



INTERNATIONAL COUNCIL FOR SCIENCE

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By email:

Dear **Dr Alejandro Ceccatto**, Presidente
Consejo Nacional de Investigaciones Científicas y Técnicas (CONICET)

Dear **Dr Lino Barañao**, Ministro, Ministerio de Ciencia
Tecnología e Innovación Productiva de la República Argentina

Dear **Darío C. Celaya Alvarez**, Titular - Encargado de Negocios a.i.
Embajada Argentina en Francia

Letter to Argentinian authorities re Dr Ricardo Villalba

The International Council for Science is greatly concerned about the recent indictment of Dr Ricardo Villalba, former director of the Argentine Institute of Snow Research, Glaciology and Environmental Sciences (IANIGLA), in relation to the way glacier mapping has favoured provincial mining companies' operations and resulted in preventable environmental damage.

The International Council for Science advocates for the free and responsible practice of science – fundamental to global scientific advancement and human and environmental well-being. Such practice requires freedom of movement, association, expression and communication by scientists.

The International Council for Science has a global membership of 142 countries, including Argentina whose national member is the National Scientific and Technical Research Council (CONICET). The International Council for Science also has 31 International Scientific Unions as members including the International Union of Geodesy and Geophysics, which covers the disciplines related to glaciology. Each member of the International Council for Science has the obligation to support its objectives and uphold the principle of freedom and responsibility in science.

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The International Council for Science is concerned that the credibility of science, and the ability of scientists to operate with freedom and responsibility, is being put at risk through Dr Villalba's indictment. If scientists believe that they are at risk of prosecution as a consequence of pursuing their legitimate scientific activities, in this case glacier mapping to globally accepted standards, they will become unwilling to pursue such activities in the global public interest. The reputation of science will be damaged and the world will be worse off in the long run. This case has parallels with a previous one in which scientists in Italy were implicated and subsequently acquitted of charges related to earthquake prediction.

The publicly available information indicates that Dr Villalba has an exemplary scientific record and he is the leading expert in glaciology in Argentina. The scientific merit of his work in mapping the glaciers should not be confused with the enforcement of environmental standards making use of that work. Dr Villalba's indictment is inconsistent with the principles of freedom and responsibility in science that the International Council for Science upholds.

Yours sincerely

Prof. Gordon McBean (Canada)
President, International Council for
Science

Prof. Leiv K. Sydnes
Chair, Committee on Freedom and
Responsibility in Science

References:

<https://drive.google.com/file/d/1mox3R5Q-clR5r8Ovaat14fQICgFtRmjG/view>
<https://drive.google.com/file/d/1MfzyhBP9n5-GEHlteEVB0uPh2CPT6Ls/view>