

Turkish report of activities on geological heritage and nature conservation in 2006

JEMIRKO (Turkish Association for Protection of Geological Heritage) was still only a progeo association in Turkey and its humble activities, which were mostly on public awareness, were not satisfying compared to the rate of nature deterioration in the country in 2006. One could say that political developments (relationships with EU, international terror and Iraq war) and also news about global warming, particularly emphasizing local desertification and unavailable water supply for irrigation overshadowed all other necessities on nature protection. Releasing of news on climatic changes were so strong that someone could think Turkey took all possible measurements about global warming, despite there was not any concrete action on the problem. It was pity that developments listed below took attention of relatively few people by this atmosphere.

A- Key in-country activities undertaken in 2006

1a- A national level joint project entitled “*Evaluation and advertising of geosites and geoheritage in national parks and their surrounding areas in central Anatolia*” by Jemirko, Ankara Univ., Turkish Geological Survey (MTA), Directorate of National Parks and Nature Conservation Office (NatCo), Scientific and Technological Council of Turkey (TUBITAK) was organised and also started in early 2006. As a matter of fact, this was the first step of a large project covering whole national parks of the country. Study of two parks, Soguksu National Park in Ankara and Yedigöller National Park in Bolu was terminated; a geosite-geoheritage reference book and a geoleaflet for each park have been prepared (they are in still printing process). Introductory panels or boards will be put on each geosite by NatCo.

This project was strategically important as it allowed geosite concept would be included into national parks which have been formed and managed by forest engineers and biologists since beginning to now. Unfortunately there is not any specific legislation in Turkey for geosites and geoheritage. The law for national parks (no 2873) is closest act for our task and it describes four types of natural areas to be conserved; a- *national parks*, b- *Nature parks*, c- *protected areas for natural life*, d- *nature monuments* (old trees). This project was a real success for Jemirko and geoheritage as many institutions and bureaucrats had to learn related terms.

1b- Three caves were opened to touristic visits in 2006. This was also important progress as relevant caves would be maintained and consequently protected. In usual procedure caves were examined

first and cave-use plans were accepted by nature conservation council and then it was applied in 2006. Fortunately many towns and cities have been interested in natural formations, particularly in caves in their territories for both touristic income and local advertisement. It is hoped that this interest would be resulted the conservation of geosites.

1c- Three salt pans in Tuzgolu (= Salt Lake) were privatized in 2005 and they all were defined as “specific area to be conserved for natural environment” in 2006 because of a large bird population. Tuzgolu with surface area of 1600 km² is the largest in Eurasia and the second largest salt lake of the planet earth and it is an international level geoheritage. The official decision dealing with Tuzgolu is significant even if it was due to birds.

2a- As it is mentioned above there is not direct regulations about geoconservation in Turkey and we earthscientists are being thankful for any official rule which covers geosite protection even if it is indirectly. A law (no 5400) about “volunteer park rangers and guides” was adopted in 2006. To this law, local people will be taught about characteristics included geosites and geoheritage of national parks and they can lead park visitors. It is expected that local people will protect the natural beauty in parks. Earthscientists can be guides. This means that geosites in national parks started to take attention.

2b- Directorate of NatCo realized re-planning of two national parks (Gelibolu Histo-cultural park in Canakkale and Soguksu national Park in Ankara) in 2006 for more effective use. Th plans were results of national competition and similar application will be expanded to all national parks.

2c- The Sultansazligi in Kayseri which is a large wetland with high population of migrating birds was designed as a new national park in 2006. Now number of national parks is 37. Sultansazligi (= reed area belong to Sultan in Turkish) is also a good geosite as it is a large turbier where turf, gitty and turba have been forming presently.

3a- A good deal of presentations, more than 75 as poster or oral talks in various symposia, conferences and congress were realized in national and regional level, mostly to the earthscientist audience in 2006. The important one was in 59th Geol. Congress of Turkey, 21 presentations of Geoheritage Session took the biggest crowds in the congress. It is possible to say that geoheritage is

a raising value in Turkey recently particularly within earthscientists and so it appears in every meeting.

3b- Jemirko organised conferences in Pamukkale Univ in Denizli, Onsekizmart Univ in Canakkale and Hacettepe Univ in Ankara mostly about geoinventory and possible geoconservation policies. We, progeo fans think if all geological studies as research, thesis or reports in every level includ *geosite and geoheritage chapter* our national geosite inventory could be completed in next years.

3c- TUBITAK gave supports to 3 projects on nature-protection, -education and ecotourism, all of which were leaded by geographers from different universities. An important part of the projects were geosites and Jemirko members were participated in as readers. Target groups were graduates and geography teachers of high schools. Number of similar projects will be 15 in 2007.

3d- TUBITAK formed a new scientific office in itself for “science for society”. This office will subsidize research and application projects aiming nature conservation and education.

3e- “Earthscience commitee” was set in Turkish Unesco by participation of Jemirko members and they decided to work jointly in IYPE activities, preferably by emphasizing of Turkish geoheritages.

4- Geopark is not included in the Turkish legislation. Jemirko repeated its usual offers (= candidates of potential geoparks) to Ministry of Environment and Forestry (MEF) and to Environment Commission of National Great Assembly (TBMM). There was not any result on seeting geoparks yet, however sites of potential candidates declared as “specific areas to be protected” now by MEF.

5- Jemirko is still only institution on geosites and geoheritage and so its name are known largely. It had 63 active members in 2006. As big number of members caused bureaucratic problems, it tried to keep stable the number of members. Its activity policy was to organise events in and for other institutions.

B- The workers and reserachers of the geosite project in national parks cited above in chapter 1.1 are emeritus earthscientists who are 55-75 yrs old from Geological Survey of Turkey (MTA), however the project was prepared by academicians. Project does not pay any to staff except for daily expenses

during fieldwork. Experiences of emeritus ones are the chance of the project and they are very successful getting positive and rapid results. On the other hand these people are happy as they are active in geology instead of sitting at home. It is nice to say that number of volunteers (emeritus) who would like to join in is increasing.

C- Majority of the 2006 progeo activities was mostly educative and/or introductive, unfortunately very few were on active conservation and/or indirect investment on geosites in Turkey. It is obvious that effective conservation of geosites seems to be difficult in next years by emphasizing importance of geosites; we should find new ways.

- a- Joint works with natural history museums could be a productive way. Because such museums have always good contacts with both schools and bureaucracy. Geosites can help already purposes of museums.
- b- A controlled geotourism (not a wild tourism) could be a chance for investment to the geosites, however it could be also a threat for geosites.

Turkish progeo group was in hope that next years will be fine for geosites and geoheritages.

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