

Karst and Cave Conservation - A World Perspective

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IUCN / WCPA Task Force on Caves
and Karst

There has always been Heritage . . .

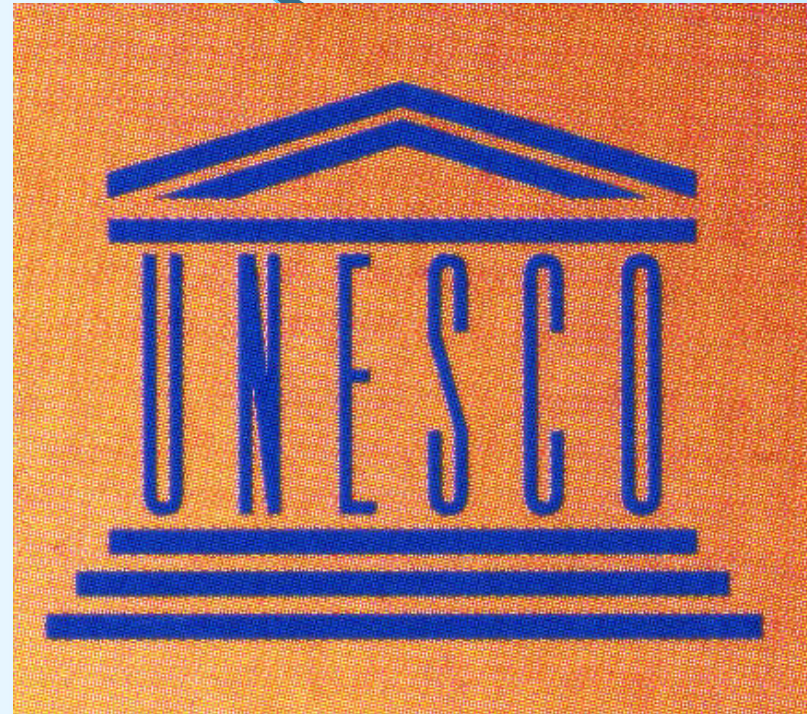
- Things handed on from generation to generation
 - Sacred Places
 - Preserves of the rich and powerful
 - Places of special beauty

Now, there is a group of international protocols

- 1968-71 Man and the Biosphere Program with its Biosphere Reserves
- 1971 Ramsar Convention on Wetlands
- 1972 World Heritage Convention
- 1982 Charter for Nature
- And evolving: the World Geoparks Network

