

**6th World Landslide Forum
Florence, 14 November 2023
Opening Plenary Session
Message from Paolo Canuti**

UNESCO Chairholder prevention and sustainable mitigation of geo-hydrological hazard

Good morning.

I am particularly pleased to be with you today, albeit from afar, to open the 6th World Landslide Forum here in Florence, in my city.

The UNESCO Chair Prevention and Sustainable Mitigation of Geo-Hydrological Hazards, of which I am a founder, is co-organizing the event together with the International Consortium on Landslides, of which I have been president and co-founder in the past.

As a landslide scientist, I am pleased to see so many specialists on landslide risk reduction gathered in Florence. Not only researchers, but also technicians, practitioners, policy makers, and other stakeholders.

Landslides are complex and widespread phenomena in all mountainous, hilly, coastal, and submarine areas. They cause a wide range of damage to communities, infrastructure, cultural heritage and the environment.

For this reason, the World Landslide Forums are organized every three years to bring together all those who can help reduce the risk of landslides on a global scale, particularly in less developed and developing countries, with special attention to the most vulnerable populations such as rural communities, women, children and the physically disabled.

I would like to thank Kyoji Sassa, who is the tireless driving force behind the International Consortium on Landslides. We all owe him the original idea of bringing together the worldwide community of landslide and risk reduction experts into a global consortium.

We owe to him the idea of starting our own scientific journal and a series of open access books to make knowledge available to those who cannot afford to access scientific literature.

We owe to him the long-term vision of making a concrete contribution to the global risk reduction efforts set out in the Sendai Framework through the International Program on Landslides, the series of World Landslide Forums, the Kyoto Commitment

2020, and other joint commitments that enabled scientists, engineers, and policy makers to engage in constructive dialog.

I also welcome and thank the past Presidents of the Consortium: Yin Yueping, Peter Bobrowsky and all Vice Presidents and Officers, President-elect Zeljko Arbanas, Chairman of the International Program on Landslides Matjaž Mikoš and his predecessors in this important position.

I would like to thank the Rector of the University of Florence Alessandra Petrucci. I have been working at this University for over 40 years, first as Professor of Engineering Geology, then as holder of the UNESCO Chair that the University has establish on the topic of geo-hydrological risk mitigation.

Together with the Rector, I thank Nicola Casagli and Veronica Tofani for representing the University in the International Consortium on Landslides and for achieving important goals such as the organization of this Forum.

I am particularly honored to have received the Consortium's Varnes Medal, the highest award for a landslide researcher. I have personally met David Varnes and admired his exceptional analytical and synthetic skills, as well as the rigor and innovation of his scientific approach to landslide studies.

I must have forgotten to thank someone, and for that I apologize.

The best gift I could get is the presence of all of you here in Florence, talking together about landslides.

Thank you very much and have a fruitful World Landslide Forum.