

Editorial

Geologica Balcanica dedicates the present volume 27 to the 50th Anniversary of the Geological Institute of the Bulgarian Academy of Sciences.

Human society changed dramatically over these fifty years, and the last eight years brought also fundamental changes on the Balkan Peninsula and in Bulgaria. The approaching 21st century augurs new challenges, and they are particularly important for Earth scientists.

Geologists are accustomed with the slow invisible changes that last for millions of years. Human history exhibits an acceleration that becomes critical on the eve of the new century. The total number of human beings upon Earth doubled in forty years, and it is expected to double again in the first half of next century. Fast urbanization is another feature of our days that changes drastically the face of the Earth. New materials and technologies bring revolutionary changes in life and science. New problems arise or/and will arise in the search for a sustainable development of modern society. Some of the most important ones are closely related to Earth sciences, and namely:

- shortage of energy resources;
- shortage of water resources;
- shortage of some mineral raw materials, and needs for restructuring the mining industry in view of sustainable development;
- degradating and insufficient soils, mostly in the Third world;
- enormous increase of waste, radioactive waste included;
- natural hazards of geologic character, as earthquakes, volcanic eruptions, landslides, and their consequences in overpopulated regions.

The Balkan Peninsula is particularly vulnerable to some of the natural geologic processes. Our society seems to be unaware of the importance of geological sciences in this perspective. Our governments give some attention to Earth sciences only when the consequences of natural geologic processes combined with neglect from the part of the authorities result in suffering of thousands of citizens, and in irreparable loss of human beings and expensive constructions. One of the most important duties of geologists as an educated part of society is to draw the attention towards the crucial problems of today that will multiply tomorrow, and to fight for place of geology and geologists in the modern society.

The Chief Editor