



**Chair: Professor John Gunn,
School of Geography, Earth and Environmental Sciences, University of Birmingham, UK**

Prof Dr Nadja Zupan Hajna, President UIS
ZRC SAZU Karst Research Institute
Titov trg 2, 6230 Postojna, Slovenia

30 May 2024

Dear Nadja,

On behalf for the Cave and Karst Working Group, part of the Geoheritage Specialist Group in the IUCN World Commission on Protected Areas, I am pleased to offer our support for the UIS proposal for an International Day of Caves and Karst (IDCK). In 2020 the IUCN World Conservation Congress passed a resolution on Geoheritage and protected areas which *“encouraged national Member organisations, other nature conservation organisations, civil society, academia and managers of protected areas... to support the respectful exploration and study of underground environments and their interrelations with the surface”*. The resolution also called on *“states, non-governmental organisations, universities, researchers, economic stakeholders and protected area managers to take into account the specific issues linked to underground environments in the definition and implementation of nature conservation policies and to adopt a holistic approach to the management of underground natural environments, considering all relationships between biological and geological elements”*. [see <https://portals.iucn.org/library/node/49213>]. These fit very well with the IDCK goals of dedicating a day to education, conservation, and public awareness of caves and karst systems and of promoting global recognition and sustainable management of these environments. Globally there are many protected areas, with designations ranging from international down to local, that contain karst landforms and caves but where the presence and importance of these environments is poorly understood by managers. A day dedicated to caves and karst will provide an opportunity to highlight the specific issues linked to these environments and a springboard for developing and implementing beneficial policies. The CKWG worked co-operatively with UIS in developing the 2022 IUCN-UIS Guidelines for Cave and Karst Protection and we look forward to working with UIS to make the IDCK a great success if it is adopted by UNESCO.

Yours sincerely,

Professor John Gunn, Chair CKWG