

A new mission for the geosciences in an age of pandemics and beyond

*Alberto Montanari¹, Helen Glaves²

1. University of Bologna, 2. British Geological Survey, Environmental Science Centre

Geoscience aims to address key environmental challenges that are relevant to society. Some of these challenges, such as climate change, overexploitation of water resources and the water-food-energy nexus, have a global dimension. Recently science at large has been profoundly impacted by COVID-19. The tragedy of coronavirus, with more than 400,000 deaths to date, is going to broadly change our lifestyle, including research avenues and the way we organize and manage scientific activities. Science will also be pivotal to ensuring a prompt recovery from the pandemic and transforming this crisis into an opportunity. Working for a brighter future is the most appropriate way to honour the memory of those who lost their life. In particular, I believe the expertise of geoscientists can support a synergetic approach to mitigating the risk of global crises. Strategies and actions to support economic recovery of countries during COVID-19 and beyond may also contribute to reducing the hazard and impact of other global threats that geoscientists are currently investigating. To reach this goal, we have to look at our research targets and organize our scientific activities with a new vision. The current crisis has created a window of opportunity to increase public trust in science and improve wider interaction between scientists and policy makers in general. In this talk we will discuss the conditions, strategies and attitude that may help geoscientists to achieve this target.

Keywords: COVID-19, Virtual networking, Geosciences