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## Garbage and “Ecomafias”: a solution is possible. The “Land of the bonfires” inflames the Greenaccord Forum in Naples

The second day of lectures of the 10<sup>th</sup> International Media Forum on the Protection of Nature organized by the Greenaccord non-profit organization found at its core the confrontation and discussion on the interests the Camorra clans have in garbage industry and on the possible strategies to employ to stop them. Among the speakers, the National Anti-mafia Prosecutor, Franco Roberti, and the President of the Parliament's Commission for the Environment, Ermete Realacci.

**Naples, 7 November 2013** – In just a few months, 20 years will have passed since the environmentalist association Legambiente first coined the word “Ecomafia” in 1994, to describe the criminal garbage waste business. A term destined to become part of the people's vocabulary nationally and internationally and, especially today, of great modernity given the outrage that broke out upon the recently released court decelerations of mafia supergrass Carmine Schiavone on the “Land of the bonfires”, a territory between Naples and Caserta often scattered with bonfires of illegally disposed trash. An Italian issue which has attracted global attention, represented also by the large public that crowded the conference room of Castel dell'Ovo where the “Roundtable on Ecomafias” was held, organized by the organization Greenaccord and part of the 10<sup>th</sup> International Media Forum on the Protection of Nature. Among the public the were the one hundred journalists part of the Greenaccord network and arriving from all over the world.

Among the speakers participating to the Roundtable, the National Anti-mafia Prosecutor, Franco Roberti; the bishop of Aversa, near Naples, Angelo Spinillo; the national coordinator on the Observatory of Ecomafias of environmental organization Legambiente, Antonio Pergolizzo : the president of the Parliament's Commission for the Environment, Ermete Realacci and the director of Philadelphia's Sbarro Institute, Antonio Giordano.

Among the topics mostly discussed: the efficiency of the justice system and the police forces to contrast the phenomenon of illegal disposal of garbage waste, the strategies to reclaim the contaminated territories, the conditions that allowed for such a phenomenon to transcend the mere judiciary aspect and become a true social, economic and health-related issue.

“When, in the mid '90s, we insisted on discussing toxic spills from illegal garbage dumps which were poisoning the land, people and journalists, would look at us as if we were aliens” remembers **Ermete Realacci, Preident of the Parliament's Commission for the Environment**, then president of Legambiente. “Only two television crews – CNN and Videomusic - accepted to come with us and see first hand the conditions of the soil near the Nato base of Licola, near Naples”. Now the issue is on everyone's mouths.

Since then, the instruments and methods to contrast the problem have been perfected, yet they are all but perfect. Both under a judiciary and legislative point of view. “The parliament has to complete – as fast as possible - the legislative institution of a Parliamentarian Commission to investigated the garbage cycle. In the meantime, it would be extremely useful to spend the



resources confiscated to the mafia on the recovery and reclamation of the damaged territories” Realacci explains, defending the State's decision to publicly publish the declarations of supergrass Carmine Schiavone, of the Casalesi clan, to the parliament's Ecomafia Commission back in 1997: “The institutions need to be secret-free on the matter. Even if Schiavone's words actually did not add that much more to what we already knew”.

But even when reclaiming the intoxicated territories one must precisely locate where to operate and carefully avoid for the organized crime to take advantage of the money inflow: “Generalizing, like Schiavone does in his declarations, is a paradoxical favor we would make to the mafia clans, because it deletes the borders defining where legal and high-quality economies can cherish and become a strong real alternative to those polluted by the mafia families”.

**National Anti-mafia Prosecutor, Franco Roberti**, addressed the ways and instruments necessary to pursue environmental crimes. His words expressed both remorse for the past mistakes and hope for the future. “I remember that time a mafioso told me that he was working with garbage and not with cocaine because the criminal consequences were minor”. Until 2001 such crimes only foresaw a penalty and this – Roberti explains - “would prevent us from using wiretaps, from involving Interpol and charging the involved for criminal conspiracy”. Luckily the situation has now changed, thanks to the laws introduced between 2006 and 2010. “Last year's ratification of a collaboration between the Anti-mafia Commission and the State Forestry Corps has allowed us to do preventive investigations on the interested territories and allowed us to intervene at the right moments”.

But the problem is far from a solution. Both because the organized crime has improved and built worldwide networks to transfer the garbage waste abroad (China, Eastern Europe and the Horn of Africa are the most targeted) and it is infiltrating the Green economy market by investing in wind farms, biomass and solar energy (“the case regarding the wind farm on the Capo Rizzuto Island is just the tip of the iceberg” warns Roberti). And also because the difficulty in pursuing environmental crimes is intensified by the old problems in the Italian justice system, too overloaded and bulky: “While the anti-mafia criminal laws do work – Roberti remarks – the ordinary criminal law languishes. Still today many criminal offenses are barred statute, with 50% peeks. Inevitably there is a strong request to the Government and the Parliament to modify the current system of barred statute to extend the time judges need to reach a definitive verdict”.

All matters and issues well known to those who have been addressing the garbage issues for a while. Like Legambiente, who has been producing a yearly “Ecomafia” report since '94. “Supergrass Schiavone's declarations simply confirm what we have been stating for two decades” says **Antonio Pergolizzi, the National Coordinator of Legambiente's Ecomafia Observatory**, attacking and accusing practices of wide sectors of the State. “Part of the reason why the local mafia has infiltrated the garbage business is also because the State was not present enough in that sector. And the more toxic, dangerous and hard to legally dispose was the waste, the higher were the profits”. And this is how the territory was literally poisoned: “roads were built with cement mixed with garbage” Pergolizzi denounces “even in the roads they have hidden toxic and radioactive waste”.

The main cause is obviously the mafiosi's hunger for profit. But not only. The compliance of professionals, administrators and politicians was also crucial. “Not even one of all the investigations conducted was white-collar free. Politicians, bureaucrats, public employees and private experts had active responsibility. This is why the solution can not be merely judicial. We

