopark from Estonia, in the exchange of experience and good practices related to the creation of exhibitions and geological education centers
- establishing cooperation with the aspiring Iron Mountains Geopark and Bohemian Paradise Unesco Global Geopark, in the exchange of experience and good practices related to geotourism and geoeducation; as part of cooperation a study visit of Mr. Jan Doucek from Iron Mountains Geopark and Vaclav Menzl from Bohemian Paradise Geopark was carried out in the Geopark of the Holy Cross Mts.
- cooperation with ProGEO The European Association for the conservation of the geological heritage, as part of the IX International ProGEO Symposium in the Geoland of the Holy Cross Mts. Geopark
- begin cooperation with dr Miłosz Huber from Marie-Curie Skłodowska University (Lublin, Poland) in the field of support for the geopark initiative located on the Kola Peninsula in Russia

As part of international cooperation, it is assumed to begin cooperation with other geoparks operating in the UNESCO Global Geoparks Network. The cooperation aim will focused, among other things, at the implementation of joint projects in the field of geotourism, exchange of experience and good practices in the area of creation and promotion of local and regional products as well as in the protection and conservation of geological heritage.

Given the above arguments, we hope that our application will receive a positive assessment and Holy Cross Mountains Geopark will be able to become a full member of the UNESCO Global Geopark Network.

*Yours faithfully,*



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Michał Poros

Chairman of the Board

„Holy Cross Mountains Geopark” Association



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## Appendix 1 – Geopark name and identification

1) New name: **GEOPARK ŚWIĘTOKRZYSKI** | *HOLY CROSS MOUNTAINS GEOPARK*

2) New logotype:



3) New identification on the infrastructure



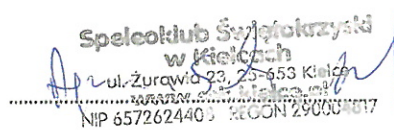
## Appendix 2 – Statement of „Speleoklub Świętokrzyski”

Kielce, 30 September 2018

### STATEMENT

In connection with the letter received from the management board of Geopark Geoland Świętokrzyski regarding the need to withdraw geological materials from the sale of souvenirs carried out at the Underground Tourist Route at Kadzielnia, we declare as follows:

1. The sale of geological materials in this site was associated with the sale of rocks obtained by a private person from active open-cast mines, in which these rocks, due to their parameters, commonness and lack of significant scientific value, are subject to industrial exploitation for the needs of the cement and lime industry and road engineering. .
2. As a non-governmental organization intermediating in the sale of the above materials, we declare that this sale took place without any formal participation of the management board of Geopark Geoland Świętokrzyski and municipalities included in the Geopark association,
3. As a non-governmental organization involved in activities related to the protection of geological heritage (in particular cave objects), we are aware of the need to protect and preserve individual elements of this heritage, which are an integral part of rocks, minerals and fossils occurring in the Geopark territory,
4. In connection with the above conditions and a letter addressed to our organization by the management board of Geopark Geoland Świętokrzyski, we undertake to withdraw geological materials from the sale of souvenirs carried out at the Underground Tourist Route in Kadzielnia.
5. In connection with the activities undertaken by Geopark Geoland Świętokrzyski, we express our will for future cooperation in the design, creation and distribution of souvenirs inspired by the regional natural and cultural heritage and created in accordance with the principles of sustainable development conducive to the protection and preservation of individual elements of this heritage.

  
Speleoklub Świętokrzyski  
w Kielcach  
ul. Żurawia 23, 25-653 Kielce  
NIP 6572624403 REGON 290004017  
Speleoklub Świętokrzyski



### Appendix 3 – Statement of „Przedsiębiorstwo Turystyczne Łysogóry”

Kielce, 30 September 2018

#### STATEMENT

In connection with the letter received from the management board of Geopark Geoland Świętokrzyski regarding the need to withdraw geological materials from the sale of souvenirs carried out at Raj (Paradise) Cave administered by Przedsiębiorstwo Turystyczne „Łysogóry” we declare as follows:

