

## EDITORIAL

It was easy to miss beneath the rhetoric and bluster about climate change, Africa and an end to poverty, but the G8 meeting in Gleneagles (Scotland) also addressed the issue of extreme natural catastrophes and what to do about them. In the aftermath of last December's Asian tsunami, Tony Blair established a Natural Hazard Working Group to evaluate the mechanisms that could and should be put in place for the detection and early warning of natural hazards of high global or regional impact. In June, the group published its report (see page 2), which recommended the establishment of an International Science Panel to identify and assess future natural threats on the scale of the Asian tsunami and greater. The PM accepted the recommendation, which was - in due course - considered at G8. The meeting did not go as far as explicitly supporting the panel's formation; this would have been too close to making an actual binding decision. It did, however, 'support closer coordination of natural hazard assessment to enable the scientific community to advise decision-takers on potential natural hazards likely to have high global or regional impact'. With G8 ended, it is vital that the proposal is not permitted to founder and fail. The legacy of the Asian tsunami is still driving a willingness to tackle future extreme hazards head-on, but this aspiration will soon give way to other priorities. If we fail to act now, we face condemnation, not only from the survivors of the Boxing Day 2004 catastrophe, but from the millions doomed to have their lives devastated by catastrophes to come.