

EDITORIAL
I've seen a country marching towards the future
 By AGOSTINO DA POLENZA

Pakistan. Just mentioning its name is sufficient to disconcert any Italian, whether a normal citizen, businessman, public administrator or politician. Then, as you explain further, concern is gradually replaced by surprise, curiosity and, ultimately, interest for the country. It is so obviously important, given its strategic position in the Arab-Asiatic panorama, its territorial extension, its population of 160 million, its troubled, but potentially resilient economy, with great development potential in several strategic sectors, like energy-production, textiles, farming, food processing and sea-based industries. It plays an important role in the internal equilibriums of Islam; but its geopolitical importance could also be extended to a geo-economic role. It's a complex country, but one that nobody wishes to see destabilised. Not China, not India, not the US, and certainly not the Arab countries. Eni and Fmmeccanica are investing and building bases in Pakistan. Fiat continues to build there 30 thousand tractors a year, albeit on rather old production lines, with eyes fixed firmly on the future development of Pakistan's farming and food-processing sector, and laying bets on innovation. Impregilo, in its turn, is now returning to Pakistan to work on dam construction, after its successful experience of a few years back in the construction of the Tarbela dam. Put briefly, if some of Italy's most important companies are investing in the country, there must be some reason. Italy and Pakistan's shared tradition of exploration and collaboration is more than a hundred years old, and the two countries also share the history of Pakistan's symbolic mountain: K2. Moreover, for more than twenty years, the EvK2Cnr Committee has been furthering this exploratory, mountaineering and scientific tradition in Pakistan, in the area of Karakorum, through its collaboration initiatives and, in more recent years, a series of development cooperation projects. Having said all this, to help people, businessmen, scientists and politicians towards a greater appreciation of the true worth of Pakistan, I want to speak about Seed, the most important international cooperation project devoted to the safeguard and development of the Karakorum region. It is an experience that has astounded both myself and my co-workers. A couple of

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From the Duke of Abruzzi to the EvK2Cnr Committee: story of an epic on the big mountains

A century-long friendship in the shadow of K2

In Islamabad, a photographic exhibition and a mountain film festival to celebrate an hundred years of collaboration between countries

By WAINER PREDA

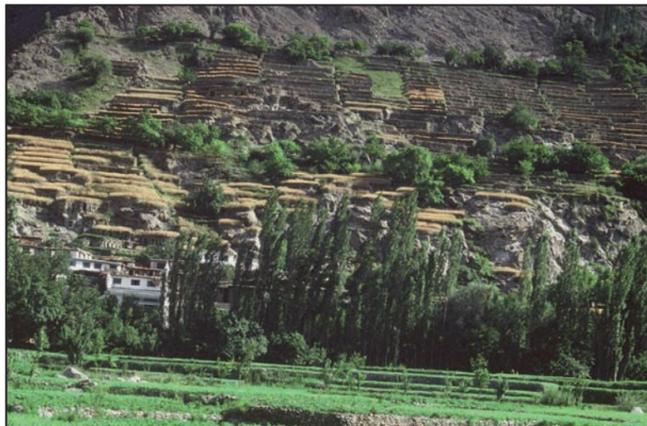
Minister Frattini, a man who knows his mountains, is right: Italy and Pakistan have a special relationship, one extending beyond continents and identified by a symbol: K2, the mountain of the Italians. Since Ardito Desio led his mountaineering expedition to scale the world's second highest and, certainly, most dangerous summit, the friendship with Italy has been continually strengthened. What started as scientific collaboration, has now extended to society, socio-economics and, from now on, even the environment, thanks to the work of the EvK2Cnr Committee, heir of Desio's legacy. But to tell the truth, cooperation between Italy and Pakistan, while evolving over time, has even earlier origins, dating back to the early 1900s, when the Duke of Abruzzi arrived in the area to explore the mysterious valleys of Karakorum, and was literally awe-struck by the beauty of its mountains, rising up like pyramids from the valley floors. It was an adventurous, daring challenge he faced. And K2 rejected him. However, the Duke's men did go on to break the mountaineering height record of the time, when they scaled Chogolisa. To celebrate

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Seed, of development

On the launch-pad 36 initiatives managed by the EvK2Cnr Committee in the Northern Areas of Pakistan



A wide array of initiatives are linked to the development cooperation project, aptly called Seed, that the EvK2Cnr Committee will implement over the next few years in Pakistan, to seal a hundred-year-long collaboration between Italy and the central Asian country. The project will concentrate on the Northern Areas of Pakistan, where it will attempt to provide a new economic and social impetus, while fully respecting the traditional culture and customs. Many initiatives are about to be launched. They range from the handling of gemstones to high altitude atmospheric monitoring stations, from fruit-processing plants to sustainable development and education. These are the ingredients of an agreement signed a few months ago by Italian representatives, supported by Ambassador Prati, at the headquarters of the Department of Economic Affairs of the Pakistan government.

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Jewels from Garnet

Garnet, a real "precious" project

The Garnet programme is part of the broader development cooperation project, Karakorum Trust, which aims to enhance quality of life, conservation of the environment, architecture and culture, and to promote sustainable economic activities in the Northern Areas of Pakistan, guaranteeing full respect of local people through the application of national and international labour laws. The uniqueness of Karakorum Trust lies in the multidisciplinary approach it takes to development cooperation. In line with this philosophy, the project involves the participation of Karakorum International University (Kiu) based in Gilgit, which will constitute a primary source of entrepreneurs, culture and politics, that is, the future of the region. Thanks to this programme of collaboration and investment, the coming generations will be better equipped to administrate the area's complex mountain world, within a perspective of sustainable development. In particular, with the support of scientific research,

technologies have been adopted to promote economic and business models based on collaborative work. In this context, the Garnet training programme oversees teaching and analyses in the field of gemology, gemstone cutting and handling, ultimately creating a training centre and processing workshop in Pakistan's Northern Areas, with a number of very precise goals. Foremost is the local training of qualified gemmologists. The second priority involves the specialisation of these operators in gemstone cutting and processing, once again to be carried out on a local scale. The project also laid the bases on which to create a network for the marketing and national and international distribution of cut gemstones. This commercial initiative is grounded on Pakistan's enormous potential in the field, since it possesses large quantities of raw materials, some of which are of very high quality, as well as a huge potential market. The gemmology training programme set up by Kiu is

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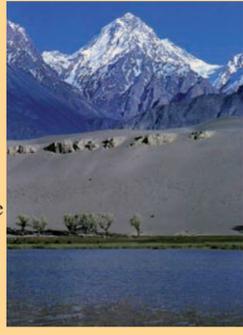
Amarcord

In July 2004 on K2

It was at 1.30 p.m. on 26 July 2004 that the telephone call arrived from the top of K2. Up there, at 8,611 metres, Silvio Mondinelli and Karl Unterkircher, were announcing live to Agostino Da Polenza the extraordinary success of the project "K2 2004 - fifty years on", organized to commemorate the first completed ascent of K2, achieved in 1954 by the Italian expedition led by Ardito Desio, founder of the EvK2Cnr Committee. On the day, Mondinelli and Unterkircher were accompanied to the top by Michele Compagnoni, Achille's grandson, Ugo Giacomelli and Walter Nones. The five Italians accomplished the ascent of the world's second highest peak following the historic route of via dello Sperone Abruzzi, without the use of additional oxygen. It was a magnificent sporting achievement for the protagonists who, during the descent, showed remarkable generosity in rescuing two Spanish climbers lost on the shoulder of K2, reaching them during the night at over eight thousand meters altitude, and saving their lives. Just two months before, on 24 May 2004, the scientific part of the K2 2004 project, which envisaged the re-measurement of the height of Everest, had also been crowned with success. Four Italian climbers - Alex Busca, Claudio Bastrentaz, Mario Merelli and, again, Unterkircher - carried out geodetic readings on the summit for four hours without oxygen.

Karakorum trust enters phase II

After four years of activity in the field of sustainable development, the project set up by the Italian experts of the EvK2Cnr Committee moves forward, with eye fixed firmly on the environment.



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Exploration

Operation K2

ELISA CALVI

In 1909 the formidable organisational machine set up by the duke of Abruzzi envisaged a highly ambitious expedition, halfway between exploration and climbing feat: the conquest of K2. The assembled team included the Duke himself, the photographer Vittorio Sella, geographer Filippo De Filippi, lieutenant Federico Negrotto, assistant photographer Erminio Botta, as well as the guides Joseph and Laurent Petigax, Albert Savoye, Ernest Bareux, Alexis, Henry and Emile Brocherel. On 26 March 1909 the explorers set sail from Marseille heading for Bombay. After fifteen days at sea, the ship Oceano dropped anchor in the Indian port. From there they continued to travel by a variety of different means of transport: trains, motor launches, local carts, canoes. From the village of Gunderbal, they hired coolies, and Balti porters, whose task it was the haul materials and equipment up to the mountain ridges. After a month's walking through the valleys of Karakorum, the caravan finally came within sight of the Baltoro glacier. For the Duke and his men, it marked the start of an extraordinary adventure in an unexplored world. On 24 May the men reach the Concordia glacier. Suddenly, on the horizon, there appeared the outline of K2. "Its shape is perfect, balanced, and ideally proportioned, the architecture of its design is very solid, in keeping with the majesty of the mountain, the walls, ridges and glacier slopes are of tremendous steepness" wrote Filippo De Filippi in "Expedition to Karakorum and the Western Himalayas", the expedition's official report. The Duke departed on 30 May with three guides, four porters and several coolies to make the first attempt on K2. Four days later they had to admit to failure. "They were forced to realise - explains De Filippi - that there was no point in continuing, not because they had encountered serious or insurmountable obstacles, but because they could not hope to accomplish such a long and exhausting ascent, when, from the very first steps, they met with difficulties so great as to render the climb problematic, making it impossible to transport upwards enough materials to stop them dying from cold and hunger". In spite of this failure, the Duke went on to climb the surrounding summits, naming everything that laid on his path, measuring and drawing maps of the mountains. On the afternoon of 7 June the Duke reached the top of the Savoia Saddle, 6666 metres, at the base of the north-western ridge of K2. On 24 June, from Windy Gap, they reached an altitude of 6600 metres on the Staircase, a 7339 metre colossus. Before them, the path was cut off by a crevasse, blocking any further progress. The duke did not give up. He decided upon a new ascent, this time to Bride Peak. The men made their way through seracs, wind and snow. On 18 July, the Duke took stock of the situation. They were at 7493 metres altitude: still 160 metres to go to reach the summit. The bad weather showed no sign of abating. Once again the Duke had to surrender, but a new record was assured, for they had broken the world altitude record of the time by 213 metres.

From Lacedelli to Unterkircher, the Italian history on K2

The conquest of the second highest summit of the planet

SARA SOTTOCORNOLO



1954 is one of the most important years in climbing history. It was the year of the Italian conquest of K2. On 31 July of that year the expedition led by Ardito Desio reached the summit. The news arrived in Italy at midday on 3 August, and was welcomed with great enthusiasm as a symbol of the country's post-war rebirth. From that moment, K2 became for everyone "the mountain of the Italians". The two climbers who arrived at the summit were Achille Compagnoni and Lino Lacedelli, even if the merit was that of the entire group, firmly led by Desio. He adopted an almost military attitude, justified by the complexity of the problems to be faced and by his responsibility for an endeavour that had assumed in Italy a meaning that went well beyond mountaineering. The expedition was dealt an initial blow by the death of Mario Puchoz, a guide from Courmayeur, struck down by pulmonary oedema. Desio's insistence on continuing operations eventually led to deep dissent between the expedition leader and the climbers, especially the "advance group", which included Compagnoni, Lacedelli, Walter Bonatti, Erich Abram and Ubaldo Rey. Abram, Bonatti and Rey accomplished most of the work with the ropes fixed to

the so-called Black Pyramid, the difficult rocky zone below 7000 metres, site of the famous Camino Bill.

Starting from a camp just above the spur, at 8050 metres, Compagnoni and Lacedelli embarked upon the final ascent, made even more difficult when the oxygen cylinders ran out just below the summit. During their return journey, both climbers were in very poor mental and physical condition, and Compagnoni suffered serious frostbite on his hands. Once back in Italy, a polemic broke out surrounding the omission of the episode from Desio's official report. The two central players were Bonatti and Hunza Mahdi, who had carried the oxygen cylinders for Lacedelli and Compagnoni almost as far as the final camp. On arrival, their companions failed to show up, and they were forced to bivouac in the open at nearly 8000 metres. After the climb, however, Compagnoni was guilty of not showing due recognition towards Bonatti, the expedition's promising youngster. In his official account, Compagnoni made no mention of the decisive contribution to the expedition's success of the climber from Bergamo, who, together with Mahdi, in harrowing conditions, brought him the cylinders he used to reach the

summit. Compagnoni's version, according to which the oxygen ran out before reaching the summit, was officially denied by the Cai (Italian Alpine Club), following the results of a commission of three experts, published in a report in 2008. According to the revised version, oxygen was in use up to the top. One photograph shows Compagnoni still wearing an oxygen mask; the other shows Lacedelli with traces of frost around his mouth, as if he has just removed a mask. Compagnoni and Lacedelli had breathed the oxygen in the cylinders for at least 9 hours and 45 minutes: the autonomy time of a fully charged cylinder. The two embarked upon the final ascent after 8.30 a.m., starting from the site of the enforced overnight bivouac of Bonatti and Mahdi, where they picked up the cylinders, left for them in clear view. Thus, Bonatti's version turns out to be true.