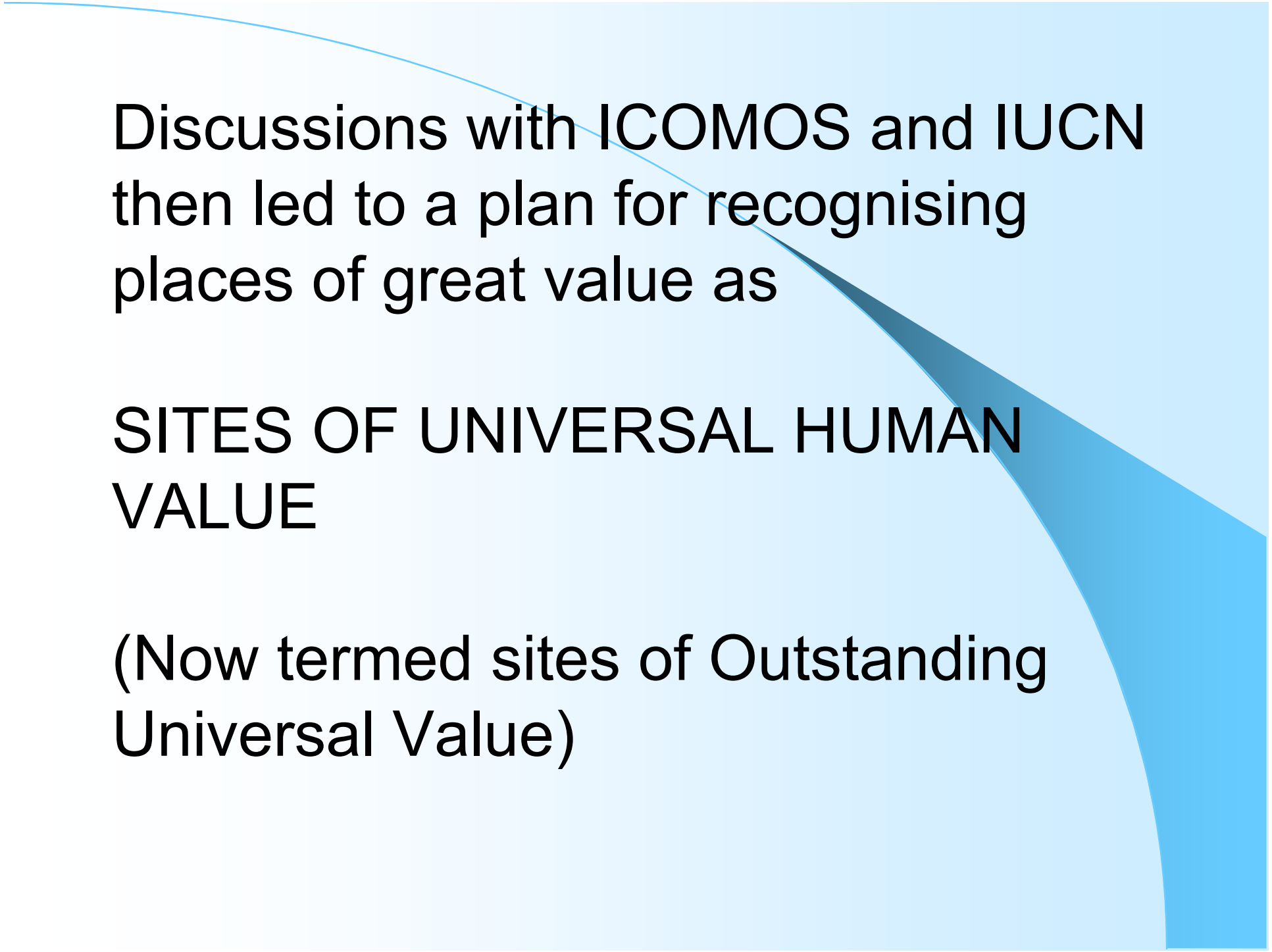
World Heritage: The beginnings

- 1960: The Nubian Monuments of the Nile Valley were saved by Renè Maheu, then Director of UNESCO



Abu Simbel (After Roberts 1846)





Discussions with ICOMOS and IUCN
then led to a plan for recognising
places of great value as

**SITES OF UNIVERSAL HUMAN
VALUE**

(Now termed sites of Outstanding
Universal Value)

So, in 1972

- The World Heritage Convention was established as an international agreement or treaty



The Register now includes some 800 sites

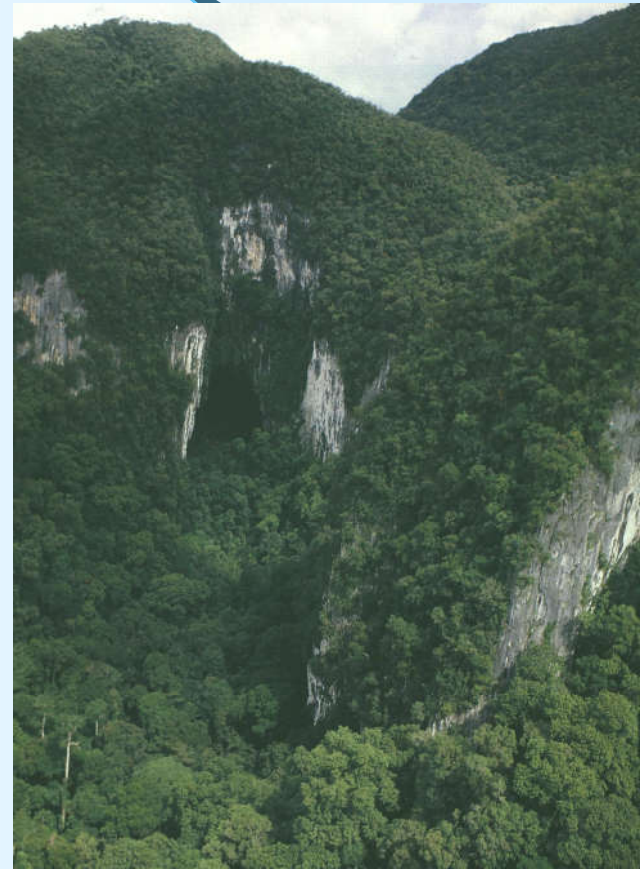
- Cultural Heritage
- Natural Heritage
- Mixed Sites, i.e., having both cultural and natural values
- Cultural Landscapes, i.e., sites within which cultural and natural values are integrated and inseparable



Today, every effort is made to:

- Ensure that each site is genuinely of outstanding universal value
- Minimize duplication of characteristics
- Ensure that each new site is the best example of its kind
- Aim at inclusive boundaries of total natural systems

