



FÉDÉRATION EUROPÉENNE DES GÉOLOGUES
EUROPEAN FEDERATION OF GEOLOGISTS
FEDERACIÓN EUROPEA DE GEÓLOGOS

24th June 2010

Open letter to the President of the Republic of Italy

(sent *via* Istituto Nazionale di Geofisica e Vulcanologia (INGV))

Dear Sir

I write on behalf of the European Federation of Geologists to express grave concern over the indictment of scientists and public officials for an alleged failure to provide warning of the devastating L'Aquila earthquake.

The European Federation of Geologists (www.eurogeologists.eu) has at the cornerstone of its mission the promotion of absolute integrity and the highest standards of professional and ethical standards for geologists and other geoscientists. We are also engaged in the promotion of excellence in communicating scientific concepts in our areas of expertise to non-specialists ranging from ordinary members of the public to politicians and regulators.

We support in its entirety the text of the open letter signed by prominent members of the Italian and Worldwide scientific community (<http://www.mi.ingv.it/open_letter/>) and, in particular, wish to register our strong endorsement of the final paragraph:

“The scientific community involved in earthquake science urges the Italian government, local authorities and decision makers in general, to be proactive in establishing and carrying out local and national programs to support earthquake preparedness and risk mitigation rather than prosecuting scientists for failing to do something they cannot do yet - predict earthquakes.”

It seems highly likely that these indictments of scientists and public officials arise not because of any lack of professional or ethical behaviour on their part but because of a misunderstanding of the scientific background and the status of earthquake prediction. However, now that eminent practitioners in this field have provided such an excellent, authoritative, non-technical summary, we hope soon to hear that the indictments against individual geologists and public officials have been withdrawn. Further we encourage local and national government to take all necessary steps (training and information) to remedy the misunderstanding of the science of earthquake prediction that appears to have led to these prosecutions being brought. I am sure that INGV would be more than happy to arrange appropriate training sessions and materials for relevant officials and public bodies. Their expert involvement should ensure that hazard identification and damage mitigation measures are implemented in the manner described in the letter you have received.

Yours faithfully

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