Certain it was that, ultimately, the expedition was a success, replicated fifty years later by Agostino Da Polenza's K2 2004 expedition, which, with its 33 mountaineers, commemorated the achievement of Desio's team, taking to the summit Silvio Mondinelli and the unforgettable Karl Unterkircher.

MN montagna news

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A Duke officer and gentleman

Sailor, mountaineer and explorer: all terms that can be used to describe Luigi Amedeo di Savoia, Duke of Abruzzi. The journals kept by his fellow adventurers convey the impression of a pioneer fascinated by grandiose exploits, and of a brave, but never irresponsible, man. Luigi Amedeo was born in Madrid in 1873, son of Maria Vittoria del Pozzo della Cisterna and Amedeo di Savoia, at that time king of Spain. In December 1884, at twelve years of age, he entered the Royal Naval Academy of La Spezia. The young Savoia passed through all the normal stages of a military career until becoming an admiral, "with no privileges, and with duties in common with all others", in keeping with the recommendations of his father, Amedeo. On the cruiser Amerigo Vespucci and gunner Volturmo, Luigi Amedeo di Savoia began his extraordinary adventure of discovery of far-off lands, from South America to the Magellan Straits, from Cape Horn to East Africa. But also to the

mountains. In 1897, in fact, he made the daring ascent of Mount St. Elias, 5489 metres, on the border between Alaska and Canada. A lead player in mountaineering history, the Duke of Abruzzi started climbing while still an adolescent, in the company of the Barnabite priest, Francesco Denza, and sometimes even with Queen Margherita herself, wrapped in heavy skirts specially made for travelling. A few years later, the Duke was accompanied in his increasingly challenging climbs by the guide from Val d'Aosta, Joseph Petigax, and the photographer, Vittorio Sella. But even those earlier ascents were always far from easy. On the contrary, alongside noteworthy challenges, like the Grépon, Petit Dru, and Zmutt Ridge, also to be remembered are Pt. Margherita in the Grandes Jorasses, and Pt. Iolanda in the Dames Anglaises. After an interlude of Polar exploration from 1899 to 1900, the Duke took his trusted collaborators on another extraordinary series of adventu-

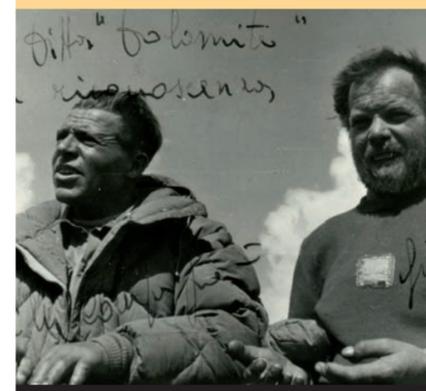
res, with the conquest of 14 peaks of the Ruwenzori massif, the most extensive African glacial range on the border between Uganda and Zaire. This was followed by the exploration of Karakorum in 1909, when the Duke and his men reached 6000 metres on the south-eastern spur of K2, but did not manage to go any further in their attempt on the great mountain. They made up for it on Chogolisa (7150 metres). Was 18 June, 1909: on that day they broke the altitude record of the time by 200 metres. In 1929 the Duke launched a campaign to establish a farming colony in Somalia, founding the village, called Duke of Abruzzi, where he decided to spend the remainder of his life. A friend of intellectuals and mountaineers alike, more than any other, the Duke knew how to interpret the values of 19th-century bourgeois mountaineering, encapsulating the two figures of scrupulous organiser and daring adventurer.

Jenny Maggioni

Protagonists



Compagnoni and Lacedelli atop K2



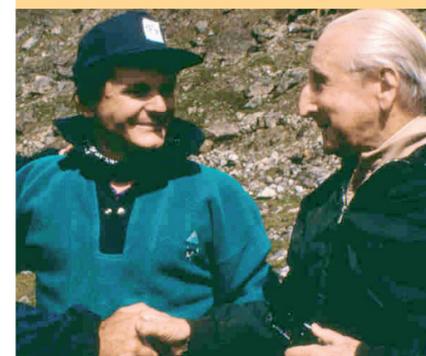
Compagnoni (on the left) and Lacedelli



Walter Bonatti



Ardito Desio



Ardito Desio and Agostino Da Polenza



The expedition "K2 2004" atop the mountain fifty years later

Protagonists



Two countries one objective: collaboration

The Foreign Minister Franco Frattini welcomes Pakistani President Zardari to the Farnesina EvK2Cnr an example of collaboration between the two

Italy and Pakistan share a special relationship, one that originates with K2, mountain of the Italians, and touches upon many aspects of culture, science, sustainable development and the environment. An example of this is the EvK2Cnr Committee, which has been working in Karakorum for years, with the implementation of important cooperation projects". These are the words of Foreign Minister, Franco Frattini.

The head of the Farnesina received the Pakistani president Asif Ali Zardari, taking him to view a photographic exhibition devoted to the historic collaboration between Italy and Pakistan, accompanied by Agostino Da Polenza, chairman of the EvK2Cnr Committee. Afterwards, they attended a round of talks with major representatives of the Italian business world. Minister Frattini opened the talks citing the example of the work of the EvK2Cnr Committee, founded by the legendary conqueror

of K2, Ardito Desio. For years one of the main actors in cooperation between Italy and Pakistan, it is today responsible for one of the most important and far-reaching development projects in the Asian country's Northern Areas, the Seed project. Discussions focused on a number of ideas for economic-commercial col-

Italy and Pakistan have a special relationship that originates from K2, the mountain of the Italians

laboration with Pakistan, particularly in the areas of energy, agriculture, textiles, food production and marble. The meeting was attended by a Pakistani delegation led by Zardari, and his Investments Minister, Saleem H. Mandiwalla, an Italian one, which included Frattini, the Italian ambassador to Pakistan, Vincenzo Prati, and Da Polenza, and a delegation of busines-

men, headed by Paolo Zegna, vice-president of Confindustria for International Relations. Also present at the talks were the Sace group, a lead player in Italian credit management, and Simest, controlled by the Ministry of Economic Development, in participation with Italy's foremost banks and business associations, whose aim is to promote Italian business abroad.

The meeting, held in the International Conference Hall, was preceded by a visit to the Hall of Mosaics on the part of Zardari, Frattini and Da Polenza, accompanied by Adolfo Urso, vice-minister for Economic Development, and Valerio Pietrangolo, a real expert on Pakistani culture and collaborator of EvK2Cnr. The group viewed the photographic exhibition organised by EvK2Cnr Committee, as a preview of a bigger one to be opened in December in Islamabad. The exhibition presents two large panoramic photographs taken by Vittorio Sella during the expedition of the Duke

of Abruzzi in Karakorum in 1909, while a third panel illustrates the activities and projects under implementation by the EvK2Cnr Committee among the same mountainous regions at the centre of the pioneering exploits of the Duke and his men. The small collection seeks to encapsulate the 100 years of collaboration and friendship between Italy and Pakistan. It is a relationship that has to overcome, on a daily basis, not only obstacles of prejudice, but also the objective difficulties of working in a country and a region that is politically unstable, but with great opportunities. In spite of all this, the relationship is destined to continue and be strengthened thanks to Seed (Social Economic and Environmental Development) project, approved and signed on 18 September at headquarters of Pakistan's Department of Foreign Relations, in Islamabad, between the EvK2Cnr Committee and Italian and Pakistani representatives of the Pakistan Italian Debt for

Development Swap. Over the next five years, Seed will be contributing to the economic and social development of the Northern Areas. Its contribution will involve the setting up of the Central Karakorum National Park: an area of 10,000 square kilometres, to which must be added another of equal extension hosting a population of one million inhabitants comprising Shiites, Sunnis and Ishmaelites - an area equal to half of the region of Lazio. The project will be funded by a part of Pakistan's ex-debt

A collaboration that challenges prejudices and the objective difficulties a country of great opportunity

with Italy, converted and designated by agreement for projects aiming at socio-economic and cultural development and poverty relief within the country. Such actions will also serve to promote the exchange of information among institutions of education, as well as legal and administrative systems. It is, without doubt, the most complex long-term major initiative involving

the region. As many as 36 specific projects will be underway within a year, fully integrated within a framework of systematic action. The projects cover the fields of science, culture, industry and environment, and range from the processing of the coloured gemstones in which the mountains of Pakistan abound, to high-altitude atmospheric monitoring stations, fruit-processing, cultivation of local crops with sustainable technology, the development of business skills, in the tourist sector, for example, environmental safeguard and education. Few days ago, the first joint venture set up within Seed, involving Italian and Pakistani entrepreneurs, was registered with the authorities of Gilgit, capital of the region. "K2, Pakistan's symbolic mountain, is certainly the most beautiful and arduous 8000 in the world. But the challenge of development, welfare and peace in the Karakorum region is no less fascinating and arduous to attain than the summit of K2" affirms Da Polenza, who has a firsthand knowledge of the "mountain of the Italians", having climbed it personally, and having led three expeditions to success on its slopes.

Here Farnesina

Head first office of Directorate General for the countries of Asia, Oceania, the Pacific and Antarctica

Domenico Bellato: We need to support Pakistani government

Bellato, what is the political situation in Pakistan after the election of Zardari? Italy pays a great deal of attention to political developments in Pakistan, and supports the democratic government of President Zardari. We take a favourable view of the climate of collaboration between majority and opposition, and we believe that a definitive national reconciliation must be reached to allow the government to concentrate, with international support, on the country's serious development and security issues. To help consolidate democracy, we encourage and support the Pakistani government in its efforts to reform the economy and governance, and to strengthen the rule of law, as these are the prerequisites for a truly sustainable development, for moving towards the indispensable modernisation of the country and for attracting foreign investment. In recent weeks, the Pakistani authorities have been engaged in a decisive military offensive against Taliban and terrorist strongholds in the border areas with Afghanistan. Unfortunately, this action, responding to a shared need to combat terrorism, is provoking a violent reaction on the part of the forces of militant radicalism, in the form of the attacks in various areas of the country. Therefore, it is important for the international community to endorse and strengthen its support to Pakistan. Italy is doing so, along with the United States and the European Union.

What effects have arisen from the recent visit of President Zardari to Italy as regards relationship between the two countries?

Relations between Italy and Pakistan, always very friendly, have undergone in recent years a considerable intensification, and the areas of collaboration between the two states have increased accordingly. President Zardari's visit in late September was undoubtedly constructive: the meetings with President of the Republic Napolitano, Prime Minister Berlusconi, and Minister Frattini, gave confirmation at the highest levels of the political and strategic support that our country is guaranteeing, both bilaterally, and through the EU and the Friends of Democratic Pakistan, to the government of Pakistan in its fight against Taliban terrorism in tribal areas, and in the correlated challenge of the socio-economic modernization of the country. In particular, Minister Frattini confirmed that Italy also looks favourably on the strengthening of the dialogue between Pakistan and the European Union, in the perspective of re-enforcing strategic partnership. Italy represents an important partner of reference, in the light of the understanding shown by us over recent years, particularly on the subject of market openings to Pakistani products within the EU trade zone. With the EU-Pakistan Summit of last 17 June, strongly promoted by Italy, the EU sent a clear signal to the Pakistani government, emphasising the will to provide renewed impetus to bilateral relations.

The Rome visit of President Zardari was constructive leading to a high-level endorsement of relations between Italian and Pakistan

2008 saw the founding of an international group of countries committed to supporting the democratic government of Pakistan and to consolidating democracy also through socio-economic support. What role does Italy play in this group?

Italy has been a member of the Friends of Democratic Pakistan since its foundation in September last year, and has consistently participated actively and creatively. The aim of this forum is to provide political, strategic and economic support of democratic Pakistan, in a common effort towards the develop-

ment and stabilisation of the entire region. The meeting of the group, held in New York on 24 September, brought together heads of state and government representatives, including Prime Minister Berlusconi and Minister Frattini, thus offering high-level confirmation of this policy. In particular, the strategy for the reconstruction of Malakand, theatre of clashes between the army and Taliban in recent months, received a broad consensus, and could represent a model to be extended to other regions of Pakistan. Moreover, through the Special Envoy to Afghanistan and Pakistan of the Italian Foreign Ministry, Ambassador Iannucci, who participates in the International Support Group's meetings and has visited refugee camps in north Pakistan, we are bearers of a message of urgency and efficiency, and of the need to increase the assistance given to the government of Islamabad.

