

Opening speech for the “One Geology Map Project”, Brighton, United Kingdom

Chairman,

Distinguished delegates,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

I am happy, as head of UNESCO’s earth science programme, to represent the Organisation at this First International Workshop on “One Geology Map Project – On the transformation of geological data into information for decision making”.

I would like to congratulate the organisers and especially the British Geological Survey (BGS) for bringing together experts from about 56 countries to this first meeting here in Brighton and I hope we will lay the foundations for a successful project in the coming days.

For those who are not so familiar with the United Nations System, I would like to indicate that UNESCO is the UN Specialised Agency for Education, Science and Culture. From its inception in 1946, the Organisation has been promoting contacts and exchange of data and information between earth scientists mainly on geo-hazards such as earthquakes and volcanoes.

In 1957, UNESCO stimulated geophysical research in the framework of the International Geophysical Year and geologists started approaching UNESCO to request for the creation of a dedicated international geology programme. This programme was finally created in 1972 in cooperation with the International Union of Geological Sciences (IUGS) and entitled the International Geological Correlation Programme (IGCP). It focussed on international research networking, on fundamental geoscience studies dealing with stratigraphy, tectonics and mineral deposit genesis, it is now known as the International Geoscience Programme keeping the same acronym IGCP; it is important to

note that it is the only longstanding geoscience programme in the UN System. UNESCO developed also, long term cooperation with the Commission of the Geological Map of the world (CGMW). The Commission was created in 1881 and thus much older than UNESCO, but in the sixties we cooperated with them in the compilation of the tectonic map of Europe and later the metallogenic map of Africa. In 1980, a geological atlas was produced. In 2000 there was an established cooperation for the production of the geological map of Europe.

UNESCO's Member States would like to increase the societal relevance of geological surveys and requested the Organisation to promote cooperation between geological surveys and other government departments, we therefore started programmes to facilitate the creation of data-exchange networks such as the Pan African Geological Information System (PANGIS) and together with CCOP we developed SANGIS for South East Asia. Recently we produced a geoscience thesaurus with CCOP in some 7 Asian languages to further enhance communication and collaboration between scientists in Asia as well as enhance cooperation with the rest of the world.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

With these few examples, I want to demonstrate the long term involvement of UNESCO in geological work. At the same time, I want to share with you some concern about the visibility of geosciences, if we look back to the eighties and the nineties, we see that a number of environmental conventions, protocols and summits were organised but then the participation of geologists in these events was rather limited.

In 2002, the UN organised a summit on sustainable development in Johannesburg and in this context UNESCO lobbied hard to get the message across that without good earth observation, it will be difficult to plan efficiently for sustainable economic development. This message was accepted by the world's political leaders gathered in Johannesburg and has given us the chance to promote geological observation and geodata handling

activities. I think the “One Geology” project is a perfect example where we can demonstrate the use of geological information for the decision making process.

Together with IUGS – UNESCO lobbied at the UN General Assembly for the proclamation of 2008 as the International Year of Planet Earth, we see this as a big opportunity to show to all actors of the civil society, the role of geosciences for development; and again, I am pleased that “One Geology” is becoming a flagship activity of IYPE. Yesterday, I was very much impressed by the attention our workshop received from the media. Radio and Television broadcasters from industrialised as well as developing countries commented on the project.

UNESCO’s wish is that “One Geology” will be truly carried out in a context of international cooperation; and that all countries will not only participate in it, but also benefit from it.

We hope that there will be possibilities for implementing capacity building activities to assist developing countries to cooperate with the industrialised countries and that, where appropriate, twining cooperation between countries from the Northern and Southern Hemisphere will take place.

UNESCO recommended to the international actors in the field of geoscience mapping to come to an agreement to make the “One Geology Project” successful. The agreement is being finalised now and I hope it will lead to a successful cooperation in the project. “One Geology” will significantly enhance the outreach in geosciences.

Thank you.

12/03/07