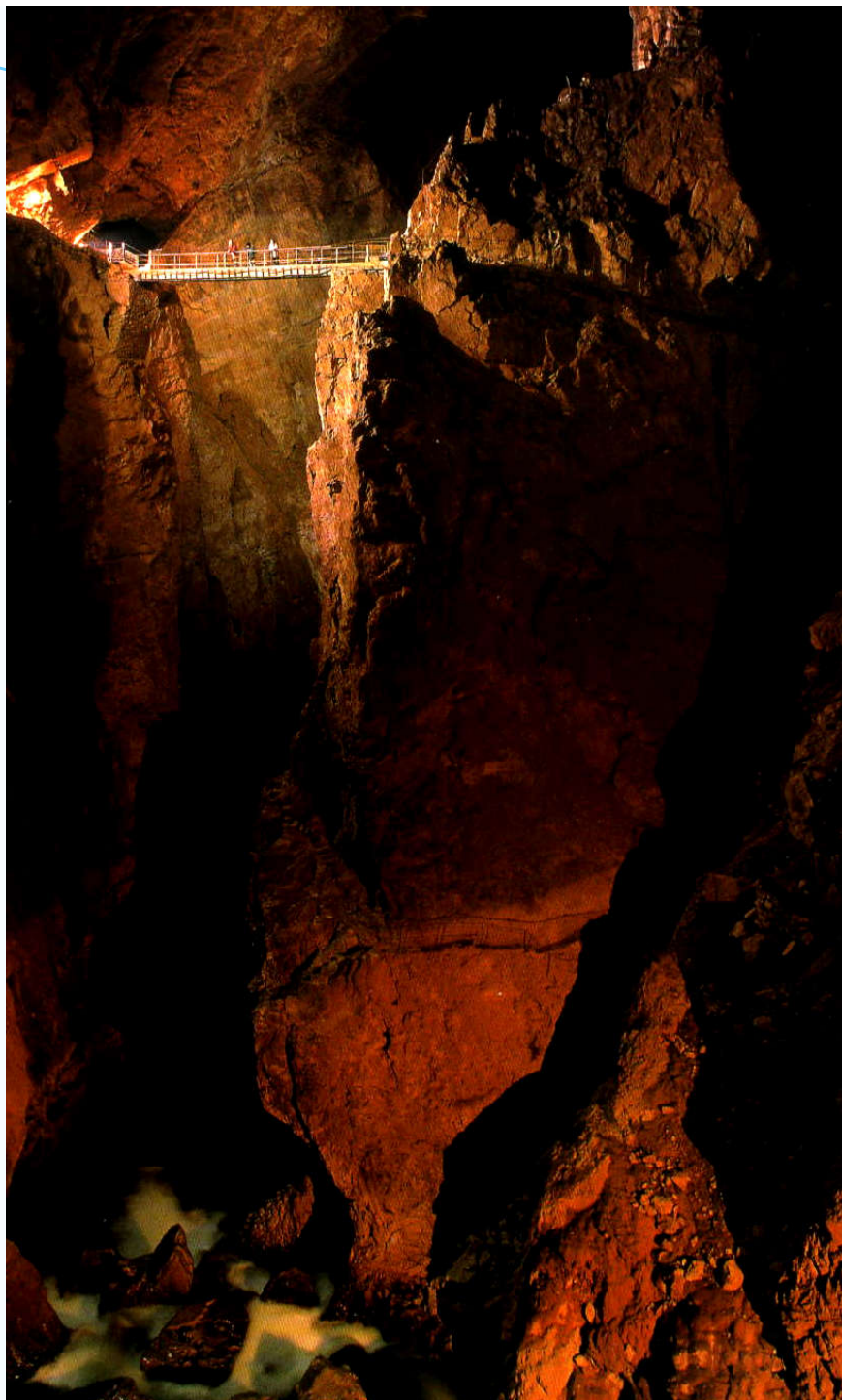
- Some 50 sites are either within karst or include major caves
- They meet one or more of a series of criteria