In concrete terms, what forms of intervention can be made by Italy to contribute to the country's stabilisation?

Italy is only too aware of the urgent need to help democratic Pakistan tackle the problems of development and security by which it is so sorely afflicted. Italy's commitment is proven by the increasing number of development cooperation projects (with new initiatives amounting to 62 million euros, focusing especially on farming and professional training), by the launch of the operative phase of debt conversion (80 million euros for development projects, including 10 million dollars for the reconstruction of areas affected by fighting), by our prompt aid to refugees (4.6 million euros), by new initiatives of economic collaboration and by our intervention at EU level in favour of negotiations for a free trade agreement with Pakistan. Other projects are in the planning phase. In accordance with the regional strategy defined during the G8 ministerial meeting in Trieste, many of these actions concentrate on the frontier areas between Afghanistan and Pakistan. We also devoted the G8 ministerial session in Trieste, last June, precisely to the stabilisation of Afghanistan, Pakistan and the entire region, on the basis of interests shared by all of the states in the area and of the need to re-launch regional cooperation.

In which sectors can Italy play a constructive role in the socio-economic growth of the country?

The development of trade and investment represents a mainstay of Italian policy in Pakistan. Our economic and commercial relations are on the increase (exchanges have doubled since 2000, totalling more than a billion euros in 2008), but a strong potential still remains untapped. Starting with the concrete reality of the presence of major Italian companies in the fields of energy and defence, there exist numerous opportunities for economic collaboration in sectors of traditional Italian excellence that have priority status for Pakistan, such as agriculture and agro-industry (particularly olive oil production, the dairy sector and fruit), marble and precious stones, leather, textiles, energy production, infrastructures and biotechnologies. These themes were at the centre of a round-table, held on 29 September at the Farnesina, in the presence of President Zardari, Minister Frattini, Vice-Minister Urso, and high-level representatives of the Italian economic world and professional associations. Also on the table is the date of the mixed economic Commission to be held in Islamabad, with the aim of endorsing the renewal of economic relations. In operative terms, the credit line is now open to Pakistani PMIs that turn to the Italian market for goods and services.



The birth of the project

The Karakorum Trust project has evolved from a century-long story of Italian exploration, research and mountaineering on the Karakorum mountains of Pakistan. In keeping with Ardito Desio's dream to see the creation of a protected area surrounding K2, EvK2Cnr successfully raised the support of the Italian government, and now coordinates a series of sustainable development initiatives in the Central Karakorum National Park area.

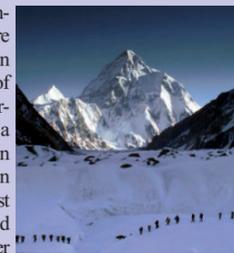
Work with local populations, Ngos, and local and national authorities, has led to the consolidation of the necessary skills for the management of the fledgling Central Karakorum National Park Ecosystem (CKNPE). In line with its other scientific objectives, EvK2Cnr is assisting communities and local institutions to understand and adapt to climate change.

The main goal of the Karakorum Trust project is to promote sustainable development and favour the improvement of living standards among the inhabitants of the

CKNPE, devoting special attention to priorities such as environmental conservation, protection of biodiversity and water resources, and the promotion of sustainable tourism. The specific goals pursued through the various activities proposed by the programme include: the creation of an integrated and harmonised communications network among development cooperation projects; an increase in the efficacy of existing cooperation initiatives; improvement of the dialogue between local stakeholders and those involved in cooperation projects; an increment in knowledge on the environmental, architectural and cultural heritage; the development of local skills for the management and coordination of cooperation projects; awareness-raising among the authorities of Central Karakorum National Park, concerning the implementation of procedures and policies to take into account the needs of the people, ecosystems and cultural heritage of northern Pakistan.

The wonder of the K2 Park

With the majesty of its mountains and breathtaking panoramas, few places on Earth can compare with the Central Karakorum National Park. Set up in 1993, the park comprises 10,000 square kilometres of mountain terrain in the north of Pakistan, along the borders with China, Afghanistan and India, occupying a section of the Hindukush-Karakorum-western Himalayan mountain system. It is an area of exceptional natural interest, which hosts the world's second highest mountain: K2 (8611 m). As well as the so-called "mountain of the Italians", the park boasts a further seventy peaks over 7,000 metres, including ten of the highest and most famous mountains in the world, including Gasherbrum, Broad Peak and Masherbrum. This group of mountains, many of which rise vertically from the valley floor for over 5,000 metres, attract to the park each year around seventy mountaineering expeditions. There are 230 villages surrounding the park. The town closest to it is Skardu, which can be reached by plane only when weather conditions are good.



After four years of work towards sustainable development the project enters a new phase

Karakorum Trust an environmental turning point

By FRANCESCA STEFFANONI

Environmental monitoring and adaptation to climate change. These are the key features of the second phase of the Karakorum Trust, the project of the EvK2Cnr Committee now present for four years in the Northern Areas of Pakistan, with a variety of cooperation activities centring on the implementation of the Central Karakorum National Park, the park of K2. After nearly five years of intense activities among the mountains of Pakistan, the project boasts a number of great successes, including the cleaning of the Baltoro glacier, the building of museums and waterworks, the implementation of reforestation systems at Askole, as well as the gemmology workshop and the university of Gilgit. Now, the Karakorum Trust is set to enter its second work phase. The new project centres on climate and environment issues, although, as previously, finalised towards the sustainable development of all aspects of the region. It was presented last month at Islamabad during the workshop "Integration and harmonization of sustainable development interventions in the CKNPE", organised by EvK2Cnr and Unep, under the auspices, and in collaboration with, the Pakistani Ministry for the Environment. The event took place on 7 - 8 October at the Marriot Hotel in Islamabad. The tension in the Pakistani capital, scene of an attack against the United Nations offices on 5 October, prevented the UNEP delegation from attending. But it did not stand in the way of the workshop, during which the EvK2Cnr Committee delegation, present with its chairman Agostino Da Polenza, reported on some of the country's most important cooperation projects. Also attending the workshop were representatives of Iucn, Wwf, Icimod, Cesvi, Kiu, Nccw, and Wrii-Narc. The first day was given over to the presentation of the main research, cooperation and development initiatives underway in the Northern Areas, illustrating the results obtained and future projects. Maurizio Gallo commented on the

first phase of Karakorum Trust, a project of which he is technical director, Elisa Vuillermoz, responsible for EvK2Cnr environmental projects, spoke about the Share project, and Bastian Flury, director of the Seed project, illustrated its five-year plan for the socio-economic and environmental development of the Northern Areas, approved as part of the Pakistan Italian Debt for Development Swap Agreement (PIDSA). This was followed by the presentation of the three-year Karakorum Trust Phase II project, financed by Italian Cooperation and implemented by Unep and EvK2Cnr. Talks went on to focus on the contributions of the main local stakeholders attending, and the activities undertaken in the CKNPE as part of the Partnership Project (Hkhh). The priority goals of the second phase of the project are the improvement of the quality of life among local communities, conservation of the environment and cultural resources, and the development of adaptation skills in the face of climate changes in the Central Karakorum region. The outputs will take the form of a park management plan, and a master plan for the sustainable development of the ecosystem, which integrates resource management, systems for climatic, atmospheric, ecological and environmental monitoring and climate change adaptation. These issues featured in the discussions of several workgroups on the second day, in an effort to gather useful advice and suggestions regarding the implementation of the activities, and to define which local stakeholders to involve. Project coordination, participation of local players, broadening of scientific bases, and concern for resources, like water, forests and biodiversity, were determined to be the key elements of the process.

They were established during the closing session, which saw the participation of Da Polenza, Marco Marchetti, co-director of the Pidsa Technical Support Unit, Nazir Sabir (President of Alpine Club of Pakistan) and the Pakistani minister for the environment.



From Aga Khan to Polytechnic Results of a project based on collaboration

The first project phase concentrated on the identification of initiatives already existing in the Karakorum park, and the creation of a network that brought together NGOs and local stakeholders. In particular, several medium- and long-term cooperation projects were developed, along with the beginning of implementation of the Park project. EvK2Cnr has also stipulated agreements with each of the local partners involved, to ensure that all the activities undertaken under Karakorum Trust contribute to its primary goal.

The main results obtained so far include: the appointment of EvK2Cnr as one of the authorities overseeing the implementation of the CKNPE; involvement in the drafting of the document "Participatory management and development of CKNPE"; waste collection expeditions in July 2006 on Baltoro glacier, with the removal of over 3 tonnes of solid waste left behind by climbing expeditions, in collaboration with the Alpine Club of Pakistan. The Alpine Club also collaborated in the training of 95 trekking guides during three different courses, and in the launch of an awareness-raising campaign concerning refuse management on Baltoro.

At the same time, in collaboration with the Aga Khan Rural Support Programme, an investigation was carried out, with the publication of its findings in a report on the Upper Braldo Valley, providing data on demographics, natural resource management, infrastructures, social organisation and potential, and house-building. The Aga Khan Rural Support Programme has also cooperated in running training courses on health and hygiene, women's issues, forest and fruit crop management, livestock management, and adult literacy studies for school teachers. Meanwhile, the Braldo Valley has been planted with 22 thousand forest saplings, and fruit trees in the vicinity of villages, and a series of irrigation canals and roads have been built to improve the socio-economic condition of the two villages of the Upper Valley.

In addition, researchers have carried out an analysis of the traditional architecture of the valley's urban settlements, working jointly with the Polytechnic of Milan to produce a plan for preserving this cultural heritage.

During the first phase, Karakorum Trust was active in the drawing up of plans to establish a centre of analysis, processing and distribution of local precious stones, with the training of ten future teachers at the Gemmology Institute in Milan and Karakorum International University. The latter initiative was also realised with the collaboration of the Cariplo Foundation. A further noteworthy achievement is the realisation and publication of the first Italian-Urdu dictionary. Finally, the Italian museum on K2, located at Skardu, has received from donors a wealth of new documentary, photographic and multimedia materials.



First operation "Baltoro Clean up"

Baltoro clean once more, climbers extend their thanks

"Thanks for this work. I'm so happy that people are being made aware of the refuse problem. It's the first time I've been to Pakistan, and the environment is fantastic. Keep it up. Ueli Steck". This message was left by the Swiss climber in the signature book of the Concordia glacier, at the operational base of "Keep Baltoro Clean", launched by the EvK2Cnr Committee to clean up the glacier. But there are hundreds of people who, like him, have taken part in the lessons on "separated refuse collection", contributing to the clean-up operation. Here are some photos and messages left last summer by mountaineers like Veikka Gustafsson, just after having scaled the fourteen 8000 metre peaks, Jorge Egocheaga, and many others. At the beginning of summer, eight tonnes of refuse were brought down by operation Keep Baltoro Clean, including paper, plastic, tin cans, glass and toxic materials. But the project, which continued into August with enormous success, did not stop at removing rubbish downhill to the valley. First of all, they had to raise awareness among the local people,

supply information on separated refuse collection, give lessons to climbers, porters and passing tourists. Then, they had to provide disposal facilities. The lessons were held mainly in the tents at the "base camp" situated in the Concordia Circus, at 4700 metres, meeting point of the Abruzzi and Godwin-Austen glaciers, where a proper "school of environmental education" has been set. There, an exceptionally hard-working Pakistani staff daily imparts lessons, using boards and practical demonstrations, teaching all who pass how to behave on the glacier. The results are stupefying: from the great mountaineers to porters, from Canadians to Iranians, Norwegians and Koreans, everyone is eager to lend a hand, as shown by the messages left in the camp books. "It's great to see that something is being done to tackle this shared problem - writes Gustafsson - Climbers must give an example. We, as visitors, have no right to leave any refuse behind us. An idea for the future: reduce the number of liaison officers, currently one for each expedition, and use that money to finance future clean-

ing. You're doing a terrific job!"

"We've just arrived at Concordia - writes Jorge Egocheaga, a Spaniard heading for K2 - and we've found this staff and this wonderful project. We'll give them all the support we can".

The book contains messages of expeditions arriving from Spain, Argentina, Nepal, France, Austria, the USA, and Korea. But also those of the Pakistani liaison officers. Messages, thanks, suggestions...even ones from the Iranian expedition to Karakorum, who especially appreciate how the project is being implemented by local people.

