

13th Session CEPA: Contribution to the “Call for Inputs”

Contributor: ItalianTradeAgency
Subject: Strengthening national and local capacities for sustainable development management

Summary

The paper looks at the role of the Italian Trade Agency (ITA) as a promoter of a sustainable economy. ITA’s support focusses on the principle of a sustainable system –i.e. a system that blends environmental resource management with culture, history, demographics, geography, values/norms and public policy.

In response to the challenge of limited natural, financial and human resources, ITA promotes collaboration among government, (civil) society and the private sector. Through its Clean Technology Desks, it encourages scientific and commercial collaboration, exchange of best practices, and private-sector investment in innovative technological solutions. In particular, this includes solutions that not only mitigate climate change and reduce carbon emissions, but also address global technological challenges promoting sustainable economic growth.

Cognizant of the role of technology in promoting economic development, ITA also assists in addressing the country’s challenge of limited existence of innovation outlets (public research centres and technology hubs, university labs, etc.). Through its services and survey on the science and technology potential of Italian enterprises, ITA helps Italian firms that champion innovative clean technology to achieve international visibility and take advantage of market opportunities.

United Nations Economic and Social Council
Committee of Experts on Public Administration

Dear Mr. John-Mary Kauzya, CEPA Secretariat, CEPA Members and CEPA Observers,

We thank you for the opportunity to submit to your kind attention our below contributions on the topic of Sustainable Development Management in the context of strengthening national and local capacities.

ICE-Italian Trade Agency is the government organization which promotes the internationalization of Italian companies, providing information and support through its worldwide network of offices. ICE provides a wide range of services such as: identification of possible business partners; bilateral meetings; trade delegations; participation in fairs and exhibitions; organization of seminars.

Both within and without, we have focused efforts on increasing capacity building for sustainable development and with this paper offer our unique *case-study*. Broadly speaking, our organization is charged with promoting the Made in Italy industry. Naturally, in its forefront, this speaks to the *economic development* of our nation through the products and services made by our country and exported world-wide. But at its core, we are charged with promoting a sustainable economy, one that goes beyond building a simple industry sector but rather builds a *sustainable system*. A system that marries *environmental and resource* management with *culture and history, demographics* and *geography, values / norms* and *public policy*. After all, Italy's patrimony and heritage stems from its vast array of natural and man-made assets.

The challenge of sustainable development can be found in its characteristics. If we posit that a characteristic of sustainable development is that it's problem-driven and therefore focused on solutions, an institution like ours has quite a challenge. How can we possibly create a sustainable trajectory when allocation of resources (be they natural, financial or human) are limited, if our very nature craves the creativity and flexibility that only comes when there are no limits? After all, even in drinking coffee Italians are not shackled by lack of choice: *café ristretto, café lungo, cappuccino, macchiato, corretto*, with chocolate, with pistachio, in a glass cup, not in a glass cup, etc.

But try we have through the creation of mechanisms that attempt to join government with society and with business. Take the example of our Clean Technology Desks that are located within the Italian Trade Commission offices. Initially created in 2000 in one select market, China, these institutional Desks have grown in size and geographic coverage. Our Desks, created and funded by the Italian Ministry for the Environment, Land and Sea, aim to promote the involvement of Italian companies around the world by encouraging scientific and commercial collaboration, the exchange of best practices, and private-sector investment in innovative technological solutions that not only mitigate climate change and reduce carbon emissions, but also address global technological challenges and promote sustainable economic growth. Italy, with it differing territorial dynamics has to address a multitude of issues, but by its very nature, intrinsically finds solutions.

By focusing on such topics as Renewable Energy, Sustainable Transportation, Waste Cycle Management, Energy Efficiency, Smart Cities, Carbon Life Cycle Analysis, Environmental Conservation and other areas, we have developed core human capital competencies which offer useful tools to our constituents. By surveying the science and technology potential of Italian enterprises; from spin-offs and start-ups, to SME and large-scale companies, and their capabilities in producing innovative and competitive products, we have helped to create an Italian network capable of helping all firms grow at a national and international level. We have

thus become able to move capital and ideas worldwide. It remains that one of the difficulties lies in the fact that Italy's innovation outlets (public research centers and technology hubs, university labs, etc.) are often perceived, especially from the outside, as not being commensurate to Italy's potential. Innovation is a very complex issue because it concerns many different aspects: education, entrepreneurship, public and private financing, government, civil society and the overall culture.

Action to stimulate innovation needs to take into account all these aspects, identifying the reason for the deficiency, and making clear and well defined plans for the medium/long term. We are trying to take those steps needed to improve the system, to attract foreign investments in Italy and to help Italian innovative firms in cleantech achieve international visibility and take advantage of market opportunities.

Only then will we strengthen our national sustainable capabilities. Not only because we will have spurred our economy through technological development which, as Herman Kahn says "technology will dissipate the threat of an energy crisis, reduce pollution, feed the world, and vastly improve the quality of life", but also we will have created a system whereby advancement begets advancement; whereby prosperity is not contingent on more energy from more resources for more consumption.

And so we showcase our technological foresight through deliberate and non-deliberate actions and remain open to ways gaps can be filled. It is therefore with great pleasure that we participate as observers at the thirteenth session of the Committee of Experts on Public Administration of the ECOSOC, look forward to the valuable best practices it has to offer and wish to contribute to its future success.

The above considerations are adaptations of the work done by the Italian Clean Technology Desk at the ITC, the Italy Cleantech Network and lectures given by the Global Institute of Sustainability.