



Launch of the International Union of Geological Sciences (IUGS), Initiative on Forensic Geology (IFG), in Rome, Italy, 18-19 October 2011

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On 22 February 2011, following a meeting at UNESCO headquarters, in Paris, the Executive Committee of the International Union of Geological Sciences (IUGS), approved the setting up of an international task group/working party on Forensic Geology. This became named the 'Initiative on Forensic Geology (IFG)'. On 18-19 September 2011, the IUGS-IFG and its newly formed committee members became formally established and launched at an inaugural meeting in Rome, Italy.

Why was the city of Rome chosen for the inaugural meeting of the IUGS-IFG committee and the formal launch of this international task group? There are several reasons; firstly Rome was seen to have a central global location so that it may be relatively easier to reach by committee members travelling from all 'corners' of the globe. However, Rome itself also reflects the global renaissance and the past developments in forensic geology. A curious note is that forensic geology was well known by the ancient Romans which, according to the Latin writers, were able to locate the camps of their enemies observing the soil types adhered to the hoofs of the horses captured from the enemy. In more recent history, in 1978, following the kidnapping and assassination of the Italian Prime Minister, Aldo Moro, forensic geologists were involved in the analysis of soil from the clothing on the Prime Minister. Throughout the early 1980s forensic geology began to advance in Rome. However, (and what appears to be consistent with many other parts of the world) forensic geology in Italy then did not significantly develop until after the millennium. This renaissance in forensic geology in Italy was facilitated by the development of a Soil Laboratory within the Servizio Polizia Scientifica, in Rome. During the past few years sampling and analytical techniques have improved and Italian geologists have had the opportunities to carry out a numerous cases undertaking attentive and diligent comparisons of samples to an international standard. Forensic geology in Italy may be considered to be operating at a good and advanced standard. Italian forensic geologists have now carried out several high profile cases involving soil analysis. These have provided positive results to assist the police with a variety of criminal investigations. It is therefore appropriate that the IUGS-IFG chose Rome as the location for the inaugural meeting and formal launch of IUGS-IFG.

The IUGS-IFG meetings in Rome were as attended by 19 committee members from around the world. It was a highly successful event organized by Rosa Maria Di Maggio, (Servizio Polizia Scientifica, Roma) with support from Laurance Donnelly (Chair, IUGS-IFG & Wardell Armstrong). The IUGS-IFG meetings in Rome enabled the aims and objectives of the working group to become established and formalized a future working plan. Further information on IUGS-IFG may be obtained from the IUGS-IFG web site <http://forensicgeologyinternational.org/> or <http://forensicgeologyinternational.com/>

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