Most of the refuse has already been disposed of thanks to Earth, the ecological waste treatment plant installed at the village of Askole by EvK2Cnr in collaboration with the Italian company Actelios of Gruppo Falck. And you will see the lessons on separated refuse collection on Concordia glacier, with a special "pupil": Agostino Da Polenza, chairman of EvK2Cnr, during his trip to K2.



High mountain porters: target professionalism

"We want them to become like Nepalese sherpas". This is the ambition of the Evk2Cnr Karakorum Trust chief, Maurizio Gallo, poised to undertake a new series of special courses to train local high mountain guides. "The situation in Pakistan is very different from that in Nepal, which has a tradition of Sherpas, no longer mere porters but really expert high mountain guides. We want to bring the same level of skill here as well. We will be training a hundred or so candidates in technical subjects, English language, logistic management, and crevasse rescue and emergency aid". The aim is to professionalize local figures who could easily work in areas where mountaineering expeditions are rather frequent. "This could be of great advantage also to climbers", who have lately been complaining

of the lack of professional skills in their porters: some climbers have even been entirely left in the lurch, with dramatic consequences on certain crucial occasions. The courses are part of the Seed project, again organised by the Evk2Cnr Committee, in collaboration with the Pakistan Alpine Club. The first trainees will be the porters who attended last year's foundation course. Their further step towards professional qualification will take the form of a three-day full immersion course to be held in proximity to Batura, the mountain made famous in Italy by Simone Moro. The first session will start on 16 November. Subsequently, a second session will be launched, this time a foundation course for porters. It will last about ten days and will

involve young people, between 25 and 40 years of age, selected by the Pakistan Alpine Club. Two Nepalese sherpas will be present to preside over the transfer of know-how and skills. The training provided during the course will include first aid, camp management, safety manoeuvres, and emergency and rescue procedures. Special attention will be devoted to environmental safeguard. Some of the newly trained porters will then be deployed in the cleaning up of the glacier. They will have the task of collecting the tonnes of refuse left behind by climbing expeditions, both at the base camps and high altitudes, and transporting it to Askole. Here, the Evk2Cnr Committee has installed an ecological treatment plant for waste disposal.

Central Karakorum National Park (CKNP)

Seed of development in the Northern Areas

Evk2Cnr oversees an attempt to bring welfare and economic growth to one of the poorest areas of Pakistan

By WAINER PREDA

Thirty-six scientific initiatives ranging from the processing of gemstones to high-altitude atmospheric monitoring stations, from fruit processing plants to sustainable development, and provision of schools. These are the ingredients of the Seed project, proposed by the Evk2Cnr Committee, recently approved by the Pakistani government.

The agreement was signed at the headquarters of the Department of Economic Affairs of the Pakistan government. Representatives of the Pakistan Italian Debt for Development Swap Agreement (PIDSA) authorised the launch of the joint project, which has as its goal "the socio-economic and environmental development" of the Northern Areas of the Asian country.

With recent international agreements, the amount of 120 million dollars owed by Pakistan to Italy has been transformed into cooperation activities between the two countries. In this case, Pakistan has converted 10 million of its former debt into initiatives for environmental safeguard, scientific research and socio-economic development, to be implemented in concert with the Italians.

Italian Ambassador to Pakistan, Vincenzo Prati, and the Secretary of Pakistan's Department of Economic Affairs, Farrakh Qayyum, extended their congratulations to representatives of the Evk2Cnr Committee and the Pro-Rector of Karakorum International University, Najma Najam, for the success of their bid. The contract for the implementation of Seed was signed at a press conference by Marco Marchetti, Italian representative of PIDSA, and the technical support unit.

Over the coming years, Seed will be the most important socio-economic development project running in the Pakistani region of Gilgit-Baltistan. The region hosts the magnificent Karakorum mountain range, which includes the second highest mountain on earth, K2, and many of the world's biggest glaciers. In addition, with its abundance of rare wild fauna, it is one of the most stunning and unique ecosystems on the planet.

Thanks to this new impetus, Seed will carry forward the conservation efforts begun over the past twenty years by various organizations and government departments, as well as the implementation of the Central Karakorum National Park, which includes K2, Rakaposhi, Baltoro, Hispar, and Biafo Glaciers.

The Evk2Cnr Committee has found an ideal partner in the Karakorum International University (Kiu), with which it has a shared vision and approach. This local university of Gilgit-Baltistan is entrusted with the task of supporting development of the region by providing its youngsters with training and scientific education, so that they acquire the skills and knowledge required for the socio-economic and environmental development of the area.

Over the past two decades, the Evk2Cnr Committee has supported Gilgit-Baltistan with scientific know-how, through community development, improvement of the tourism sector, cultural heritage conservation and assistance to small businesses. All of this has been done in collaboration with its partner organizations and various authorities of Italy, Pakistan and Gilgit-Baltistan itself. Among the projects jointly approved by Pakistan and Italia is a fruit processing plant (the region abounds in apricots, most of which are wasted due to the lack of a system allowing the population to make good use of them). Apart from the plant itself, it represented a first attempt to generate business in a region that is geopolitically important, but afflicted by endemic poverty.

"It's been an important trial - explains Evk2Cnr Committee chairman, Agostino Da Polenza - Such intervention does not interfere with the political and cultural interactions of the local population, but they do bring wealth. Business activities are aseptic. That's why they easily involve the local people. They provide the basis of a highly significant production process that facilitates the transfer of knowledge and opportunities".

The installation of the plant has already provided fresh juridical impetus to the region. The presence of the first western "company" in the Northern Areas has spurred the local government to modify certain bureaucratic and juridical restrictions, providing unprecedented legislative encouragement.

The Evk2Cnr Committee has taken the opportunity to exploit its varied field experiences by extending them on a large scale through the creation of a collaboration network. The Seed project has implementation partners in both Italy and Pakistan. They include the Aga Khan Rural Support Program of Baltistan, the Pakistan WWF, the Mountain and Glacier Protection Organization, the directorate of the Department of Forest and Central Karakorum National Park, the Pakistani Meteorological Department, the Pakistani Alpine Club, Karakorum International University, and various Italian universities participating in projects in some form.

With Seed, the Evk2Cnr Committee encapsulates the spirit of the Pidsa: a real, concrete collaboration between Italy and Pakistan in favour of the development of its most remote and marginalised regions.



Interview with the project director Bastian Flury

What is your role within the project Seed?

As Seed Project Director my role includes managing the Seed project, coordinating activities and providing technical advice. I am the main interlocutor between the implementing partners of the project, the scientific committee, which guides the research activities, the project's board of governance, the donor and the project stakeholders - a multitude of people and representatives from different backgrounds and with different interests. Considering also that Seed project will be one of the major projects in the region for the next years, you can imagine that my job is and will be rather extensive and challenging. In short, I am the main focal person for all Seed project-related technical, institutional and administrative issues. As Seed Project Director I also head the project management unit, located at the premises of the Karakorum International University in Gilgit, Pakistan.

What are the philosophy and approach behind the project?

I am honored to lead a project which in a way is the realization of one of Evk2Cnr's great visions. For the past 20 years, Evk2Cnr has been supporting the Cknp and Bufferzone area in Gilgit-Baltistan District with scientific expertise, through community development, improvement of the tourism sector, conservation of cultural heritage and facilitation of small businesses. It has done so in collaboration with many partner organizations, institutions and government agencies from Pakistan, Gilgit-Baltistan and Italy. Finally, the Seed project has given Evk2Cnr and Kiu the opportunity to catalyze these experiences and collaborations in different sectors in a holistic large-scale project, which will make a real difference on the ground. In accordance with Agenda 21, the project recognizes the close interrelation between poverty alleviation through opening up livelihood options and improved the well-being of local people, economic viability of local enterprises, and conservation through sustainable use of natural resources in helping mountain regions to tackle current challenges and overcome today's and future problems. For this reason, Seed project has set out to catalyze an integrated social, economic and environmental develop-

ment, of Cknp and Bufferzone region, in partnership with experienced local partner organizations and all concerned stakeholders and beneficiaries.

What are the main activities of the project?

Aiming at an integrated development naturally leads to a very broad intervention with a multitude of activities in many different sectors, with different scopes and involving different stakeholders. In accordance with the project's approach, the key areas of the Seed project are: support improvements of agricultural production and marketing in CKNP Bufferzone, which are consistent with park regulations and conservation efforts; improvements of key services related to well-being of people of CKNP Bufferzone in the health and education sector as well as access to these services. Strengthening Cknp management and conservation efforts in synergy with existing projects (PC-1). Conducting environmental baseline research and monitoring to support Cknp management. Strengthening Karakorum International University as a local resource center for higher education and for generation and transfer of knowledge. Support for the development and quality improvement of eco-sustainable tourism services in the area. Sustainable improvements and management of park facilities. Support for the development of alternative non-farm livelihood income options for people in Gilgit-Baltistan in the small-scale industry and tourism sector Support strengthening and valorization of cultural heritage in the area.

What kind of problems Seed will be reaching to solve?

Gilgit-Baltistan and CKNP area are afflicted with many social, economic and environmental problems, and, as most remote mountain regions, is at the same time highly prone and vulnerable to unforeseen changes in these areas. Many local people's livelihoods teeter on the brink of poverty. High environmental degradation threatens the ecosystem and local people's lives at the same time and the local economy is structurally weak. The Seed project aims at making a real improvement in these areas, for local people living in CKNP Bufferzone and

beyond, the local economy, especially in the tourism, agricultural and small-scale industry sectors, and for the rich wildlife and unique ecosystem constituting the amazing beauty of this region, which is and will increasingly become one of its most important potentials. I would like to stress here, that the Seed project by itself will not be able to make this difference. It is the beneficiaries and stakeholders who recognize the opportunity of this project and put the services Seed project provides in a true partnership spirit to good use for the benefit of this beautiful region. The Seed project management will proceed with open eyes and ears and set up mechanisms which will allow for a genuine involvement of all stakeholders to initiate such a process.

What are the targets in a short, medium and long term?

In the long term, the project tries to achieve an integrated Social, Economic and Environmental Development and improvement of the situation (the name "Seed" emerged from the initial letters of these terms). This requires a good coordination of the different activities and with existing projects in the area with similar aims, as well as a solid and fruitful partnership with all stakeholders. Some activities, especially the ones carried out at the local scale will produce a visible result in a short time-frame. Others, such as research, institutional and economic development, awareness raising and improvements in the education system, for example, will only show their impact in the long-run. Nevertheless, both are key to achieving a sustainable improvement of the social, economic and environmental situation, which is self-supporting in the long-run.

So, speaking about "integrated development" does not only mean support for different interrelated sectors at the same time, but also, a meaningful integration of activities with different time-horizons and on different scales -from local households over single enterprises to large institutions and legal frameworks. Last but not least, "integration" also means, the integration of the voices and needs of all concerned stakeholders and beneficiaries into the project implementation, in an equitable way.



Riccardo De Bernardi (EvK2Cnr) and Najama Najamm

Environment and culture: this is the Kiu mission

With her vivid glance and multicolors dress, original from her country, the vicecancellor of the Karakorum International university Najama Najamm speaks of the wonder of Pakistan and that academic site embraced from the most beautiful mountains of the planet.

Professor Najamm, when the Karakorum international University (Kiu) was born?

It was commissioned in 2003 and is the only university in the mountain area of Northern Areas in Pakistan. And new but is growing. There are already 12 departments, including computer science, management, biology, chemistry, physics, earth science, English, mathematics, and soon we'll have others. We have almost 2000 students of whom one third are women, a great achievement for a land very traditional like that. Even more so when you consider that five of these girls are studying in Italy, alone, without parents to learn the processing of colored stones.

Environments and natural sources are the great opportunities in Pakistan...

The Karakoram/ Hindu Kush mountain region, unique in the world, is our treasure and pride but at the time our responsibility. Kiu and EvK2Cnr's collaboration on the Seed project is a befitting tribute of the shared commitment and love of the mountains and its people and, therefore the Gilgit/Baltistan region. It also symbolizes the continuity of commitment across time: past, present and future.

How will this collaboration continue?

Kiu is a partner for present and future, being the only university in the region which has since its inception focused on maximizing resource development (human, community, and natural) through research and teaching, in areas relevant to the region on the one hand and the national, international (and global) commitment on the other. Kiu also has the vision of preserving not just the environment but also the

cultural heritage and languages of the region **which sectors will be the focus of your work?**

Kiu scientists, academicians and students will have a critical role in the study of climate change, glaciology, water resources, tourism, mountain culture and heritage, languages, and most important environment and mountain and earth sciences. The future research in partnership with EvK2Cnr will create a pool of trained personnel for this region.

What is the nature of your links with EvK2Cnr?

This partnership between Kiu and EvK2Cnr is the first of its kind and will go far in the strengthening institutions and as well bringing scientists of our two nations together in collaborations and in friendships. Felicitations to the vision and efforts of all involved at Kiu, EvK2Cnr, our partner organizations, Pakistani and Italian Governments and above all the people of the Gilgit/Baltistan.