Sheer beauty, or of Spectacular (sublime) Character

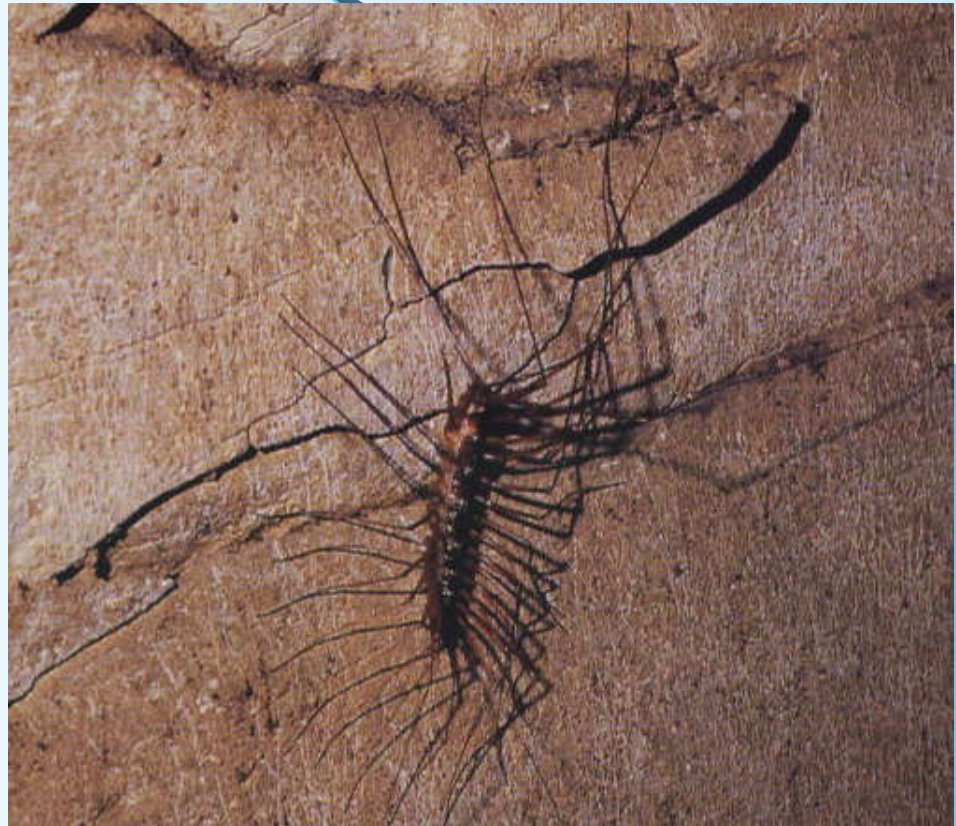


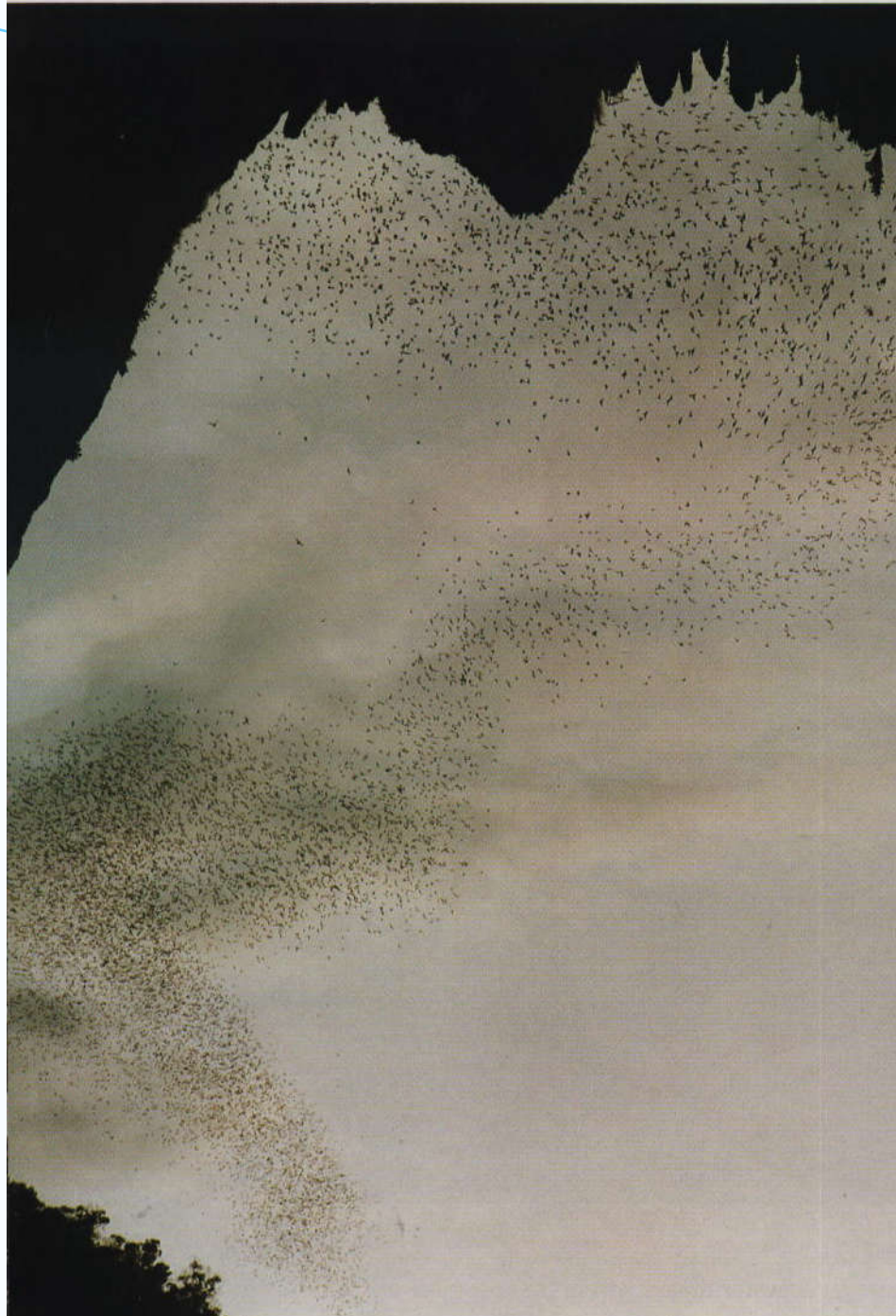




Outstanding Biodiversity Values

- Not surprising, as karst provides an immense range of microclimates and hence environmental niches, both underground and on the surface





Geo-climatic and Environmental History



- *Caves are the books in the library of the history of the earth !*



History of human culture





Cultural Landscapes may be

- Intentionally created
- Organically evolved as a result of social or other human influences
 - Either a relict of a past regime, or
 - Part of continuing and long standing traditions or lifestyles
 - Associated with religious, artistic or cultural traditions, even though little material evidence remains

The Host Nation must:

- Provide for proper protection and maintenance of the site
- Make access available to the peoples of the world





The Biosphere Reserves

- Essentially these represent a commitment on the part of the stakeholders and the state parties
- to work towards an appropriate balance between development and conservation
- And so to achieve sustainability

Today, they . . .

- Generally are based around a core protected area
- The biosphere reserve pattern of negotiated management by stakeholders can provide an ideal basis for buffer zone management

Ramsar was established to . . .

- Foster protection and quality management of wetlands
- Became best known for its work on behalf of migratory water-birds
- But now has a section devoted to subterranean wetlands, most of which are in karst.

