

Dr. Alejandro Ceccatto
Presidente
Consejo Nacional de Investigaciones Científicas y Técnicas (CONICET)
Godoy Cruz 2290 (C1425FQB)
Ciudad Autónoma de Buenos Aires, Argentina

Paris, 8 December 2017

Letter of concern about allegations against Dr. Ricardo Villalba

Dear Dr. Ceccatto,

In this letter I am expressing my support for Dr. Ricardo Villalba, whom I have known since 12 year now, through his scientific work and service to the international scientific community, including the Past Global Changes project of the former International Geosphere-Biosphere Programme and now under the umbrella of the Future Earth programme.

Dr. Villalba is one of South America's internationally best renowned researchers in the environmental sciences due to his high quality of work, which is based on rigor in methodologies and firm scrutiny in scientific interpretation. His work has continuously been peer-reviewed by international colleagues, who are world experts in their respective fields. Dr. Villalba is thus valued as a researcher of highest integrity, which is strikingly inconsistent with the allegations against him and the questioning of the integrity of his scientific work on the Inventory of Glaciers in Argentina.

I am deeply bewildered that a scientific study is made the penal target of an environmental disaster that, as I understand, could happen essentially due to a very poor risk judgment by the mining company and by the responsible regulation institutions. If the already very detailed minimum threshold of a country-wide glacier inventory is the matter of argument here, then it is obvious that the readiness to take a substantial risk for disaster was already irresponsibly high.

Finally, I see this prosecution as an aggression against scientific integrity as a whole. Our organization Future Earth is keen to provide knowledge to decision makers to allow them to make better decisions for a sustainable future. However, I consider it unacceptable to make peer-reviewed science then accountable for poor decision-making at the regulatory, political or business management levels. I therefore feel obliged to foster attention and discourse around this case at the level of international research communities and public.

Kind regards,



Thorsten Kiefer, PhD
Future Earth Secretariat
Director Global Hub in Paris, France