Italy-Pakistan relationship

A century-long friendship in the shadow of K2

*From Duke of Abruzzi to EvK2Cnr Committee
Photo exhibition and a Mountain Film festival to celebrate
100 years of collaboration between Pakistan and Italy*

(from page one)

those times and the hundred years of friendship between the two countries, the Evk2Cnr Committee and the Pakistan government have organised series of special events to be held on 14,15 and 16 December 2009. On those days, in Islamabad, at the National Art Gallery, pavilion 5, in the capital's sector F5/1, a series of exhibitions, festivals and much else, will be sealing the bond between the two countries, one which has endured for a century. The first day of events will see the inauguration of the photographic exhibition devoted to the Duke of Abruzzi, to whom we have given ample space in the first part of the newspaper. "A hundred years on: in the Duke's footsteps on the Karakorum expedition", is the title of a collection that captures the epic feats and details of Italian exploration in the early 1900s. The exhibition will be inaugurated at 5.15 pm by Pakistani and Italian dignitaries. Afterwards, they will move to an Auditorium open to the public, where they will be presenting the two countries' joint cooperation initiatives, in particular, the Seed project for sustainable development in the Northern Areas of Pakistan. The schedule includes speeches by Agostino Da Polenza and KIU representatives, followed by the official inauguration of the Pakistan Mountain Film Festival.

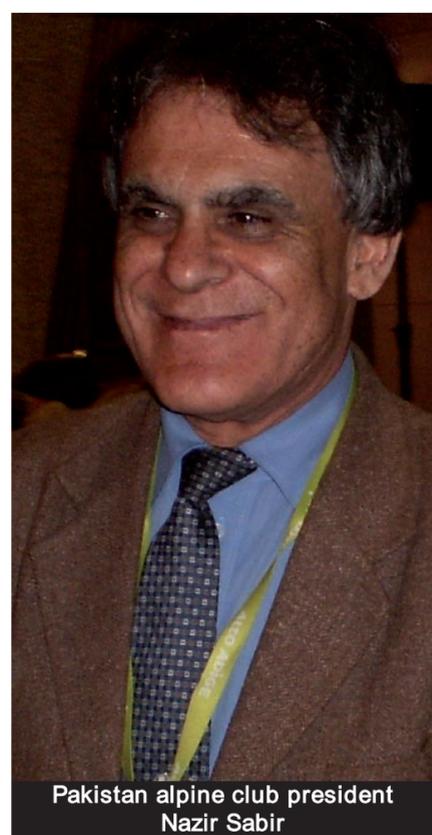
At 6.30 pm there will be the projection of a

special documentary produced by the RAI in collaboration with Evk2Cnr. It recounts the tale of Italian mountaineering enterprises, as well as describing other initiatives implemented by our country in the Central Karakorum Park area. The title is meaningful. "Challenge of K2, the mountain of the Italians: EvK2Cnr and its activities in the Northern Areas of Pakistan".

The following day, at 5 pm, will see the official inauguration of the exhibition "Valleys of Memory. Ancient people, sites and images from Swat", organised by the Italian Institute for African and Oriental studies (ISIAO), in collaboration with the Department of Archaeology and Museums, part of Pakistan's Ministry of Culture. Afterwards, in collaboration with the Cervino Film Festival and the Pakistan Alpine Club, there will be a showing of the first three films of the Pakistan Mountain Film Festival: Nazir Sabir's "To the Ends of Himalayas"; Donagh Coleman's "Stone pastures"; and Manzoor Hussain's "Meeting the Paju Challenge".

On 16 December, again at the National Art Gallery, starting at 5.30 pm, mountain cinema will be featured again, with the showing of a further three films: Carlo Rossi's "Quei momenti così intensi"; Nazir Sabir's "Everest Men Against Nature" and Guido Perrini's "Ten, a cameraman's tale".

The exhibitions will be open to the public from 15 December 2009 to 24 January 2010.



Pakistan alpine club president
Nazir Sabir

Nazir Sabir applauds the mountain film festival

Nazir Sabir, president of the Pakistan Alpine Club, is also one of the nation's greatest mountaineers. He is the only Pakistani to have scaled Mount Everest and four other of Karakorum's summits over 8000 metres. In 1981 he opened up a new route on K2, ascending by the south-eastern face. As Alpine Club president, he is a lead player in the promotion of climbing and mountain tourism in the country's ranges, and has participated in numerous international collaborations, above all the Italian Karakorum Trust project, for environmental protection and the training of Pakistani climbers, rescue workers and guides, with special emphasis on the training of women.

Mr. Sabir, what role does the Alpine Club play in the Pakistani context?

Since its foundation in 1971, the Alpine Club has sought to promote mountaineering and respect for the mountain environment. We have organised expeditions, also to Everest, and obtained great results, even if our resources are very limited. We have also managed to train young climbers. In this case, our collaboration with big projects and international organisations, like Karakorum Trust, has been of the utmost importance. Lately, we have been active on the environmental front, in an effort to keep our much frequented mountains clean. It's a tough challenge, but we are doing our best to be efficient and, with the help of Karakorum Trust, we have achieved good results in the areas of the Baltoro glacier.

"Keep Baltoro Clean" offers great prospects. Next year, you're planning the clean-up of K2...

Yes. The Alpine Club, with Karakorum Trust, was already active in the field also before the cleaning of Baltoro. We have managed to make the intervention more intense. This summer, KT was working alone on Baltoro, but from next year our collaboration will be resumed: we want to clean K2 by means of large expeditions, arriving as far as the high-altitude camps, although not up to the summit. Up there are frozen tents, abandoned materials, attached ropes left

behind along the route. Next year's K2 cleaning expedition will be made up of Pakistani high-altitude guides, who are due this month to undergo special high-altitude training.

High-altitude training is a first step...

Yes. It's the first time that we've offered this type of training. It will be given to the trekking guides trained over the past two years, and we'll be specialising them in emergency techniques, and crevasse rescue. We also need to improve their climbing skills: for the moment they know how to ascend using jumars and little else. We will teach them about rescue and mountain sickness. From the middle of July, 20-25 high-altitude sirdars, as we prefer to call them rather than "porters", will take part in the "K2 cleaning" expedition, thus undertaking an actual job. It's one of the most important projects we share with KT. Over coming years, we hope to train many other sirdars, thus creating a new human resource for Karakorum expeditions. Unlike Nepal, the quality of our high-altitude guides is one of our deficits, something that discourages many commercial ventures. In fact, to bring their clients here, they have to bring sherpas for them, but it's very expensive, because they pay the same permit-fee as the climbers themselves.

Italy is a very important partner for you...

Yes. A great collaboration exists between Italy and Pakistan. It was born on the mountains. It dates back to Ardito Desio and the Duke of Abruzzi, and has brought Italian projects and expeditions to Karakorum. Today, Italy makes a major contribution to Karakorum. That is why we say that K2 is the mountain of the Italians. The Italian government and NGOs assist us in formulating new policies, for example, the Central Karakorum National Park: it will be a great venture, and I hope that other nations will join us. And I hope that one day it will truly become a Unesco World Heritage Site. As well as promoting tourism and environment, you're also active on the cultural front.

And now you are soon to have the Pakistan mountain film festival...

Oh yes, it's been our dream for many years. It will be held this year as part of the large Ev-K2Cnr event. Pakistan, and especially Islamabad, deserves this type of event, in which people can see mountain films brought to the country by other nations, films that have been seen at the world's most important festivals, like Trento.

Does Pakistan have a tradition of mountain cinema?

No. Not of mountain films. And it's a pity. I remember that I saw my first film at the age of 8 or 9, and it was the Italian film of K2. I recall the expedition's cook, who, every time he saw someone climbing with a pack, would exclaim: "That's me." It wasn't true, of course, but I remember it all the same. He was a relation of mine. However, we climbers have made films of many expeditions, also involving the army, but they have never been shown. This will be the first time.

Do you think it will attract the interest of the young, since you'll be showing the films to students?

Yes, and especially the girls, I hope. I didn't say before, but we depend a lot on them: they count for 51 per cent of Pakistanis, and they have never had any opportunities. We've been training them over the past three years. Since becoming president, I have greatly encouraged climbing training for girls. I would like to launch a female expedition to Everest within the next ten years. Two years back, 24 girls and a team of American women mountaineers had organised the ascent of a 6000 metre peak, but problems arose in Islamabad and our girls couldn't participate. Iranian girls were allowed to scale Everest, while our own did not. We want them to have this opportunity. Here, there are many great mountains. Many disapprove of me because of this, but I take no notice and go ahead regardless.



Agostino Da Polenza with President Zardari

Pakistan marching towards the future

(from page one)

months ago, with the valuable assistance of our Embassy and Italian Cooperation agencies, we signed a contract in the framework of the agreement that allows the Pakistan government to convert its debt into development projects. The Seed contract was ready to be signed three months ahead of the date initially anticipated and, after a couple of weeks, we were handed a cheque for the first major advance sum. It's a small example, but one that reflects a really efficient way of working, based on a clear will to get things done, to get international colla-

boration operational. It is undeniable that Pakistan also means safety checks, difficulties in getting around and road blocks, security service warnings received via sms, news of terrorist attacks, and anti-terrorist military actions. It's a difficult country, with fundamentalist leanings, tribal interests, structural and political problems, but it is also a nation with a strong cultural and scientific tradition - the University of Lahore is the oldest in Asia. Eighty percent of Pakistan's population depend for their income on agriculture, a sector representing little more than 20 per cent of the gross national product. Desperate and wide-

spread poverty and land neglect are the realities of a country made up of lacerating contradictions, but also a land of great opportunity. For the few reasons I have mentioned, along with thousands of others that reflect the reality of this great country, I will continue to admire and promote Pakistan for its splendid mountains, deep valleys through which flow great rivers, like the Indus, the green oases of high-altitude deserts, its universities where the hopes of young people reside, its men and women, and those cities, so full of people, tension, enthusiasm and movement. A country that is mostly poor, but strong, like its land and its people.

Business

A country of opportunity for Italian companies: Pakistan as defined by president Zardari at a meeting with Italian political and business representatives

By WAINER PREDÀ

On one side, the aristocracy of the Italian business world. On the other Pakistan's president, Asif Ali Zardari, and his governmental delegation. Between them, a world of economic and commercial opportunity offered by the Asian country to Italian companies. This was one of the topics discussed at the meeting held last 29 September at the Italian Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Rome.

The meeting, coordinated by the host, Italian minister Franco Frattini, also saw the participation of premier Silvio Berlusconi, who spoke with the Pakistani president on major political issues on the international agenda.

It then moved on to the economy. The objective of Zardari's visit was to strengthen the bases of economic collaboration between Italy and Pakistan, already very firm. In 2008, for example, bilateral trade surpassed the record figure by a billion euros. Minister Frattini also announced two important appointments: a session of the mixed commission on economic cooperation between the two countries, to be held at Islamabad by the end of the year, and a new summit between the European Union and the Asian country, to be held next spring.

The Farnesina forum constituted an occasion of exchange among Italian commercial operators, in view of investment projects in the sectors of textiles, manufacturing, energy production, agriculture, agro-industry, marble and gemstones. It also featured culture, archaeological commissions, student grants and the environment, with the EvK2Cnr Committee leading the discussions.

On all these issues, President Zardari was very clear: "We ask the Italian government and operators to facilitate investment in our country". In his speech, the president stated that "Pakistan wants to open up to economic operators worldwide. Terrorism exists, but, with the help of the international community, we will prevail over it. Our country has a strategic position, bordering with China and India, and in communication with the Arab world. In addition, we have almost completely



Business and opportunity come together at the Farnesina

untapped natural resources. We therefore need the skills of more developed countries, like Italy".

It is worth noting that Italian cooperation has been present in Pakistan for almost 30 years, with past intervention centring chiefly on the hygiene and farming sectors. Pakistan is currently the beneficiary of several major cooperation initiatives. One example of success was the emergency and post-emergency management following the disastrous earthquake that struck Kashmir on 8 October 2005. On that occasion, Italian cooperation arranged the provision of humanitarian aid to the suffering population, for a total of 1.3 million euros.

In recent months, Italy has proceeded with a partial cancellation of the debt deriving from aid credits, by an overall amount of 59 million euros. The cancellation, initially restricting the employment of resources in favour of Afghan refugees, is currently undergoing a phase of negotiation with the Pakistani government. The goal is to direct finance

more generally towards the realisation of development programmes in the social and environmental fields.