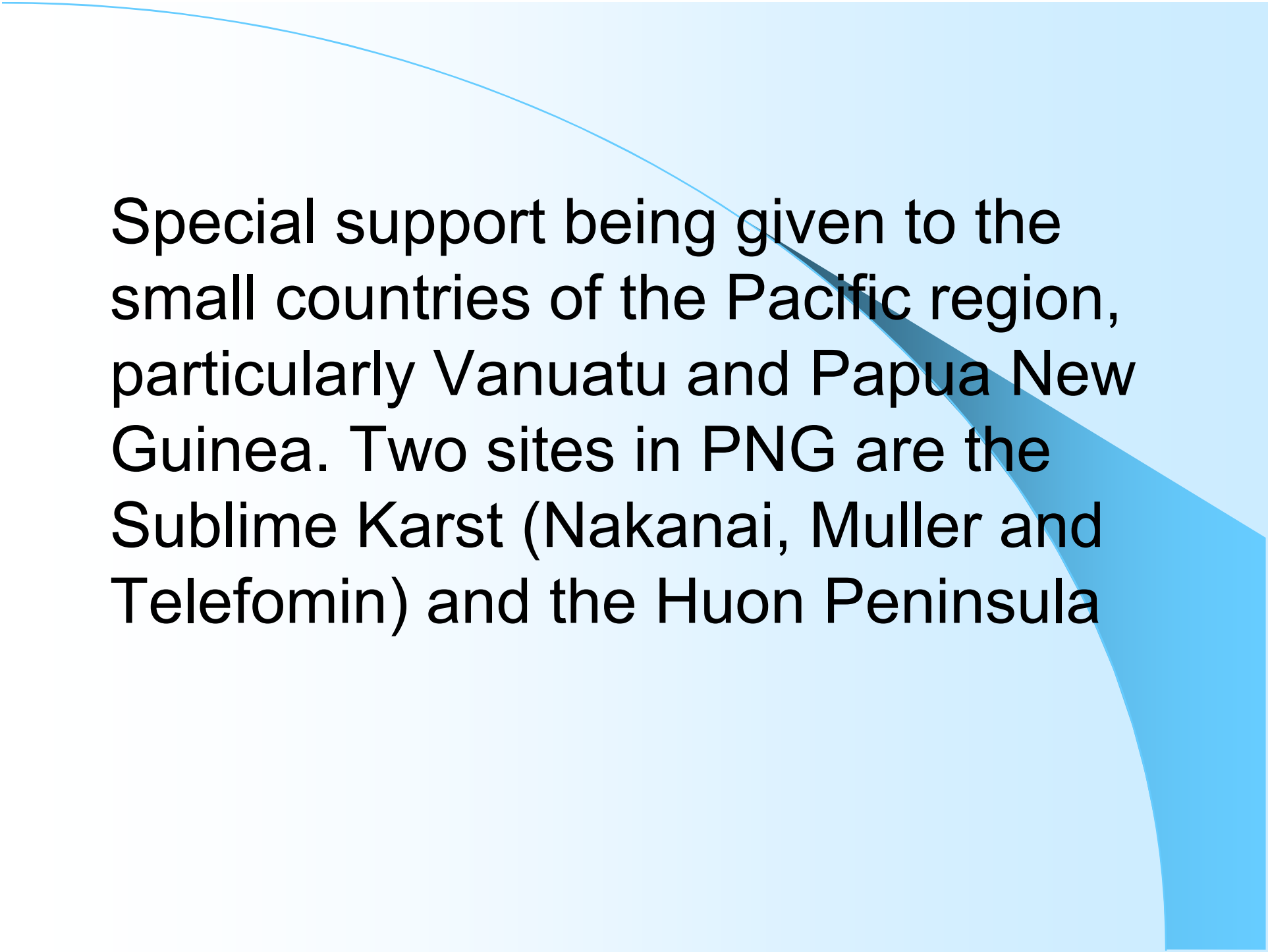


Geoparks are developing rapidly . . .

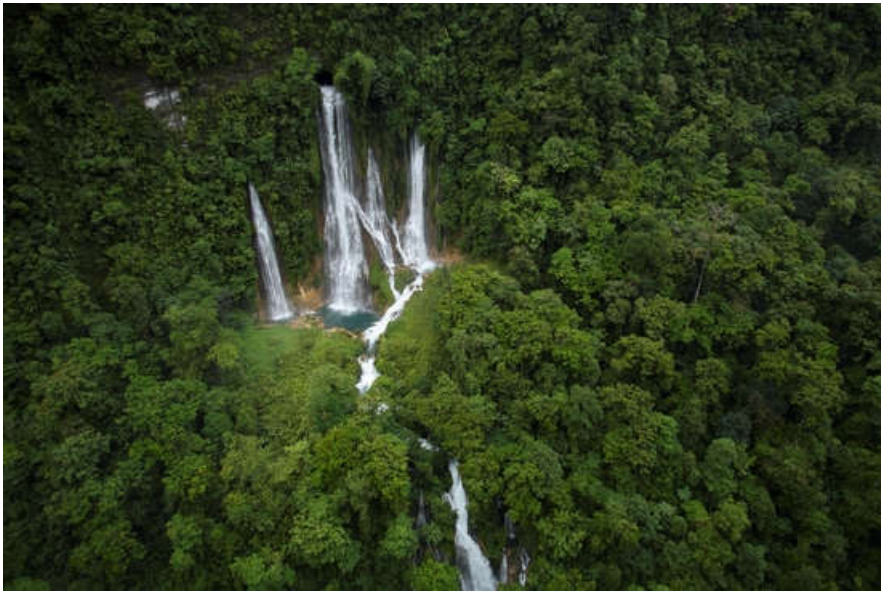
- Aimed at protection of, respect for and understanding of geological phenomena
- Strong emphasis on public education
- Networks developing in Europe, Asia and Australia with now regular world meetings

Now to the good news . . .

