The report published by the InterAcademy Partnership (IAP), entitled *"Combatting Predatory Academic Journals and Conferences"*, addresses some topics in an incomplete and non-rigorous manner, specifically regarding MDPI's peer-review period and the editorial process on page 30. Therefore, we would like to express our concerns regarding the statements, providing relevant information clarifying the inaccurate aspects reported.

Firstly, we would like to address one of the main points, where **MDPI's rapid peer-review process** is treated as being unqualified.

There is no correlation between the scientific rigor of content prepared before submission to scientific journals and the length of the peer-review and editorial process. In fact, the assessment of scientific integrity and the identification of fraudulent content are carried out in a rigorous manner, following the industry's best editorial practices outlined by the Committee on Publication Ethics (COPE). MDPI is a member of COPE and follows all the guidelines provided here: https://publicationethics.org/guidance/Guidelines. Their recommendations include support on handling issues like conflicts of interest, authorship issues and disputes, misconduct allegations and data issues, overlap and plagiarism, and peer-review integrity.

Thus, the core publication ethics principles of MDPI are as follows:

• Prevention—the early detection and flagging of potential ethics issues via automated and manual checks of peer review and manuscripts.

• Neutrality—to be fair and objective, making assessments to correct the literature where necessary.

• Transparency—keeping all parties informed when possible and appropriate, and providing the time for them to respond.

• Consistency—ensuring standard processes are followed for the investigation of issues and applicability of policies, and that the principles and flowcharts of COPE are upheld.

Following these principles, MDPI journals uphold a rigorous peer-review process together with clear ethical policies and editorial standards, thus supporting the addition of high-quality scientific studies to the scholarly publication landscape. Further details on MDPI's publication ethics policy and procedures can be found here: https://www.mdpi.com/ethics.

Along with the long-term membership with the COPE, MDPI is actively collaborating on research integrity issues and publication ethics in order to share knowledge and technology across the publishing industry. MDPI is a participating member of the STM integrity Hub (https://www.stm-assoc.org/stm-integrity-hub) and recently joined as a signatory to the United2Act against Papermill initiative (https://united2act.org/). MDPI is dedicated to support this industry-leading initiative to reduce the impact of publication misconduct and continue to contribute high-quality scientific publications for the academic community.

MDPI also provides a comprehensive level of assistance to authors, reviewers, and Academic Editors, coordinating throughout the entire manuscript editing process. MDPI relies on our own submission system (SuSy), where each manuscript undergoes rigorous ethics checks, and which ensures adaptability and flexibility to support the needs of authors, reviewers, and Academic Editors. In-house editors perform technical screening at the submission stage, including the verification and validation of authors' identities and affiliations, screening for plagiarism and AI generation of content, as well as the verification of previous scientific controversies or the

misconduct of the author group. MDPI, in this way, enables all Academic Editors and Editorial Board members to focus on the scientific quality, prioritizing the decision making of content that meets the minimum requirements to be considered for the peer-review process.

We would like to highlight that fast and sustainable turnaround times are made possible by the dedicated support provided by MDPI staff, with a trained and professional in-house journal editor dedicated to each article, who mediates between authors, reviewers, and Academic Editors, and who remains available throughout the peer-review process. These editors are located around the world, thus offering 24-hour support. These in-house MDPI journal editors efficiently handle administrative tasks and provide prompt assistance with any technical issues, from manuscript submission to the final publication of the article. This includes the production, language editing, copy editing, and XML conversion, ensuring a fast, robust, and supervised publication process, which has been maintained around 40 days over the past 2 years and has been fairly consistent overtime.

Secondly, we also need to accurately address the point of **MDPI's remarkable growth** presented in the report.

MDPI was founded in 1996 in Basel, Switzerland, as a non-profit organization named Molecular Diversity Preservation International (MDPI). MDPI's initial focus was on promoting and preserving chemical sample diversity. This ethos of knowledge sharing to advance science evolved over the years, expanding its vision and operational scope to become a linchpin in the OA publishing sector. With the successful launch of several OA journals like *Molecules*, *Sensors*, and *Entropy*, MDPI transitioned from its humble beginnings to a leading OA publisher. In 2010, this evolution culminated in the establishment of the Multidisciplinary Digital Publishing Institute (MDPI), marking a new era of growth and innovation.

