

## Volcano Geoparks and the 5th International UNESCO Conference on Geoparks

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Global Geopark Network (GGN) was established in 2004 under the support by UNESCO. Presently 90 members from 26 countries are involved in GGN. Geopark is different from World Heritage Program in points of networking, educational application, local communities' development and every four-year revalidation in the former. It aims to become the UNESCO Initiative this year. Volcanoes are one of important geoheritages among these geoparks. For example, Katla (Iceland), Wudalianchi (China), Batur (Indonesia) and Jeju (Korea) Global Geoparks. Three of 5 Global Geoparks in Japan are also characterized by active volcanoes including Unzen and Usu. In Japan, there are 25 national (domestic) geoparks as of 2012, most of which includes active volcanoes or Quaternary volcanic fields in their territories. The geopark activity is one of the tools to educate visitors and local people on natural disasters including earthquakes, tsunami and volcanic eruptions. During the eruption at Shinmoekade in January-February 2011, the communities organized under the Kirishima Geopark's functioned effectively to exchange the information and take the action against the volcanic disasters. It became one of good examples of the geopark function during volcanic disasters.

Fifth International UNESCO Conference on Geoparks was held in the Unzen Volcanic Area Global Geoparks, Japan, during May 12-15, 2012. The main theme of the conference was "Earth heritage and sustainable development". Five hundred and ninety three (593) people made registration in this conference from 31 countries and areas. This was the largest number of attendees in geoparks conferences. The Shimabara Declaration affirmed in this conference includes utilization of tsunami disaster experiences of March 11, 2011 in order to mitigate future possible natural disasters in geoparks over the world. Geopark is the most effective platform to educate the natural power of our Planet and geodisasters. Roles of geoparks in climate change debate and in natural resource management were also noted. Establishment of cooperation among geopark-related communities and the importance of networking for sustainable development were also written. Community of volcanologists will be able to promote the future UNESCO Initiative as the geopark program.