



Ministero degli Affari Esteri



Ministero dello Sviluppo Economico



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Comune di Roma



## PRESS RELEASE

### **II Mediterranean Economic Forum opens in Rome on 25 February**

*Strategic marketplace for the relaunch of exports: around 600 companies and 1,300 B2B meetings*

**Rome, 22 February 2010** – Strengthen Italy’s role as the social and economic development crossroads for the Mediterranean market and further study of business and investment openings for Italian companies for the relaunch of exports. These are the key objectives of the **II Mediterranean Economic Forum** opening in Rome on **25 February** at the Campidoglio and ending on **26 February** at Confindustria.

Around 600 companies, including 200 foreign companies from 13 countries – Algeria, Cyprus, Egypt, Jordan, Israel, the Lebanon, Libya, Malta, Morocco, Palestinian Territories, Syria, Tunisia and Turkey – and 1,300 B2B meetings. These are the figures covering the two-day event organised by the ICE (the Italian foreign trade institute), Confindustria and ABI, with support from the Italian Economic Development and Foreign Affairs ministries and contributions from the UIR (Rome industry and trade union). The Forum launches its second edition, after the first held in Palermo in 2006. Up to the end of 2009, in the years following the first event the average performance of Italian exports to the 13 Mediterranean countries involved was approximately 22.5 billion euro.

For the Ministry of Economic Development representative, **Claudio Scajola**, “the aim of the Forum is to help relaunch Italy, the South in particular, as the strategic trade route for the Mediterranean basin, an area of massive development potential that in the last ten years has proved to be one of the most dynamic, along with Central-Eastern Europe, in terms of Italian exports and investments”.

The Foreign Affairs Minister, **Franco Frattini**, points out that “this initiative fits in perfectly with the latest economic diplomacy commitments of the Foreign Office and the role played in this context by Foreign Secretary Craxi as the Government’s representative in Mediterranean Union activities”.

“Young, dynamic, but above all adjacent markets”, states **Emma Marcegaglia**, Confindustria chairman and event organisation partner. “A basin with growing potential, where gradual consumer developments, mass motorisation, infrastructure investments and privatisation are destined to offer extraordinary opportunities, especially for our SMEs”.

In the words of ICE chairman, **Umberto Vattani**, “Italia could now reclaim its historic position as European outpost for the Mediterranean basin and not only as an economic crossroads, but also in cultural terms. Through its offices in all the Mediterranean countries – Algeria, Cyprus, Egypt, Jordan, Israel, the Lebanon, Libya, Malta, Morocco, Syria, Tunisia, Turkey and even the Palestinian Territories – the ICE is able to guarantee continuity in economic and commercial cooperation between the Mediterranean coastal countries”.

“The Mediterranean”, says ABI chairman **Corrado Faissola**, “is a strategic reference point for the Italian banking sector that has always seen this area as a natural extension of the European market. For this reason,

especially after the crisis that has hit the international markets, the Institutions, banks and companies have to continue work on strengthening Italy's role by relaunching investments, trade and partnerships in this area in which the Italian banking groups already have strong commitments".

"For the Mediterranean countries," specifies **Aurelio Regina**, the UIR chairman, "Rome and its economy represent a strategic platform for their European business development. For European businesses, Rome is instead a crucial production, commercial and logistics hub for their business with the Mediterranean and Middle East because of its airports, ports and road systems, the 500-plus multinationals operating in the area, its dynamic small businesses and its priceless human resource capital. To sum up in just one sentence, I'd say that Rome plays a stronger role than ever in the Mediterranean".

"Rome, a geographic, historic and cultural crossroads for the Mediterranean populations, is an open city that during the Economic Forum reconfirms its central and traditional position as a trading crossroads. In a setting of unparalleled splendour, our overseas guests will have the chance to meet with the Italian business owners most active in the Mediterranean". These the words of Mayor **Gianni Alemanno** as he announced the city's involvement in the event.

The inaugural session, introduced and moderated by ICE chairman **Umberto Vattani**, will be opened by a greeting from the Mayor of Rome **Gianni Alemanno** and the UIR chairman **Aurelio Regina**, followed by speeches from the Economic Development Minister **Claudio Scajola**, the Egyptian Trade and Industry Minister **Rachid Mohamed Rachid**, Italy's Foreign Secretary **Stefania Craxi**, the Confindustria chairman **Emma Marcegaglia** and ABI chairman **Corrado Faissola**. The closing speech will be made by Deputy Economic Development Minister, **Adolfo Urso**.

The second day of the event will be divided into two separate sections: the first dedicated to seminars on water, energy, hi-tech, logistics and distribution, and the second to business cooperation opportunities through meetings between Italian and foreign business owners.

The chairmen of Confindustria, ABI and the Investment Agency counterparts from each country will also participate.