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CANDIDATE'S STATEMENT

My first encounter with the IAEG community dates back to the International Symposium organized by the Greek National Group of IAEG in 1988 in Athens. Since then I have attended many IAEG congresses and regional conferences, including the last European Regional Conference (ERG) held, again, in Athens in 2021. It is also my privilege to currently act (2019-2022) as the Official Representative of the National Research Council of Italy to IAEG. Thanks to this recent position, and, in particular, through the official Council meetings as well as informal discussions with the representatives of different National Groups and members of the Executive Committee IAEG, I have learned more about the Association. All this motivates me to offer my experience and involvement to promote the growth of IAEG.

I am aware of the Association accomplishments and strengths. There are still some persisting issues (e.g., maintaining/enlarging the membership; enhancing the activity of National Groups), as well as new challenges related to the evolution of engineering geology (broadening of the field to cover the growing impact of natural hazards and climate change, environmental and safety concerns). In this context, I feel qualified to contribute to IAEG in the role of the Vice-President, because of my long and diverse work experience in research, academia and consulting, as well as in serving as an editor of a top scientific journal (see CV). Moreover, I have had research project collaborations with various public and private institutions, and maintain direct contacts with engineering geologists in many European countries. Although I live and work in Italy, I was born in Poland and have established contacts with engineering geologists from several countries of Eastern Europe. I can also benefit from the knowledge of four European languages (including two slavic) and from the awareness of cultural differences throughout Europe.

Although the Association is doing well, there is still potential for growth and for enhancing its relevance and leadership. It seems that this potential is unexplored in a number of countries, including those of the Eastern Europe. The proposed action agenda aimed at untapping this potential is summarized below with reference to the responsibilities of the Vice-Presidents defined in the *Bylaws* of the Association:

a) *Promoting IAEG membership and encouraging new National Groups* – I would focus on meeting in person with the Groups' representatives and local engineering geology leaders in their own countries. To attract new/young members, I would consider presenting lectures (e.g., in university departments, geological surveys, research institutes) on current issues and trending topics in engineering geology, along with updated introductory information about the Association. New/young members are needed to revive the existing National Group as well as to establish the new Groups. In this context, new opportunities could be identified in Eastern Europe, where the rate of construction of more infrastructure is high and this presents new opportunities to engineering geologists.

b) *Supporting the National Groups in their area and providing information and guidance in relation to matters pertaining to IAEG* – e-mail-based networking alone may not suffice and face to face meetings seem needed to redefine involvement and foster greater engagement of inactive or little active National Groups.

c) *Encouraging and supporting symposia, conferences and meetings in their area* – there is an urgent need to foster more frequent and regular organization of such events in Europe, following a well-established tradition of excellent ARCs. The example of the last European Regional Conference of IAEG held in 2021 in Athens, Greece, demonstrates the importance of such initiatives for disseminating new knowledge, discussing the current and future opportunities and promoting collaborations between the researchers and professionals working in the vast field of engineering geology. The direct involvement of academia and professionals, with the balanced participation of both established experts and young members and students, are the necessary ingredients for a successful IAEG conference. My personal goal would be to encourage the organization of such a conference or symposium in one of the Eastern European countries. A joint organization by two neighbouring countries can also be an option to explore.

d) *Endeavouring to ensure each of the National Groups is represented at Council meetings, or if this is not possible, that a proxy vote is given* – this can be secured through person to person contacts, as well as the identification and greater involvement of local dynamic figures. Although it may sound obvious, the National Groups represent the true potential of the Association and enhancing their activities is of utmost importance.