The International Risk Governance Council (IRGC) is delighted to have been able to support the Forschungszentrum Jülich GmbH’s Man, Environment and Technology Programme Group by funding the translation of their original 2004 text into English. We very much hope that having the report available in English will help to increase worldwide readership of this contribution to the understanding of risk and its governance.

The IRGC is a private, independent, not-for-profit foundation based in Geneva, Switzerland. The IRGC was founded in 2003. Its mission is to support governments, industry, NGOs, and other organizations in their efforts to deal with major and global risks facing society and to foster public confidence in risk governance. We work to achieve this mission by reflecting different views and practices and providing independent, authoritative information, by improving the understanding and assessment of risk and the ambiguities involved, by exploring the future of global risk governance, and by designing innovative governance strategies. We focus on issues, whether human-induced or natural, which have international implications and have the potential for harm to human health and safety, the economy, the environment, and/or to the fabric of society at large. We endeavor to work and communicate in ways that account for the needs of both developed and developing countries.

The establishment of the IRGC was the direct result of widespread concern within the public sector, the corporate world, academia, the media, and society at large that the complexity and interdependence of an increasingly large number of risk issues were making it ever more difficult for risk managers to develop and implement adequate risk governance strategies. Consequently, the IRGC is committed to promoting a multidisciplinary, multisectoral, and multiregional approach to risk governance. The subject of comparative risk assessment (CRA) was identified as a priority area for the IRGC from the date of its founding, precisely because it offers a means of improving risk decision-making on a global basis.

All those who make risk-related decisions, whether government ministers, regulators, or company directors, require sound knowledge on which to base their decisions, wherever possible including the best scientific knowledge available. Often, decision-makers are confronted by the need to make decisions for which they must allocate resources to one or more of several different problems, and are required to
do so in the absence of any objective means of comparing the risks or the impact of their decisions. CRA offers a possible means of providing a scientific basis for such decisions.

As the authors of this book make clear, there is a need to further study and understand how best CRA can fulfill its full potential. There is a growing body of knowledge, and the publication of this book is a most helpful addition to it. We are pleased to have been able to play a role in helping to bring Forschungszentrum Jülich GmbH’s report to a wider audience.

Finally, the IRGC extends its thanks to Simon Milligan for the excellence of his translation of this valuable contribution to the debate about CRA and its place in the total risk governance process.

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