

23th Dec. 2017

To: the officers of UNESCO concerning the World Geopark, Kumamoto, Japan

From: Mr. Nakajima Yasushi, Head of the Association for Protecting Nature and Life without Tateno Dam

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Mr. Nishi Seiichi, Head of the group of Kumamoto Prefectural Assembly.  
Assembly member concerned with flood control and water usage without dam system.

Mr. Tatsuya Tanoue, Head of the group of Kumamoto City Council  
concerned with Shirakawa flood control without Tateno dam

The Representative above is Mr. Nakajima Yasushi.

## Request

### to Stop the Columns Destruction of the Aso / Tateno Canyon In World Geopark and to Preserve the Columns on Right Bank

Columns made from lava of Aso volcano have been destroyed by construction work by the Ministry of Land, Infrastructure and Transportation of the Japanese government in the Aso -Tateno Canyon already designated as the "World Geopark" by UNESCO.

The columns were destroyed due to the construction of the New Aso Bridge. The location of the "New Aso Bridge" and its construction method were decided before the plan was thoroughly thought and it was announced in the newspaper.

After September 14th, various news reports were made in the top national newspapers like Mainichi Shinbun and etc.

If Japanese and local government had asked for opinions at the stage of deciding the location and construction method of the Tateno dam, we would have thought of alternatives that do not destroy the precious columns.

More valuable columns can be seen about 1 km downstream of the destroyed columns site on the right bank of the Tateno Dam. Here, the 5- to 8-layer vertical columns and plate-shaped columns of the Tateno lava can clearly be observed.

We can understand very well that the Tateno lava has flowed down many times in history. If the main construction work of the Tateno dam begins, these valuable columns of a width of 200 m, a height of 90 m, maximum thickness of 40 m will permanently be swallowed by the concrete of the dam.

These columns are also academically a precious geologic heritage and should be studied by posterity. We will be able to know the formation of Aso area. The landscape can also be valuable tourist resource for local people.

The MLITT (Japanese government) declared that they have been considering the methods to preserve valuable landscapes by establishing a reviewing committee which consist of experts on landscape in Kumamoto prefecture, Otsu town, Minamiaso village etc.

However, according to news reports, unfortunately it can only be said that the Ministry concerned LITT does not care about Tateno Canyon being situated in the precious World Geopark.

The MLITT, the operator of the Tateno Dam has faced a lot of uneasiness and doubts from people about the construction of the Tateno dam. The surrounding ground collapsed on a large scale and the running of active faults were seen at the time the Kumamoto earthquake, April 2016. Nevertheless, the Japanese Government has never held a dam briefing session for people living close to Tateno dam and along the river Shirakawa. They are not trying to answer any questions from the residents. The frequent proposition sent by residents who do not want the World Geopark destroyed because of dam were not forwarded at all.

Concerning the destruction of the columns this time, the MLITT officially stated on its website "We will proceed with the construction of Tateno dam while paying attention to the terrain and geology etc. that are precious for the world."

But there is no way to reform the attitude of the MLITT. The MLITT does not inform the residents about Tateno dam, does not know the voice of residents, not responding to the inhabitants' doubts, and regretfully destroys the valuable geological heritage while the residents do not know it.

The World Geopark committee will review the recertification of Aso Geopark next year. The Japan Geopark Committee on 27th September, 2017, decided that committee urges the local council to reconsider its stance by next review scheduled for next year by UNESCO.

In order to conserve the Aso Geopark and ensure the recertification by the World Geopark next year, we ask the officers of UNESCO to supervise Japanese and local governments the following 2 points.

### The matters to be considered in urgent

1. To strongly supervise and request the Japanese Government and the Ministry of Land, Infrastructure, Transport and Tourism to stop the construction of the Tateno Dam in order to preserve the precious geologic heritage columns of the Aso Geopark for the future.
2. To strongly supervise and request the Japanese government and the Ministry of Land, Infrastructure, Transport and Tourism not to destroy valuable Aso's heritage and sufficiently inform with local councils and residents about the construction of the dam and the reconstruction work after the Kumamoto earthquake.



Main Tateno lava site, the right bank of the river where dam is planned.

(taken on 7th October 2012)

The MLITT emphasizes that the outcrop of columns affected by dam construction is only partial. However the vertical columns of lava rocks and the horizontal plates are only observed at this point. The stratum of 5 to 8 layers overlap that are clearly visible.



Before being destroyed, the columns at the site of reservoir of Tateno.  
(taken on 19th December,2015)



Destroyed columns. (taken on 30th August 2017)