1. The sale of individual souvenirs made of geological materials taking place at the stand at Raj (Paradise) Cave, was mainly associated with the types of rocks commonly found in the Świętokrzyskie (Holy Cross) Mountains, obtained from active open-cast mines, in which these rocks due to their parameters, commonness and lack of significant value are subject to industrial exploitation for the needs of the cement and lime industry and road engineering,
2. As an intermediary in the sale of the above materials, we declare that this sale took place without any formal participation of the management board of Geopark Geoland Świętokrzyski and municipalities included in the geopark association,
3. As Przedsiębiorstwo Turystyczne „Łysogóry” actively supporting the protection of geological heritage, including by monitoring and protecting the abiotic and biotic environment of the Raj Cave, we are aware of the need to protect and preserve this heritage, which are an integral part of rocks, minerals and fossils found in the geopark territory,
4. In connection with the above conditions and the letter addressed to our organization by the management board of Geopark Geoland Świętokrzyski, we undertake to withdraw from the sale of souvenirs made of geological materials,
5. In connection with the activities undertaken by Geopark Geoland Świętokrzyski, we express our will for future cooperation in the design, creation and distribution of souvenirs inspired by the regional natural and cultural heritage and created in accordance with the principles of sustainable development conducive to the protection and preservation of individual elements of this heritage.

REKTOR SPÓŁKI GŁÓWNA KSIĘGOWA

*Piotr Dłubnik* *Iwona Wójcik*  
Prezes Zarządu Członek Zarządu

Przedsiębiorstwo Turystyczne „Łysogóry”

#### **Appendix 4 - GENERAL RULES AND CODE OF GOOD PRACTICE FOR COLLECTING ROCKS, FOSSILS AND MINERALS**

1. Rocks, fossils and minerals as an integral component of geological heritage require protection and preservation to the same extent as other elements of geological heritage and natural science.
2. Searching for and collecting fossils and minerals present in the Geopark area in positions covered by legal protection is subject to the relevant provisions of the Act of 16 April 2004 on nature protection.
3. Acquisition of minerals and scientifically valuable fossils being a component of national heritage is subject to relevant legal provisions.
4. Acquiring specimens of rocks, minerals and fossils from active quarries exploiting stone for industrial purposes may only take place with the consent of the management of mining plants, but it must not contradict the principles set out herein in points 3, 4, 7 and 8
5. Geopark Świętokrzyski does not run, mediate or support associated activities with the acquisition and sale of specimens of rocks, minerals and fossils. This rule applies to both specimens from the territory of the Geopark as well as from other areas outside of the Geopark.
6. In the case of persons or companies not formally associated with the Geopark, but trading in specimens of rocks, minerals and fossils in the Geopark area, the Geopark Board sends a special written appeal requesting the change of the specifics of commercial activities and replacement of original geological specimens with replicas or other materials which usage is not contrary to the idea of protection and preservation of local geological, natural and cultural heritage.
7. In the event of a positive appeal by a person / company trading in specimens of rocks, minerals and fossils, Geopark offers substantive support and consultations on the development of a new marketing strategy related to the replacement of natural geological specimens with souvenirs made of other materials, non-hazardous towards the protection of geological, natural and cultural heritage.
8. Geopark Świętokrzyski supports the collection of rocks and minerals and fossils for educational and scientific purposes, provided that it is carried out in accordance with applicable law and does not pose a threat to the protection and preservation of geological, natural and cultural heritage and landscape.
9. Acquiring specimens of rocks, minerals and fossils by people who do not have adequate knowledge and education in the field of Earth sciences may entail omitting or damaging valuable specimens for science. In connection with the above, Geopark offers assistance in consulting such finds with specialists - employees of scientific and research institutions and universities cooperating with the Geopark.
10. Geopark Świętokrzyski supports the creation of educational collections for local schools and non-governmental organizations focused on nature education of children and youth.

The above set of rules is also published on the official geopark website:

<http://geopark.pl/en/dla-kolekcjonerow/>



## Appendix 5 – Improving the quality of geological interpretations on selected geosites



Phot. 1 New interpretation panel in Kadzielnia geosite



Phot. 2 New educational infrastructure – „Geological Garden of Experiences” in Wietrznia Nature Reserve (Wietrznia Geosite)