Vice-Minister of Economic Development, Adolfo Urso, affirmed that "Italian companies hold Pakistan in high regard", especially in the areas of food production and processing and textiles. Trade is excellent "but more needs to be done, particularly for small and medium-sized businesses: barriers must be broken down". Turning to international policy, president Zardari thanked Italy for the support it continues to give his country. "Pakistan - affirmed the president - wants to be part of the solution of the problems afflicting this part of the world, but it needs the support of the international community".

Zardari also met with President of the Republic, Giorgio Napolitano, at the Quirinal Palace, and expressed appreciation "for the highly valued political role assumed by the Italian government in the central Asian context".

The Committee new offices in Pakistan

In a natural development of a now tried and tested collaboration, the EvK2Cnr Committee has opened two new Pakistan offices. The first is the operative headquarters in Islamabad, inaugurated last September. The second, located at the Karakorum International University in Gilgit, will be the official headquarters of the Seed project.

Interview

with Ambassador Tasnim Aslam

A fruitful collaboration with EvK2Cnr

Ambassador, how has the relationship between the Pakistani government and EvK2Cnr developed over the years?

EvK2Cnr has been a long-term partner of Pakistan in a multifaceted partnership - a partnership that is completing a century. **What does your collaboration centre upon?**

The important fact about EvK2Cnr is that it is focusing on earth sciences, environment, anthropology, and development of new technologies in an interconnected and holistic way. Its programs aimed at helping resolve urgent environmental and development issues.

What activity does Pakistan appreciate the most?

In Pakistan, the EvK2Cnr has been engaged in activities that not only bolster the awareness and efforts to protect environment but also help train Pakistanis in different sectors. The projects in Karakorum International University and support for scientific research, in particular are very useful.

Care for the environment is fundamental, especially at present...

The celebration of the 100 years of the Duke of Abruzzi's Karakorum expedition and the 100 years of friendship and collaboration between Pakistan and Italy to coincide with the International Mountain Day is very appropriate. The EvK2Cnr's dedication to highlighting the environmental aspects of mountaineering is laudable.

How will collaboration develop in the future?

EvK2Cnr's future activities especially in the areas of scientific research, sustainable development and environment would be very valuable. I hope that EvK2Cnr would, also focus on the genetic resources of the area and their preservation.

What prospects do you foresee?

I wish the events being organized to mark the 100 years of the Duke of Abruzzi's Karakorum expedition and the 100 years of friendship and collaboration between Pakistan and Italy success. I am confident that this cooperation and friendship will not only continue but will increase further in the years and decades to come.



Garnet, a project with a "precious" future

(from page one)

unique in its kind. It operates in an area where large gemstone deposits have been found. The decision of employing locally trained personnel in such activities, in line with its policy of capacity building, is one of the programme's innovative elements. All of the profits from the sale of gems have therefore been employed to the benefit of the local people. The proceeds have been reinvested in workshop equipment and the training of new experts in the handling of stones. At the same time, the University has been able to open new departments, which will serve to encourage scientific research and local businesses more in general. Furthermore, the development of the gemstone market in the Northern Areas of Pakistan may potentially lead to a greater, as well as necessary, regulation of exploration and extraction of mineral resources, thus increasing safety at work and reducing the negative environmental repercussions of an unregulated market.

The first members of the course were trained in collaboration with the Italian Gemmology Institute (IGI). Ten Kiu graduates were chosen to take part in

a 300-hour training programme in Italy, specialising in the analysis of coloured stones. The training course concentrated on the optical identification and crystallography of minerals and gems, the chemical properties of colours, and the use of equipment in gemstone analysis. All ten course participants obtained the diploma in "Gemmological analysis", and progressed to a further 90-hour course on coloured stone cutting. Meanwhile, back in Pakistan, new professional openings were created for the Italian-trained students, who in turn passed on to other students the knowledge acquired in our country. In a short time, the project had attained its goal of creating a team of local professionals expert in the cutting of rough stones and gemstone analysis, bringing added value to the Northern Areas of Pakistan. Thanks to the generous donation of instrumentation and fully equipped workshops, supplied with energy by Kiu, two types of laboratories have been set up, one for gemstone analysis, and one for cutting, both located on the university campus at Gilgit, and supervised by an expert of the EvK2Cnr Committee. This is the culmination of the objective to establish a new professional activity to be developed on a local basis

The third point of the plan envisaged the distribution and marketing of gems. Pakistan ranks third in the world in the production of rough stones, many of which are traded on the internal market. Only a small percentage of the gems produced make it onto the international marketplace. Garnet set out to improve the quality of locally produced stones, to make them competitive on the international level. With this aim in mind, the workshops have become fully operative, passing from the start-up phase to the establishment of an internal and external market. The training course was supervised by business experts chosen by the EvK2Cnr Committee. Thus, the gems produced in the Garnet workshops by qualified professionals are being distributed internationally to jewellers and dealers. The new line of jewellery featured alongside are the result of the fine handling of coloured stones. The profits from Garnet are reinvested locally towards improving professional and technical expertise, on workshops and facilities, and scientific and academic resources, in related fields. All of this has triggered a sustainable mechanism providing development, expertise and opportunities to the Northern Areas of Pakistan.



Italian-Pakistani joint venture: Water Enterprise is born

A joint venture between Italian and Pakistani companies to bring mineral water to the country's tables: this is the objective of Water Solutions, which has invested in a project for the implementation of a mineral water extraction and bottling plant, in the area of Lahore.

Access to an adequate supply of drinking water is not only a basic need and fundamental condition for a healthy life. It is also a human right.

In normal situations, access to a source also presupposes that it is able to supply at least 20

litres pro capita a day at a distance of no more than a 1000 metres from the user's residence. Often this requirement is not met. Pakistan suffers from problems regarding both the availability and management of water resources. About 44 per cent of the population does not have access to safe drinking water. In rural areas, that figure can rise to 90 per cent.

The possibility of drinking bottled water is not only a habit of the richer Pakistanis; is also a necessity, indeed, the only option, for obtaining

drinking water in areas not reached by public mains.

Also to be considered is the massive economic growth on the regional scale, despite the global economic crisis, which has made consumers more aware of health and welfare issues.

Pakistan's mineral water market, equal to that of the whole of southern Asia, goes hand in hand with the country's sustained and generalised economic growth. In 1999, the Pakistan government described its market for bottled water, with its 33 million litres per year, as

small but in constant expansion. Already by 2003, consumption had risen to 70 million litres per annum, equal to a pro capita increase of 40 percent per year.

However, in some areas of the world, bottled water is not always reliable, with frequent cases of contamination undergone by water in the bottling plants, which are subjected to only sporadic controls. Therefore, an initiative of this kind requires modern technologies and western-style controls.

To attain these goals, Water

Solutions purchased an existing plant in Pakistan and 'i going to adapt to new standard. It subsequently went on to buy Italian-made equipment for water extraction and bottling according to our country's standards, by far the most restrictive and safest in the world. It then employed instruments of analysis to allow daily checks of water composition and quality.

Last but not least, the Lahore plant will favour the creation of new jobs and the training of technical cadres in line with international standards.

Environment and climate

It will be built in the Park of Deosai. But collaboration with EvK2Cnr will also extend to animals, with the involvement of the WWF

By PAOLO FORNONI

The activities aim to improve the understanding of climate changes in progress in the western Karakorum, home of the famous K2, "the mountain of mountains". To attain this goal, a climate monitoring station will be implemented, becoming part of the larger ABC project, the result of collaboration between EvK2Cnr and the United Nations Environmental Programme (Unep).

The installation of the new station has also been made possible by collaboration with the Karakorum International University (Kiu) and the Pakistan Meteorological Department, in the wake of the "K2-2004 fifty years on" expedition, which led climbers and scientists in the footsteps of professor Ardito Desio, half a century after the first conquest of K2. Only with this series of agreements and combination of different skills, has it been possible to identify the Deosai National Park as the ideal site on which to set up the Pakistan Climate Observatory in Karakorum (Pco-K).

In recent years, several climate monitoring stations have been installed in Pakistan, as part of the Share network, set up in collaboration with the Ceop project. The network also includes the stations of Urdukas (at 3926 metres altitude on the Baltoro glacier) and the one at Askole (at 3015 metres in Baltistan).

The main purpose of the new station, which comes within the framework of the Abc project, together with another 12 stations distributed over 3 continents, is to collect data on climate and atmosphere in the hitherto unmonitored Pakistani Karakorum.

The operation involves numerous Pakistani organisations, including the Pakistan Academy of Geological Science, the Karakorum International University in Gilgit, the Wwf, and the Pakistan Department of Meteorology. Thanks to this series of collaborations, past and present, it will be possible to study climate change impacts on a region that is crucial to Central Asia and the entire world, with the aim of implementing activities of support geared towards the sustainable development of the Central Karakorum National Park.

However, Share's efforts will not only address meteorology and climate features. Experts of the EvK2Cnr Committee have in fact approved a biodiversity monitoring programme, for the close scrutiny of the great mammals that populate the Sagarmatha National Park (the park of Everest), and especially the K2 park. Researchers will analyse animal behaviour in relation to climate changes in progress. Rising temperatures cause the melting of glaciers, variations in sea- and ocean-levels, a reduction in water resources in some regions and rainfall increases in others, variations in snow precipitation, all of which have an inevitable impact on the local flora and fauna. Meteorological parameters, ecological variables and behavioural factors are some of the aspects determining natural selection and habits of herbivores, in particular ungulates. In the mountain habitat the availability of natural resources is strongly influenced by seasonal variability, which determines the survival and movement of ungulates. Climate changes have reduced the snow cover in mountain areas, causing a northward shift in forest distribution, consequently altering the geographical collocation and extension of the habitat of herbivore species. For this reason, modifications of plant areas have a direct effect on the high-altitude distribution and numbers of ungulates in mountain regions, in turn giving rise to a shift in carnivore species. Furthermore, a different distribution of vegetation interferes with habitat and resources that may be available in terms of food needs, with a consequent indirect effect of the distribution of species. Such variations and the environmental situation will be the subject of the monitoring programme implemented by Share in Pakistan.

Share inaugurates a new observatory in Pakistan



The Urdukas weather station

All the station's characteristics

Pakistan possesses one of the most developed irrigation systems in the world for arid and semi-arid lands previously subjected to processes of saturation and salt formation, and which are therefore particularly vulnerable to the impact of aerosols and climate changes. In addition, this fragile basin would be exposed to an even higher environmental risk should the sporadic precipitations become more intense, giving rise to an increase in erosion processes in the western Himalayas. The projects Karakorum Trust Phase II, Share and Unep-Abc, envisage the installation of an atmospheric monitoring observatory of aerosols and trace gases in the Karakorum region.

The new station, called the Pakistan Climate Observatory at Karakorum (PCO-K), is considered of great importance for understanding environmental changes and their local level impacts on the mountains of Karakorum, although also having repercussions on the regional and global levels.

Moreover, together with the Nepal Climate Observatory at Pyramid (NCO-P), installed in Nepal at the Pyramid Observatory, 5,079 metres above sea level, operative since 2006, it extends the high-altitude observation network of the ABA project, representing the background atmospheric concentrations.

The Pakistan Climate Observatory at Karakorum will be equipped with sophistica-

ted sensors for the monitoring of aerosols and trace gases. In particular, it will include an optical particle counter, an ozone (O₃) analyser, an aethalometer (for black carbon) and meteorological sensors (for precipitation, temperature, relative humidity, wind direction and velocity, pressure), a photometer for measuring solar radiation.

The main local partner in the implementation and management of the PCO-K observatory is the Pakistan Meteorology Department (PMD), as part of a scientific collaboration begun in 2007 for the study of high-altitude climate change impacts in the Karakorum region, and in support of sustainable development initiatives in the area of the Central Karakorum National Park (CKNP), together with the Karakorum International University of Gilgit, for the development of activities aimed at scientific and cultural reinforcement and the promotion of cooperative scientific and technological activities.

Observations of atmospheric pollution and climate change provide data and information that are essential to scientific studies, which in turn have important implications in political decision-making.

The analysis of current environmental conditions, coupled with the development of global circulation forecasting models based on ground level observations of aerosols and other pollutants, will help in the formulation

of preventive measures for the protection of the environment and human health.

The new observatory to be installed in Pakistan will certainly contribute to a better understanding of the impact of aerosols and pollutant species in a remote area far from emission sources.

Predictive circulation models and the estimate of impacts on agricultural productivity and the already arduous living conditions of local populations will therefore be able to furnish more accurate and complete scenarios.

Finally, thanks to the improvement of the capacity to trace the origin of major pollutant species, future investment can be better channelled toward direct intervention on the main sources of such emissions.

During the joint EvK2Cnr/ PMD mission in Pakistan last July/August, the site for the installation of the new observatory was identified as the National Park of Deosai, considered to be sufficiently representative and accessible to host the new installation.

