

LEADER

by

PROF. ALBERTO PRESTININZI

Scientific Editor-in-Chief

HALTING THE DISSEMINATION OF FALSE SCIENTIFIC COMMUNICATIONS NOT TO MISS THE OPPORTUNITY FOR DEVELOPING MAJOR ACTIONS FOR PREVENTION OF NATURAL RISKS

We have often tackled the issue of natural risks, namely those due to seismic and hydrogeological events. Central to our debates has always been prevention, i.e. the capability of our social system to make the best use of the wealth of knowledge acquired in risk planning and mitigation in the past few years. However, difficulties arise when the administrative-political system attempts to promote rational and positive prevention policies. Indeed, the more and more pervasive action of the media in communicating climate change puts a heavy strain on these policies. Slogans and sensational definitions, mostly based on the opinions of (almost invariably) political organisations, tend to lay the blame for the intensification of floods and landslides, with increasing damage to people and property, on climate change rather than on anthropogenic factors, i.e. poor care for the environment and low respect for scientific rules. Earthquakes, too, have caused increasing damage to people and property, but here the blame cannot be placed on climate change. There is a paradox in all this. A large number of scientists expressed doubts about the correlation between higher carbon levels in the atmosphere and global warming. Now, many authoritative communicators, certainly in “good faith”, feel that these scientists are to be ranked among NEGATIONISTS, just as those denying the Nazi holocaust or the landing of man on the moon or even some minorities disputing the legitimacy of compulsory vaccination of our children. This hateful anti-scientific epithet, coined for scientists expressing doubts, cannot certainly be applied to all those (including some of the leading Nobel prize-winners) that have devoted their entire life to research, building their opinions on scientific results based on experimental research procedures. Their fault is that they sharply discriminate between scientific theories and opinions and that they reject demagogical definitions not founded on models and scientific evidence. Apart

from some problems that may be attributed to data manipulation, the most crucial issue is that western countries have made key economic choices, since the Kyoto Protocol (1997), by relying on political decisions. In a complex system, in which the world’s major research institutions are involved, these political decisions have led to considering CO₂ abatement as the sole parameter capable of decreasing global temperature by about 2°C in the coming years. However, these decisions only reflect the arrogance of top decision-makers and are very remindful of some Inquisition trials in the Early Middle Ages.