We have invaluable experience as a number one OA publisher; however, we do not think that MDPI's remarkable growth was made possible only due to our editorial process, but also to the growth of the OA market overtime, as funders have required authors to publish papers in OA journals. Looking at the data from *Dimensions* (https://www.dimensions.ai/), only 35% of papers were published in closed traditional journals, and 65% of papers were published in OA journals (39%: gold fully—OA; 15%: gold hybrid—OA; 8%: Bronze—OA; 3%: Green—OA) in 2023. Following the growth of the OA market, authors have also seen the benefit of publishing OA articles as they accumulate more citations, as well as the support of more authors, enhancing the value of Open Science.

In addition, the authors are pleased with the high level of customer service they experienced when publishing with MDPI. Based on our 2023 survey, 95% of submitting authors rate their overall experience with MDPI publication process as "Excellent" or "Good".

Lastly, we would like to comment on the article **'Journal citation reports and the definition of a predatory journal: The case of the Multidisciplinary Digital Publishing Institute (MDPI),** from Oviedo-García. The assertions rely on hearsay and a flawed analysis from an article published by OUP, which the COPE is currently investigating. The article already has an expression of concern and initial correction, but further revisions are required to address the major methodological flaws. We have addressed the methodological shortcomings in detail in our announcement (https://www.mdpi.com/about/announcements/2979).

Furthermore, and to prevent future asymmetries of information, we would like to provide **further information about MDPI and our Editorial Process**.

1) All MDPI articles are peer reviewed, and we publish the name of the Editorial Board members or Guest Editors who made the final decision, i.e., accepted the article to be published. You can find more information on the MDPI editorial process here: https://www.mdpi.com/editorial_process and on the MDPI Special Issue Guideline here: https://www.mdpi.com/special_issues_guidelines.

2) MDPI journals have large Editorial Boards that independently oversee the peer-review process. Please find the responsibilities of the Editorial Board and Supporting Editors here: https://www.mdpi.com/editors.

3) For transparency, we encourage authors to opt for Open Peer Review, which makes the review reports openly available alongside the published article. Reviewers are informed that authors have selected this option prior to providing their report and may choose to include their name on the review report. In 2022 and 2023, 39% and 38%, respectively, of MDPI review reports received in all MDPI journals were for Open Peer Review.

4) MDPI journals have a strong indexation profile in highly selective databases. For example, a total of 251 MDPI journals are covered by the Web of Science and 97% of MDPI publications are covered in the Web of Science in 2023. In addition, a total of 400 MDPI journals are in the Directory of Open Access Journals (DOAJ), indicating that MDPI is the second-highest count for any publisher. We highly recommend you read our 2023 annual reports here: https://www.mdpi.com/about/annual-reports.

As a publisher, we have been able to drive efficiencies in the peer-review and publication process, ensure that we have well-resourced teams and adequate staffing, and reinvest into free services for the academic community, such as Preprints.org (https://www.preprints.org/) and SciLit (https://www.scilit.net/). As a result, over the years, we have received extensive support and attention from not only scholars, but also the public. Scientific knowledge is a public commodity, funded by taxpayers, designed to drive progress for the many, not the few.

MDPI is leading the movement to democratize access to scientific knowledge and boost the societal impact of research. Open access is here to stay, transcending a mere publishing industry trend. It is at the forefront of a broader social movement demanding accessible, affordable, and equitable scientific knowledge. Please note that throughout 2022, over 100,000 MDPI research papers were mentioned in tier-one global media such as National Geographic, The Washington Post, Forbes, The Guardian, BBC, CNN, Time, and Harvard Business Review.

We are very interested in providing any additional information and any evidence needed to support you and validate a facts-based approach to MDPI's legitimacy.

Contact: Rui Duarte, Public Relations Manager, MDPI; Dr. Jisuk Kang, Scientific Officer, MDPI