The Deosai National Park is close to the village of Skardu in the Northern Areas of Pakistan, and is situated on the Deosai tableland, one of the highest plateaux in the world, with an average height of 4,114 m asl and an extension of about 3,000 square kilometres. The installation of the PCO-K observatory is scheduled for summer 2010.



**Alessandro Gaudiano, Head of Office V,
General Directorate of Development Cooperation
Ministry of Foreign Affairs**

Cooperation: italian projects underway

The high-ranking functionary of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs outlines Italy's numerous initiatives in Pakistan

interview by FRANCESCA STEFFANONI

Mister Gaudiano, can you provide a brief outline of Italy's development cooperation in Pakistan?

Pakistan, a country with which Italy has had relations of development cooperation since the 1980s, has in fact become a government priority only in the last few months. This is reflected by the trend of aid flow volumes from 2001 to 2008, which has seen the approval of aid and donations for a total of 18 million euros (2.2 million euro/year on average), 7 million of which have been issued to date. In the meantime, there have been recent changes in the world scenario, the failure of years of international efforts for the stabilization and democratization of Afghanistan, with the ensuing negative effects on Pakistan, and Italy's specific commitment in the G8 framework for the first half of 2009. All this has led to Italy's pledge in Tokyo on 17 April of this year, which envisages a substantial injection of resources in favour of Pakistan, but within a regional vision and perspective, for a total of 62 million euros, to be employed to fund initiatives in the fields of micro-finance, rural development, professional and agricultural training. Finally, it is worth bearing in mind the important debt conversion operation for about 80 million euros, following the definitive cancellation of a part of the debt of an equal amount, already agreed prior to signing the Conversion Agreement (in November 2006). The respective activities are already in progress, and major projects were approved in June this year.

What are the country's current priorities and how can Italy contribute?

The priorities of cooperation with Pakistan are, security conditions permitting, the reduction of poverty in the northern tribal areas and in the Frontier Province with Afghanistan's NWFP, as well as support to the Pakistani government in triggering a development dynamic able to break the vicious circle of poverty-instability. The widespread high poverty levels contribute to creating a base that can be tapped by destabilising elements. The country needs economic aid in support of its development policies and fight against poverty, to be provided in a coordinated, efficient and effective manner. Italy, with the commitments of Tokyo and subsequent ones, all concrete actions, is rightly moving in this direction.

The Debt Conversion Agreement between Italy and Pakistan, which allocates funds to activities of development and the fight against poverty, can certainly lead to significant results. What prospects do you foresee?

The debt conversion operation is precisely one of those concrete actions taken to support Pakistan's government in the difficult task of re-establishing normalisation and development processes. It is a flexible and efficient means of supporting not only initiatives proposed by the non-governmental sectors, but also governmental ones that, while priorities, cannot find coverage in the state balance, also because of the restriction imposed by international financial institutions, aimed at guaranteeing the macroeconomic stability of the country.

Which cooperation projects are currently in progress in Pakistan?

Currently in progress are the implementation of ordinary aid intervention in the environmental sectors (management of the Hindu Kush-Karakorum-Himalaya parks and the integrated project for the

management of environmental and cultural resources in Shigar, supervised by the Iucn, for 1.3 million euros), and in support of the rural peoples of Belochistan and the Fata (entrusted to Pam for 1 million euros), as well as over 7.75 million euro in aid credits as a credit line for the development of PMI, part of the technical assistance aid entrusted to Unido for a total of 1.4 million euros. In 2005, a voluntary contribution of 1 million euros was made to Unep for the partial funding of the Karakorum Trust project, currently in the implementation phase, under the sponsorship of the EVK2Cnr Committee and Icimod (International Centre for Integrated Mountain Development), allocated for the coordination and integration of all Italian environmental initiatives in the region. Also underway is an emergency intervention in support of the victims of the 2005 earthquake in the Northern Areas of the country, for an amount equal to 3.3 million euros. In the wake of the grave refugee problem arising from military operations in the Swat Valley, the Dgcs responded with humanitarian aid for the transport of goods for a value of around 800,000 euros, with Fier funding of 400,000 euros, and contributions to the Oms of 1,000,000 euros, to the Unhcr of 1,000,000 euros, and to Pam of 500,000 euros.

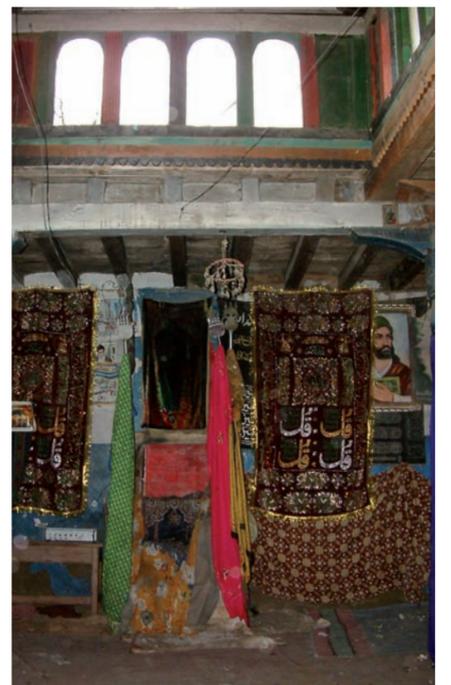
What are the most important activities you have on the ground nowadays?

The most important current intervention in financial terms is the debt restructuring, which started with the cancellation of 26.5 million dollars, plus 58.7 million euros (Bilateral Agreement of February 2003), followed by the stipulation of a Debt Conversion Agreement for the same amount (Bilateral Agreement of November 2006), allocating funds to development activities and the fight against poverty. In this context, several important projects have already been approved, especially those relating to the Northern Areas of the country on the border with Afghanistan.

As previously mentioned, at the Tokyo donors' conference (April 2009), Italy announced a pledge equal to 62 million euros, including 2 million in the form of donations, and 60 million in aid credit at high concessional conditions. In the context of the pledge, the Directing Committee has recently approved a major aid credit initiative, to fund local development actions and micro-credit in favour of rural populations in the border areas with in NWFP and Belochistan, for an amount of 40 million euros.

The Tokyo pledge also envisages funding of the continuation of the current programme of the Foreign Agricultural Institute (Iao) for the production of olive oil crops in Pakistan, Afghanistan and Nepal, totalling 2.4 million euros, and for the implementation of regional intervention aimed at its integration with a similar initiative currently underway in Afghanistan, with the aim of favouring exchange and dialogue between the two countries.

The coming meeting of the Directing Committee for Development Cooperation in November 2009 will also consider the approval of further aid credit initiatives totalling 20 million euros, to be set against the Tokyo pledge, for professional training in support of the educational system of the NWFP and the development of production sectors in the frontier regions with Afghanistan (marble and gemstone extraction industry), together with a donor initiative through the Iao for fruit- and vegetable farming development in the Swat Valley, for 1.350,000 euros, and two contributions to Unifem and Unicef for a total of 3.100,000 euros.



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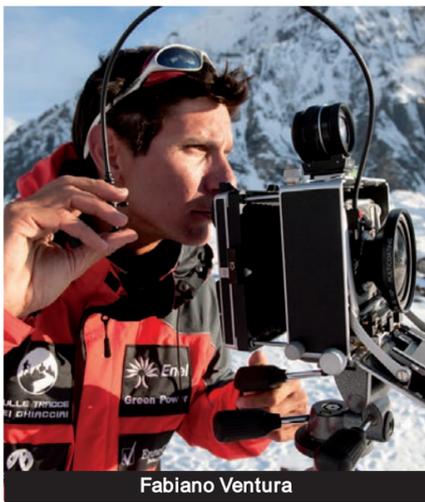
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Fabiano Ventura

One hundred years after the Duke, following the glacial tracks (in photos)

In 1909, during the expedition of the Duke of Abruzzi, it was the tireless activity of Vittorio Sella and his assistant, Erminio Botta, to guarantee the first valuable documentation of the K2 area. Twenty years later, the expedition led by Aimone di Savoia, Duke of Spoleto, explored and photographed the Baltoro glacial basin and the Shaksagan valley, a "geographical problem" left unresolved by the previous exploration work. The expedition team counted 12 Italians, including Ardito Desio and Massimo Terzano, a photographer and film-camera operator. A hundred years after the first daring enterprise, other Italians realised an ambition plan. Between 24 July and 4 September, 2009, they traced the same route taken by the Duke of Abruzzi, taking new pictures from exactly the same points adopted for the historic photographs of Sella and Terzano, for the purpose of assessing climate change effects on Baltoro, the world's greatest glacier. The new photographs were taken by Fabiano Ventura, photographer and the project's deviser. Scientific observations were supervised by a scienti-

fic committee that included Claudio Smiraglia, former President of the Italian Glaciological Committee, and Kenneth Hewitt, expert of the Cold Regions Research Centre at the Canadian University of Waterloo, who accompanied the team via satellite link, supplying useful suggestions as to the choice of field observation points, based on the outstanding experience he acquired in the region visited by the expedition. Finally, Pino D'Aquila, geologist and mountaineer, specialised in geomorphology and GIS land surveying, was present in the field to perform on-site analyses and direct data collection. The team travelled in the company of a group of television camera operators, who realised a documentary produced by SD Cinematografica. The expedition was supported by contributions of major companies in the renewable energy sector, including Enel Green Power and Enneci. After the expedition's return from Karakorum, a series of events was scheduled to present its results to the public. Foremost among them is a photographic exhibition, sponsored by the Rome Municipal

Authority at Sala S. Rita in via Montanara 8, from 23 February to 23 March 2010. The exhibition, entitled "On the tracks of the Glaciers - 1909-2009: a century of climate changes on the glaciers of Karakorum", will display a selection of the best pictures taken during the expedition, shown for comparison alongside the historic photographs in black and white taken by public awareness of energy saving and the sustainable management of natural resources, particularly water. The photographs will be accompanied by captions in Italian and English and by introductory texts written by Ventura himself, and Prof. Claudio Smiraglia, coordinator of the project's scientific activities. The show will comprise 36 large-format prints realised in fine-art quality, thanks to the partnership of Epson Italia, responsible for their production. An exhibition catalogue will also be produced and, on the occasion of the vernissage, there will be a preview showing of the documentary on climate change issues, shot during the expedition and produced by SD Cinematografica.

High-Tech

Use science to prevent disasters

The University of Trieste and EvK2Cnr Committee will monitor the geological region of Nanga Parbat before the construction of an important dam

By CARLO PERONI

A team of Pakistani and Italian researchers from the Bahria, Azad Jammu and Kashmir and Trieste (Italy) is training for monitoring hydro-geological catastrophes.

The Friuli Venezia Giulia Region and the University of Trieste are working together to help Pakistan to overcome some of the problems caused following the devastating earthquake in 2005.

The project involves the stage in Trieste of researchers from the Kashmir region of Pakistan to follow some refresher courses on the modern techniques of managing territorial information and on the new cartographic methods for the determination of the seismic risk and for the outlining of land slides in mountain areas

These studies carried out at the Centre of Telegeomatics and at the Department of Geology of University of Trieste will be useful for the local administrators while planning the reconstruction of the buildings and of the roads of the areas destroyed by the seismic event that caused more than 82000 casualties and 3.5 million homeless while 120 students and staff lost their lives under the rubble of the Azad Jammu and Kashmir University.

Under the supervision of the coordinator of the project, Giorgio Poretti of the Department of Mathematics and Informatics, a programme has been defined to teach researchers from Kashmir some methods for the determination of the hydro geological, and seismic risk and techniques for landslide monitoring.

The University of Kashmir had in fact requested the Region Friuli Venezia Giulia and the University of Trieste, through the Italian Embassy in Islamabad, to collaborate on a project for the training of experts in management of the territory during the phase of reconstruction concerning the geologic and seismic danger. The Region Friuli Venezia Giulia financed a three-year project of the Department of Mathematics for the realisation of a Geomatics laboratory within the Azad Jammu and Kashmir University, the Athenaeum hit by the earthquake.

Researchers expert in the field of geotectonics, from the Bahria and AJK Universities, visited the area involved in the 1976 Friuli earthquake and proposed as model for its reconstruction that developed there since '76 until to day. This year two researchers from the Kashmir region of Pakistan spent four months in Trieste to attend a course on GIS concerning the hydro-geologic danger (landslides, soil unrests) following seismic events, and were supervised by Giorgio Poretti and Chiara Calligaris of the Department of Geological, Environmental and Marine sciences.

"The aim of the project - explains Poretti - is to promote a political trend of preservation of the environment and to promote a better quality of life for the local population through the deepening of scientific knowledge and monitoring of multidisciplinary data and the results of the research will be employed for a sustainable management of the territory".

