

PRESS RELEASE

**ABI, Internationalization Forum aimed at strengthening  
dialogue between Italy and Gulf countries**

*Banks, companies and institutions discussed economic and political relations at the two-day conference organized by ABI. Faissola stated: “despite the crisis, Italian banks continue to support business internationalization”.*

Strengthening economic cooperation and enhancing dialogue between Italy and the Gulf countries in order to promote trade and investment opportunities. Banks, companies and institutions – from Italy and the Gulf countries – met today in Rome, on the occasion of the Internationalization Forum organized by ABI, to discuss the state of political, economic and financial relations, also in light of the ongoing financial crisis, as well as the repercussions that the crisis could have on the global economy.

The third annual ABI forum, will be dedicated to, this year, “Gulf countries and Italy: growing together”; it was organized in collaboration with leading representatives from the business world and institutions: Confindustria (confederation of Italian industry), ICE (foreign trade institute), SACE (Italian export credit agency), SIMEST (development finance institution dedicated to supporting and promoting the activities of Italian companies abroad), INVITALIA (national agency for inward investment promotion and enterprise development), ISME (institute of economic and financial studies for the development of Mediterranean Countries), the Union of Arab Banks and the Dubai International Financial Center.

“Even in times of difficulty and market strain, as today, - said Corrado Faissola, President of ABI, during his opening address at the forum – the Italian banking sector is proving to be sound and stable and continues to support business internationalization strategies, with special focus on the Gulf countries, which have been growing at a rate exceeding 7% and are a gateway to the market that sweeps from the Middle East to Northeastern Africa and from the Indian subcontinent to the Community of Independent States. This market is worth 1.5 thousand billion dollars in terms of total GDP. This area – added Faissola – even in the current financial situation, offers significant business opportunities to Italian and international players, both in terms of import-export, investment projects, financial activities and in terms of attracting capital. Italian companies are certainly in a position to seize these opportunities.”

Hon. Adolfo Urso, Undersecretary of Economic Development, Emma Marcegaglia, President of Confindustria, Adnan Yousif, President of the Union of Arab Banks, Nasser Al Shaali, President of the Dubai International Financial Center, Domenico Arcuri, Chief Executive Officer of Invitalia, Alessandro Castellano, Chief Executive Officer of SACE and Massimo D’Aiuto, Chief Executive Officer of SIMEST, also attended the first day of the conference. Meetings, workshops, four technical sessions and two seminars will be held as part of the Forum – which will continue tomorrow – and will address, among other issues, the following: trade and investment opportunities in the Gulf countries, financial and insurance instruments aimed at supporting projects and business in this area, growth prospects for Islamic finance in the Italian and EU market and the Gulf countries’ risk profile will be analyzed.

Rome, Palazzo Altieri, October 27, 2008