

PRESS RELEASE

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From local to global: the many ways and approaches to assail the waste problem

Changing the measurement indices of progress and wellbeing, studying the systems to share the goods and services available, include in the equation the external influences and social costs of human activity. These are just a few of the solutions proposed by the experts who spoke today in the 10th International Media Forum for the Protection of Nature held in Naples and organized by Greenaccord, bringing forward concrete suggestions for a development truly sustainable.

Naples, November 6th 2013 – A multi-disciplinary approach is key to resolving the garbage waste issues. And everyone can give a concrete contribution, on every level. This is what is being discussed during the first day of lectures and speeches in the 10th International Media Forum for the Protection of Nature brought to Naples by Greenaccord in collaboration with the Neapolitan town-hall.

And if Cardinal Crescenzo Sepe – in front of more than one hundred journalists from around the world – launched a shocking proposition on a spiritual level (“those who pollute are not in God's graces and can not receive communion”), the other speakers have underlined the tight liaison between garbage production and a model of socially and environmentally sustainable development.

Impressive numbers and data was presented, for example by Professor William Rees, from the British Columbia University. Urban economies produce consistent amounts of garbage, the largest ever so far. The Japanese produce 11 tons pro capita per year, the Americans reach the incredible amount of 25 tons. In the meanwhile, 30% of cultivable land has become unproductive because excessively exploited, an exploitation progressing 40 times faster than what the Earth can bare. And the oceans are not doing any better: 82% of fish stock is also excessively and intensely over-exploited.

“Many environmental variables are reaching a point of no return: acidification of the oceans, draining of the water reserves, excessive soil consumption, exploitation of the Earth's biodiversity. Unfortunately many of us persist in ignoring this problem, it is a story the public opinion does not want to hear” says Robert Costanza, ecological economist and professor of Public Policy at the Australian National University. “We need to change our standards and not succumb as other civilizations have done in the past. The first step would be to abandon the misconception that economic growth is potentially infinite”.

Professor Costanza looks to a better society which holds into account the negative effects the production of garbage has on people's wellbeing. To do so, we need to change the measurement tools used so far to evaluate a society's development, starting from the GDP. “Paradoxically, GDP grows if the garbage waste increases, or if salvage teams are hired to clean oil spills or when toxic gases reach intolerable levels for public health”. The new indices need to include in the equation the external consequences of any human activity, by also calculating the social costs production has. “This would be an excellent in-

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centive to produce less waste as more waste would be damaging to the corporations' or the country's income".

The measures to be put into action are not just on an international level. Local small communities are key to rethinking the idea of wellbeing. For example by reconsidering the old concept of sharing. "Changing the way we consume is crucial if we want the world to continue spinning." Professor Friedrich Hinterberger, researcher at the SERI (Sustainable Europe Research Institute) in Vienna, explains. "I'm thinking of car sharing for example, efficiently used by many in my hometown. Or sharing washing-machines by putting them in a communal area in apartment buildings. We need to start by reducing our personal ecological footprints and understand exactly how much each one of us consumes. And at the same time, we must trace the provenience of the resources we use. Only by embracing a new idea of communal use of resources and goods we can look towards the future with renewed hope".

Visit www.greenaccord.org for a full program of the X International Media Forum on the Protection of Nature. Live streaming of the event is available on our website.