

## PREFACE

It is my distinguished pleasure to introduce this volume devoted to geoethics and edited by Silvia Peppoloni and Giuseppe Di Capua, for two main reasons.

First and foremost, the volume is a collection of papers presented during the 'Geoethics' scientific session at the 8th Italian Forum of Earth Sciences that was held in September 2011, in Turin, Italy. The Forum singled out sustainability – “Earth Sciences for sustainable development” – as its main theme, thus highlighting the key role of the geosciences with respect to important issues for the present, and in particular, for the future of our society. Resources and energy, climate, water, impact reduction of natural hazards, new materials, and protection and conservation of cultural heritage are all aspects of interest where a (geo)ethical approach is strongly needed.

Public opinion is growing more aware of the critical issues that our society will have to face in the environmental field. Unfortunately, neither the perception of virtuous behavior, nor its adoption appear to be keeping pace with this increasing awareness. This gap is common at various levels, from politicians to ordinary citizens, and it has multiple and complex reasons that are sometimes dramatically highlighted by the effects of improper use of the land. Admittedly, it is necessary to provide better information about the role that geosciences can have in offering most of the answers to critical questions, providing decision makers not only with the tools they need to face the most daunting challenges – infrastructure safety, water and energy supplies, environmental protection – but also with new cultural and ethical values.

The second reason has to do with the careful attention that the *Federazione Italiana di Scienze della Terra* (Italian Federation of Earth Sciences) is paying to the sharing and spreading of ethical values, which resulted in the establishment of its own Geoethical Commission in January 2011. This commission is primarily entrusted with the task of drawing up a list of ethical behavior and commitments that will be submitted for approval by everyone active in the field of the geosciences.

We and all those working in the field of environment and natural resources management know only too well that any decisions taken in this context can result in significant, and potentially irreversible, consequences. We therefore have a responsibility to correctly inform the public of any risks involved in excessive and irrational exploitation of our natural resources, and to raise the awareness in each and every one of us, from the early years of public education, that the environment is worth protecting and preserving for future generations.

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