

The Asia Pacific Geotourism Conference 2013 (“APGC 2013”) jointly organised by The Association for Geoconservation, Hong Kong; Hong Kong Global Geopark of China and Committee of Tourism Earthscience and Geopark of Geological Society of China was successfully held on 30 November 2013 at the Hong Kong Convention and Exhibition Centre. It was the first international geotourism conference held in the Asia Pacific region to support the global geopark movement. Supported and sponsored by 17 government, non-governmental organisations and private enterprises including Asia Pacific Geoparks Network, Tourism Commission, Hong Kong Tourism Board and The Travel Industry Council of Hong Kong, APGC 2013 received overwhelming responses with over 300 participants from eight different countries and region in the Asia Pacific region and Europe attended the meeting.

The theme of the Conference is “challenges and opportunities”. It aims at 1) sharing geotourism experience and exploring challenges and opportunities; 2) pioneering Hong Kong as a regional hub to promote geotourism and geopark; and 3) supporting development of Hong Kong Global Geopark in the promotion of conservation, earth sciences popularisation and sustainable economic development.

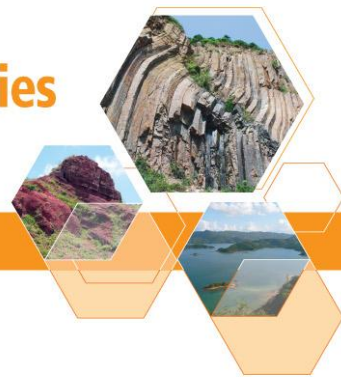
Dr. Young Ng, chairman of the Organizing Committee, opened the Conference by pointing out that this was a good opportunity for experts in the Asia Pacific region to draw together to share their thoughts and experiences and work together for the promotion of geotourism and geoparks.

Mr. Alan Wong, Director of Agriculture, Fisheries and Conservation, HKSARG and management authority of Hong Kong Geopark, shared with the audience the new geotourism experiences initiated by Hong Kong Geopark. He also mentioned some strategies his Department formulated to tackle with the challenges encountered by various stakeholders to promote geotourism.

Mr Tsang Yam Pui, Executive Director of NWS Holdings Limited, emphasised that Hong Kong has a clear advantage in geotourism given its unique and easily accessible geo-attractions, rich heritage and a growing pool of professional geo-guides. The concerted effort of the government, the business community and civic groups will help materialise Hong Kong’s competitive edge and build the community support for a distinctive and authentic experience for visitors.

Keynote speakers included Professor Nickolas ZOUROS, key member of the UNESCO Global Geoparks Network Bureau; Professor Ross DOWLING, advisor of Asia Pacific Geoparks Network; Professor Setsuya NAKADA of the Volcano Research Center, Earthquake Research Institute of the University of Tokyo; Professor Anze CHEN, Research Fellow of the Chinese Academy of Geological Science, China and Professor Zhizhong ZHAO, Vice Director of the Center of National Geoparks of China, Ministry of Land and Resources of China.

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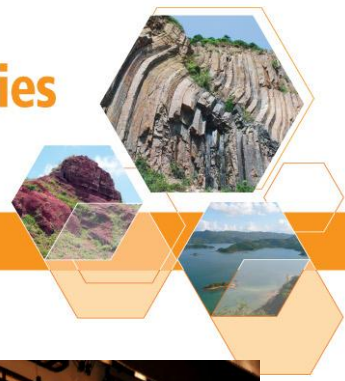
Together with five other overseas and local speakers of various geotourism perspectives, they shared both the theoretic concepts of geopark, geotourism, sustainable development and tourism earthscience to practical challenges and opportunities encountered in promoting geotourism in different countries. Two Young Ambassadors for Geoconservation, the future pillars of society, were invited to express their expectation towards the future of Hong Kong geotourism.

The conference has successfully drawn experts from different areas and helped building up a very powerful network for future development of geotourism in the Asia Pacific region. The overwhelming interest with the participation of large number of delegates also demonstrated that geotourism has attracted tremendous attention of tourism authorities, operators, scholars, professionals and individuals. The conference is expected to be held once every two years as a regular event to promote geotourism and geoparks.



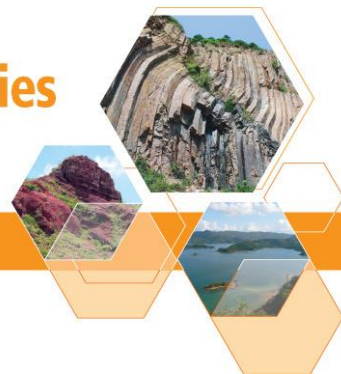
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