- A continuing growth in recognised sites
- Including more karst sites (with a significant focus on the Asian-Pacific Region)
- Generally a significant improvement in management quality
- A couple of examples below

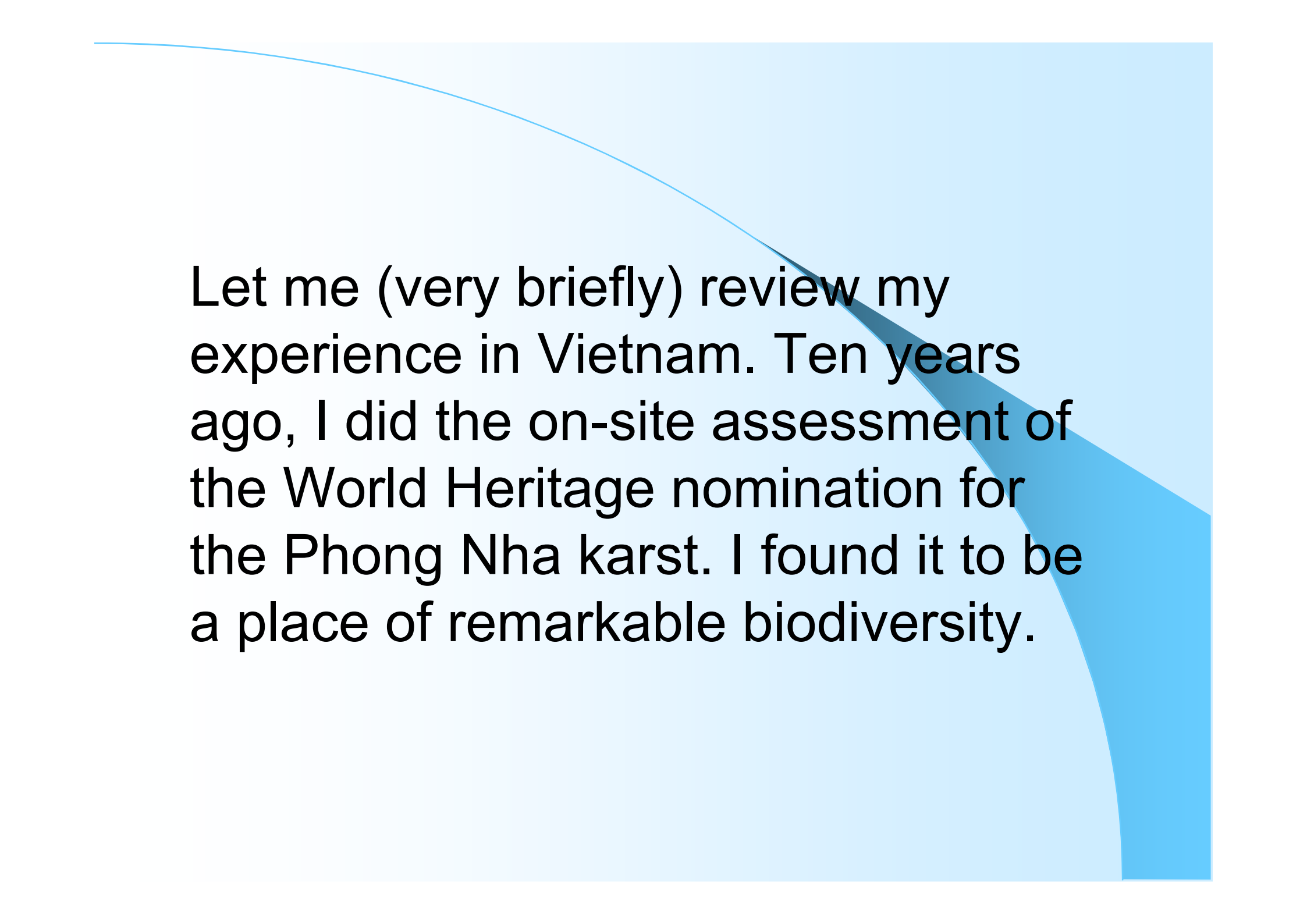


Special support being given to the small countries of the Pacific region, particularly Vanuatu and Papua New Guinea. Two sites in PNG are the Sublime Karst (Nakanai, Muller and Telefomin) and the Huon Peninsula



