

Dipartimento di Progettazione dell'Architettura

POLITECNICO DI MILANO



Milano, 24th February, 2011

United Nations International Strategy for Disaster Reduction Secretariat (UNISDR)
Administrator of the UN Sasakawa Award for Disaster Reduction
Palais des Nations, 8-14 Av. de la Paix

CH-1211 Geneva 10

isdr-sasakawa@un.org

Reference letter to support Dr Irene Manzella in her application to Sasakawa Award

Dear Administrator of the UN Sasakawa Award for Disaster Reduction,

I am pleased to recommend Irene Manzella in her application for Sasakawa award to enable and support her research and activity in natural disaster reduction. I have known Irene Manzella since 2001 in my capacity as Professor for the master of advanced study "Settlements upgrading for cooperation and development", Politecnico di Milano, Faculty of Architecture, Mantua, Italy and I have had the opportunity to follow her final project based on the three months staying in Nicaragua.

During the year as an advanced master student, Irene Manzella has shown a great interest for natural disaster prevention, forecast and mitigation and according also to her expertise she choose to carry out her trainee in a highly affected area such as Nicaragua. There she worked with local authorities and NGOs to the resilience of the community of El Viejo (Chinandega, Nicaragua) after the Hurricane Mitch and to the prevention and emergency response of future natural disaster. Because of her great interest and of the high quality of her work there, she has also been involved as a consulting in a project for the assessment of hazard, vulnerability and risk in collaboration with the municipality of Managua for the development of the legal framework and the emergency response of the city. This gave her the possibilities to present a complete final dissertation ("Progetti di cooperazione in zone ad alto rischio. Il caso nicaraguense: Cooperation project in high risk area. The Nicaragua case study"), that obtained the highest grade.

In general, Irene has revealed a capability to conduct independent, diligent, efficient research and has demonstrated excellent self-organization to an extent rarely observed.

She has been particularly appreciated by the other students within the master thanks to her cooperativeness and her capacity to work in a multi-cultural environment. The same remarks can be made with respect to her relationship with the professors, the other staff members of the University and with stakeholders and co-workers during her trainee in Nicaragua.

In addition she acquired a strong theoretical background and practical experience during her studies and her very promising career as a researcher.

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All these characteristics bring her today to carry out a high level cutting-edge research combining risk mitigation with numerical and experimental modeling and field work that is pretty unique in the field of risk reduction.

For all these reasons Irene Manzella has clearly demonstrated her potential to make a highly relevant research contribution in the field of natural disaster prevention, forecast and mitigation and in enhancing resilience of communities and territories. The Sasakawa award would be rewarding for her and would be of benefit to her work. As it is indeed rare to be accepted for such an award, I can only recommend her.

Sincerely,
Prof. Eleonora Bersani

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Eleonora Bersani".