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**An Open Letter to Bruno Lafont, CEO of Lafarge, Paris, and his Executive and Sustainability Stakeholder Panel: from Alastair McIntosh, retired Panel member**

When the Lafarge Panel has its annual full meeting with the Group Executive under your chairing this week it will be the first time in a decade that I will not be present. As you know, I stood down in March this year as I needed to free up time for other pursuits and I think I have already given of my best. I would like, however, to take this opportunity to share with you my appreciation of you all, of the insights I have gained and of the opportunities to influence Lafarge's policies over that period.

You will mostly all recall the circumstances of my being invited to serve on the Panel back in 2004. I had negotiated Lafarge's withdrawal from the Isle of Harris superquarry proposal having been a leader of that socio-environmental campaign. I believe Lafarge made the right decision for the island. The subsequent banking crisis of 2008 and its worldwide economic repercussions would suggest that it was probably also a wise commercial decision. I agreed to serve on the Panel in an unpaid capacity and initially, this was very controversial within Lafarge. There were those who asked "What is Lafarge doing, letting *the Greenpeace* loose within its corridors?"

What has happened over these ten years is that we earned one another's mutual trust and respect. Throughout this period my website page where I transparently document the role I have played has been highly prominent on Google and yet, on average, I have been approached only once every two years by fellow environmental activists with a concern about Lafarge in some part of the world. In each case, those concerns have been raised with the Panel and addressed by the Group. This has been impressive. It has provided me with *evidence* that the Panel's work is not greenwash and I have seen senior staff jump and take action when we have raised issues.

More than that, in listening to and carefully researching expert suggestions from our wide-ranging Panel, which includes social, environmental, architectural, industrial

safety and trades union expertise from people who have reputations worth not losing, Lafarge has lead the industry in such initiatives as site restoration, biodiversity conservation, the development of sustainable building solutions, dematerialisation (with R & D on new cements, recycling, etc.), industrial safety, emissions reduction, shared value thinking and subcontractor, lobbying and anti-corruption policies. Cutting CO2 has been especially groundbreaking. No large multinational corporation has total control of every operation, and there have been failings, but all of us have been impressed by how, under Bruno's leadership, huge steps have been taken to integrate these top level concerns vertically through the organisation and horizontally with subcontractors and the industry more widely.

I am particularly proud that, over the past two years in its annual environmental reports, Lafarge has publically affirmed its recognition of the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples. I believe that this is the first time that a major extractive corporation has done this. One can argue that the UNDRIP has few teeth, but by making the commitment that it has Lafarge has established its own self-policing sanction, because its reputation is on the line. If my Kenya-based Scottish colleague (who I have recommended to replace me on the Panel) confirms his willingness to serve, I hope that Lafarge will similarly lead the way in endorsing his (and my) concerns about the protection of Sacred Natural Sites (SNSs), and developing robust policies in league with his associated major scientific conservation organisation.

*Reputation* is what drives corporate responsibility from a shareholder perspective. It is the fulcrum of the Group's license to operate, of its social legitimisation and moral dignity. Over the time I have served on the Panel I have watched how Lafarge has earned that legitimacy. It has gained our respect through frank, robust and sometimes for staff, bruising debates about contentious issues. Other Panel members with more corporate experience than me have frequently said that no other panel on which they have served has functioned as well as Lafarge's in these respects. There remain rough edges to be worked on, there remains a need for a Panel of tough "critical friends", but I believe that Lafarge is in general a very worthy recipient of ethical certifications.

Bruno, and colleagues, it has been such a privilege to know you all and to have been able to contribute with real traction. I have seen your "Lafarge Way" working in ways that have built a distinctive corporate ethos, one that shines a light in today's world. I will always recall you saying, Bruno - "Our values are our value" – and you live it.

There is a story that Lafarge had its origins with French priests who were concerned about rural unemployment and started quarries. I do not know how large a factor this was, but I am quite sure that if those priests were watching today they would be proud. I say, as they might have said: *God bless your work*. Care for nature and for the people, especially the vulnerable. Remember the grandparent test: do only what you can be proud to tell them sitting on your knee. And me? I will miss you all, but not forget you.

Yours sincerely



**Alastair McIntosh BSc MBA PhD**