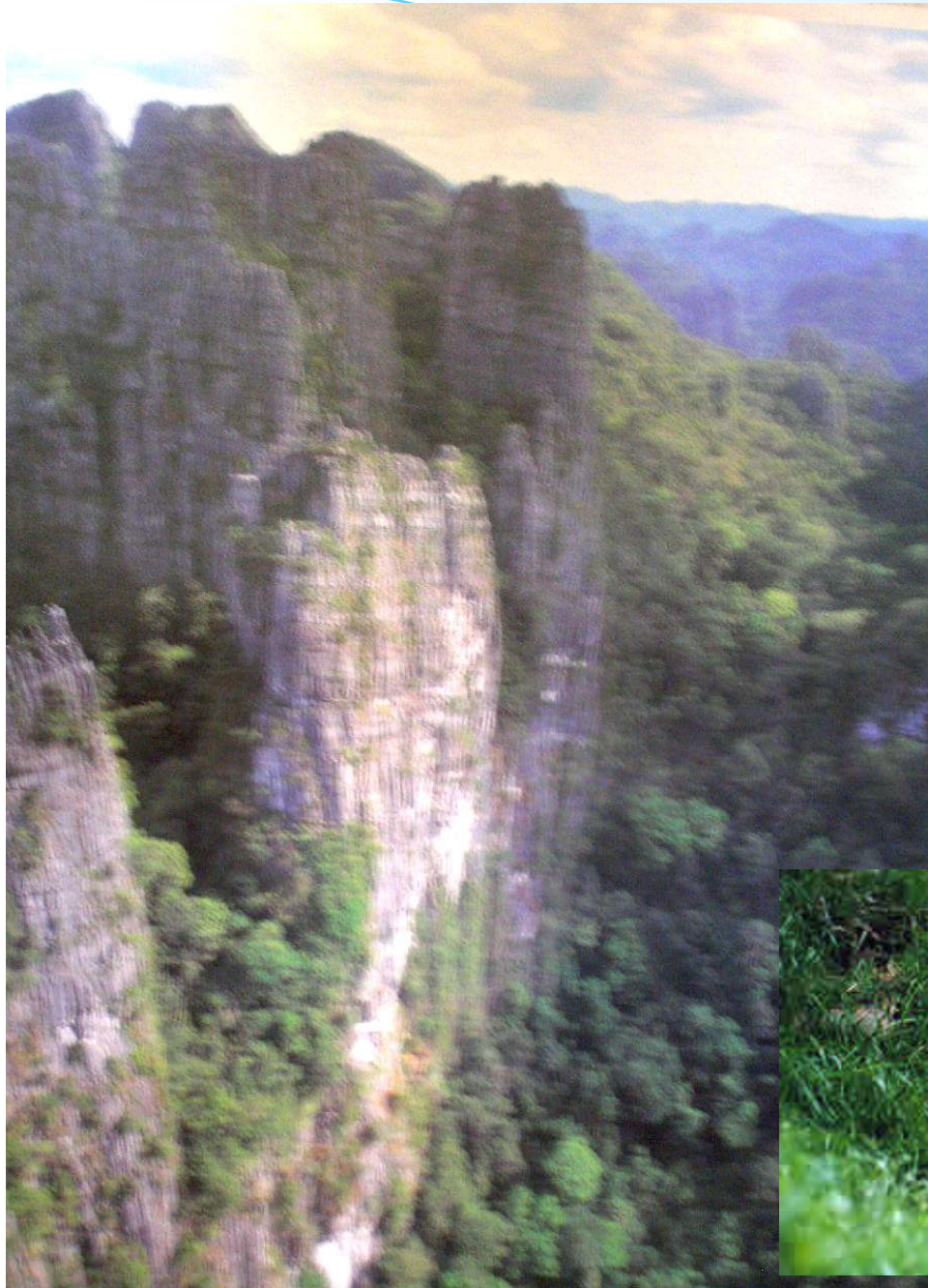
China already has four karst World Heritage Areas. But a serial nomination of some 12 locations is in progress on the South China Karst. Given that China has some 25% of world karst, this is probably not an excessive number

One of these locations is the exceptional Maolan forest. Generally considered the world's finest sub-tropical rain forest, this has been managed by the Shui People on a basis of sustainability for over 1,000 years.

The background is a light blue gradient. A thin, dark blue curved line starts from the top left and arcs towards the center. A darker blue triangular shape is positioned on the right side, pointing towards the center.

Let me (very briefly) review my experience in Vietnam. Ten years ago, I did the on-site assessment of the World Heritage nomination for the Phong Nha karst. I found it to be a place of remarkable biodiversity.

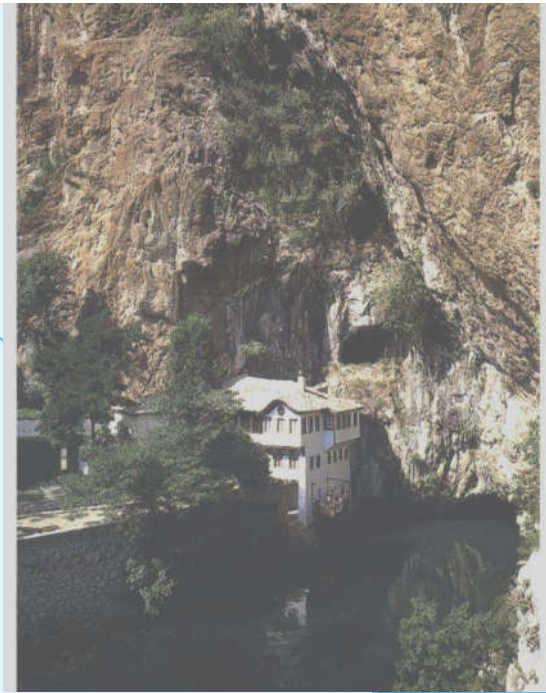
The nomination was premature so I recommended deferment, but also (a) that the proposed area be quadrupled and (b) a trans-boundary agreement be struck so to include the Hin Namno Karst of the Lao PDR. The first took **less than six months**; and I have only just returned from a joint meeting to establish the trans-boundary agreement.




