

# Prologue

This book rounds off the publications that have come from the III International Symposium ProGEO on the Conservation of the Geological Heritage, held in Madrid in November of 1999, and organized by the Geological Survey of Spain (ITGE), the European Association for the Conservation of Geological Heritage (ProGEO) and the Geological Society of Spain (SGE), under the auspices of the International Union of Geological Sciences (IUGS).

The conference gathered 180 participating members from 35 different countries, who presented more than 90 communications and 11 invited lectures; the event turned out to be a suitable setting for the exchange of knowledge and experiences, as well as a forum for debate from a real and global perspective, facing and discussing all aspects of the protection and conservation of our geological heritage.

At a point close to the beginning of a new millennium, the geoconservation community is evolving, passing from discussions about which geological elements are worthy of conservation towards considering how they should be protected in the framework of modern strategies for sustainable development. It is now that geological heritage planning and management may become a truly important integrated part of natural heritage conservation, capable of many and diverse uses: scientific, educational and training, touristic and recreational.

Therefore, with the aim of discussing all aspects of the conservation and management of our geoheritage, the symposium was arranged in six thematic sessions. These thematic sessions were the following: legislation, planning and management for geoconservation; inventory and cataloguing of the geological heritage; the geological heritage in the framework of the integrated management of protected areas; educational and interpretative activities; geological heritage and tourism; and experiences in geoconservation in southern and south-western Europe. Each of these sessions was initiated with the presentation of one or more keynote lectures, given by experts on the topic.

This book collects the papers which reflect the content of the lectures from each thematic session of the symposium; these are presented along with their conclusions, which are a result of the development the debates which followed each of the sessions. Finally, a specific chapter contains the Declaration





of Madrid, unanimously approved in the plenary session of the Symposium.

This volume completes the published products of the symposium, and it is the third of a set in which the following titles have previously appeared:

- *Towards the Balanced Management and Conservation of the Geological Heritage in the New Millennium*, (Eds: D. Baretino, M. Vallejo and E. Gallego), 1999, edited by the Geological Society of Spain (SGE), a collection of the communications given in the Symposium.
- *The Geological and Palaeontological Heritage of Central and Eastern Iberia (Iberian Range, Spain)*, (Eds: G. Meléndez and C. Soria-Llop), 1999, edited by the University of Zaragoza— the guide for the two symposium field trips.

This extensive literature is a good indicator of the noteworthy success of this international conference, both in the matter of participation and in the great interest felt in the growing geoconservationist community. We believe that these books constitute an invaluable and basic tool for the formulation of initiatives directed towards the conservation and management of our geological heritage in the new millenium-to-come. We also believe that they will be very useful from all points of view, from that of the citizen interested in geoheritage conservation to that of organizations in charge of Nature Conservation.

Finally, it is our intention to acknowledge the support of the sponsoring and collaborating organizations of the symposium: without their help this event would not have been possible. Specifically, we are very grateful for the support of the Geological Survey of Spain (ITGE) in the year of its 150th anniversary, and also of the ENRESA Foundation, for the publication of this volume.

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