Bosnia and Herzegovina is bouncing back

- The wondrous Vjetrenica Cave
- And the Popovo Polje







France, Italy and Slovenia have
joined in a three country program of
identifying and managing Karst
Cultural Landscapes

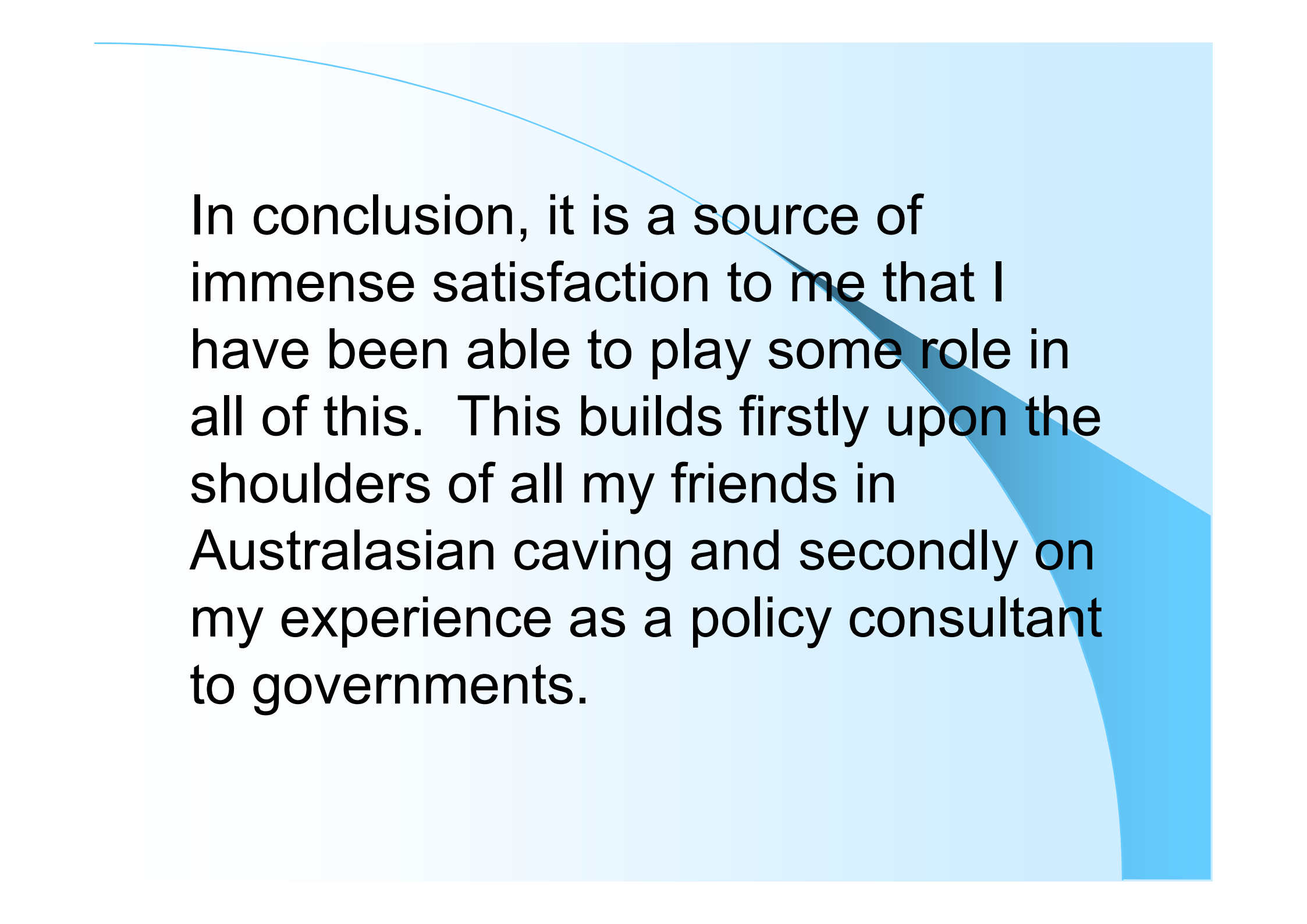
And some bad news . . .

- War is destroying or seriously threatening a number of wonderful sites
- Poor Management of either the site or of associated tourism is destroying others almost as effectively

The Worst is in South Africa . . .

- The Cradle of Humankind site at Sterkfontein is very likely to be totally destroyed by acidic waters rising from abandoned mine shafts





In conclusion, it is a source of immense satisfaction to me that I have been able to play some role in all of this. This builds firstly upon the shoulders of all my friends in Australasian caving and secondly on my experience as a policy consultant to governments.