The activity of the researchers from Trieste continues also on another front. The "Measurement of the tectonic movements of the Nanga Parbat - Haramosh massif and in the Indus valley" is in fact the title of the project promoted by the "Comitato Ev-K2Cnr"

drawn up and coordinated by Poretti, approved by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and financed with a sum of 100,000 Euro for the current year. The Nanga Parbat-Haramosh massif is the area of the Himalayas with the highest increase of elevation and an equally meaningful (though still unknown) horizontal shift.

Several scientists have analysed this phenomena - among whom Ardito Desio - in an area subject to numerous earthquakes and countless landslides which make serious difficulties for the traffic on the Karakorum Highway that passes very close to the Nanga Parbat along the Indus Valley.

Slightly south of this area the concrete Diemer Basha dam is being built that will create a lake of large dimensions.

Remembering the disaster occurred in Italy in 1964, when a landslide produced an overflow of the lake of the Vajont lake destroying several villages and causing more than 1000 casualties, it results necessary to monitor the Indus River banks along the whole area. Consequently the above-mentioned research proposes to determine the movements of the plates of the Nanga Parbat - Haramosh with a GPS network and with highly accurate topographic surveys across the river Indus in the Basha dam area. For this purpose two profiles with 3 benchmarks each have been established and will be re-measured yearly.

On the bases of these results, in collaboration with the Karakorum International University, with the already-mentioned Azad Jammu and Kashmir University of Muzaffarabad and the Bahria University of Islamabad, it will be possible to propose a monitoring system for the dam itself when it will be built.

Lino Lacedelli dies

Lino Lacedelli has also passed away. He died during the night at his home in Cortina, at the age of 83, just a few months after Achille Compagnoni, with whom he shared the historic first ascent of K2. "The mountain was my first great love - said Lacedelli - my life's companion". The climber, who would have celebrated his 84th birthday next 4 December, had been suffering health problems for some time, following a heart operation a year ago. The latest heart attack proved fatal. Over the past few hours numerous messages of condolence have arrived. Among the many is that of the president of the Italian Alpine Club, Annibale Salsa, who recalls him as "a discreet man of great intellectual honesty, a repository of true mountain values". Born in Cortina d'Ampezzo on 4 December 1925, Lacedelli received his training as a mountaineer in the Dolomites and, during his long climbing career, he opened up many new routes, performing highly skilled ascents throughout the Alpine Arc. During the ascent of K2 in 1954, he suffered severe frostbite, leading to the amputation of the big toe. "Up there you experience a beauty that has no need of many words. You look around and see all that the Almighty has created". The year 2009 has therefore seen the demise of three great figures of Italian mountaineering. Along with Lino Lacedelli and Achille Compagnoni, the first two men to walk upon the summit of what is considered the world's most difficult and beautiful mountain, the month of August also saw the death of the great Riccardo Cassin.





Raffaele Del Cima shows olive production in Pakistan

Olive culture

The government intends to launch the sector, both internally and externally. Enormous market. Opportunities and through the story of Raffaele Del Cima and his olive groves in Pakistan



Olives fight for a place at the table

interview by PAOLO BARACHETTI

I arrived in Pakistan for the first time in 2004, charged by a UN agency, the famous FAO, to carry out a feasibility study prior to launching an agricultural project in the country. That's the beginning of the story of Raffaele Del Cima, Italian entrepreneur dealing with olive growing for edible oil production in the Central Asian country.

Del Cima, what do you remember of your early experiences in Pakistan?

After my experience in 2004, I was in Africa on other business, when I was tracked down by the Italian Foreign Ministry. Given my experience in the sector, they asked me to come up with a sustainability study for a project that the Farnesina intended to finance in Pakistan using Italian funds. So, in 2006 I went back to central Asia to develop this project, which was eventually financed, and which dealt with the production of edible oils, a rare resource in Pakistan, since the country mainly depends on supplies from abroad, in spite of possessing enormous internal potential in the sector.

What possibilities does the country offer a foreign businessman who considers investing in Pakistan?

Well, the sector of edible oils and of agriculture in general is virtually untapped. Both market and production systems are waiting to be built from scratch. There are all the advantages of a culture that arrives in a new country with wonderful prospects. This is a land of opportunity, a place where you can really build something new. We have invested heavily in the training of local technicians. With the help of the Italian Embassy in Pakistan, we have managed to obtain permission to import western machinery, allowing a more modern and automated form of agriculture. There are all the advantages and disadvantages of a sector that has to be created, but the potential is truly huge. Certainly, it's been no bed of roses.

Could you comment on the current security levels?

There are undeniable tensions. Let's not forget that the country is emerging from years of military dictatorship. Like all periods of transition, this one is also characterised by episodes of violence. Islamic fundamentalism is rife in parts of the country under the thumb of the madrasses. In some areas, the Taliban have arrived at the town gates. Attacks are frequent. Not many people realise, but the death toll in Pakistan due to attacks has exceeded that of Afghanistan, which receives so much press coverage worldwide. The new government is trying to face these challenges with considerable courage. Problems still exist, however.

What difficulties have you had to face during your work?

Getting olive-growing started was far from simple. To tell the truth, many were convinced we would never pull it off, because the customs and habits of Pakistanis did not contemplate the use of olive oil on their typical

foods. It took time to get them to appreciate it. The first thing we did was to work out, with the help of the Ministry and the university sector, a way of identifying the areas of the country suitable for olive-growing. We examined maps and satellite surveys, creating a rich database of zones that were geographically ideal for this type of crop. Studying our estimates, we realised that the potential olive-tree planting area is around 800,000 hectares: enormous. The problem was that many of these areas were located in Baluchistan and the Northwest Frontier Province, that is, in the eye of the storm as far as security is concerned. They are the poorest parts of the country, where people have no other possible sources of income. Therefore, agricultural work could be something indispensable to them. In the end, we tried to bring employment and development to an intensely poor area, without any form of "invasion" or "colonisation". We have respected their way of life, while giving them the possibility to access a rudimentary form of welfare. We explained all this to the members of the Jirga, the great council that governs life in these parts. We approached them with considerable discretion, explaining that our intent was to bring wealth to the local population. After some hesitation, they understood, and during 2004 we were able to start growing our olive trees for the production of edible oils.

How did you succeed?

We found an unassailable "entry point": the olive itself and its tree. People were convinced that olive oil would not fit in with the Pakistani cuisine. They changed their minds when they realised that our olive oil did not spoil the taste of their food. On the contrary, at the tastings, they were very enthusiastic. However, the key was the olive tree, considered holy in the Koranic tradition. This served to dissolve the last resistance within the Jirga. Today, our relationship with the local people is excellent, so much so that have been able to set up entire olive plantations close to the villages.

How is your work proceeding at the moment?

It continually developing. The potential market is enormous, given that Pakistan has 170 million inhabitants. The pro capita annual consumption is 16 litres, that's for each Pakistani. Edible oil requirements are increasing yearly. Every year Pakistan spends 2 million dollars on edible oil imports. The government wants to avoid this expense by building up internal production. It's one of the country's priorities, as it will allow that money to be saved for other activities.

Have you had the support of the Pakistan and Italian governments?

The aim of the Pakistani and Italian governments is to favour business investments in Pakistan. It's a strategy born of a hundred years' collaboration between the two countries. It involves collaboration and exchanges of experience in a number of sectors, not only agricultu-

re. It covers building, cement production, water, energy resources and sea-based industries. So, it's a very varied form of collaboration. In our specific sector, the governments helped us in the purchase of olive presses, bottling machinery, seeds and trees to plant in the areas identified as suitable for olive growing. Basically, they have given us the opportunity of creating a sustainable business in the region which, together with the purely economic benefit, allows the local people to have an income and employment, as well as professional training and the skills with which to transfer their knowledge to create local technicians. In fact, there are frequent updates and exchange meetings that, apart from the purely business issues, help up to maintain an important dialogue among those working in this area and this sector. One thing needs to be pointed out. The Italian and Pakistan governments are trying to favour joint-ventures between companies of the respective countries of a certain size, with major investments in both production and marketing. For the moment, the initiatives are geared only towards the European market of edible oils. However, the short- and medium term objective is to use the plantations and olive groves in Pakistan to produce for bordering countries, who also have equally interesting markets in continual expansion. Italy is promoting olive-growing in Afghanistan, Nepal and China, all of which are markets of really enormous potential.

Support of small and mid-size companies

The Foreign Ministry has launched a programme that aims to provide development support to Pakistani small- and medium-size companies in the industrial and craft sectors. It foresees the constitution of a project Technical Unit, which, in collaboration with Unido, will carry out the support operations necessary to make funding requests to public and private institutions. The credit will be used to purchase machinery, equipment, licences and industrial patents.



Collaboration as smooth as oil

In recent years, Pakistan has witnessed a constant growth in demand for edible oils, one that is substantially met by imported products. The entity of demand has induced the authorities, in particular the Pakistan government and Ministry of Agricultural Policy (Minfal), through the Pakistan Oilseed Development Board (Podb), to increase national oil production.

The policy has led to an increase in the total surface area devoted to rapeseed and sunflower crops, accompanied by experiments to introduce new species, in an effort to eliminate importation in future years. So far, the new species, which are hoped to lead to sustainable internal production, include palm oil, coconut oil and extra-virgin olive oil.

Recently Minfal and Podb launched a project for the production and marketing of olive oil within the country, with different aims in mind. The first was strategic: to increase national production of extra-virgin olive oil and reduce foreign imports. The other objectives were to improve the welfare and economic practices of farmers, encourage private investment in rural areas, especially in infrastructures, and offer employment opportunities to local people.

All of the project's initiatives were supervised by the Institute of Foreign Agronomy in Florence, technical consultant to the Italian Foreign Ministry, in view of its

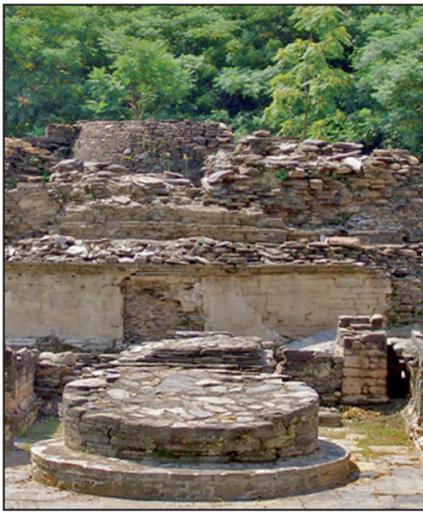
technical and scientific expertise in olive growing and its long-standing experience in the realisation of international development cooperation initiatives, funded by the Italian Association for the General Directorship of Development Cooperation.

Initiatives were monitored and checked on site by an international olive growing expert, and some of the activities involved the use of Italian Ngos working at the local level.

The Pakistan Development Board made several technicians available for project support, and well as covering the local costs. The General Directorship of Development Cooperation of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs provided technical assistance, training and the purchase of machinery necessary for the initial phase of the project.

The short-term beneficiaries of the technicians' intervention were the local farmers, who were provided with training in olive grove management and the main agricultural techniques involved in producing good quality oil. The long-term beneficiaries of the process will be the Pakistani consumers.

The project had a duration of twelve months, the length of one production cycle. In July 2008, a seven-month extension was granted, in order to continue with some of the project's activities.



Italy and archeology in Pakistan: 50 years of presence in Swat Valley

Recently the valley of Swat was brought to public attention because of the presence of an organized insurgency, because of the military operation, and of a huge humanitarian emergency. But it is not always so. An Italian cultural presence has been active there, in a peaceful and friendly environment, for over 50 years mainly in the field of archaeological studies, history and anthropology.

Swat is a valley in the mountainous region to the north of the Peshawar Plain, at the foot of the mountain range connecting the Hindu Kush with Karakorum. The valley, conquered by Alexander the Great in 327 B.C., and over the following centuries by the Indo-Greek, Saka, Parthian, Kushan, Sasanian and Hephthalite kings, was a prosperous region. It constituted a trading centre between the plains of Gandhara and the mountains of the Northern Areas looking towards Central Asia, and at the same time a great centre of Buddhist culture with an ample scattering of Buddhist monasteries, representing an important stopover on the way to the holy places of Buddhism, traversed by numerous Chinese pilgrims, thus becoming a place of transit not only for goods but also ideas. It was in fact from

this region that Padmasambhava, the moving force of Tibetan Buddhism, set out in the 8th century, and it was indeed the suggestive accounts of this 'holy land' of Buddhism contained in the Tibetan texts that brought Giuseppe Tucci in the Swat Valley in 1955. The Italian cultural and archaeological activity in Pakistan dates back to more than 50 years ago. A mission of the Italian Institute of research Isiao, in close cooperation with the Pakistani Department of Archaeology, is working on some projects: excavations and conservation at Barikot (fortified urban settlement 2nd BC-5th CE, and Turki/Hindu Shahi top hill structures 7th-11th CE), Udegram mosque, documentation of rock art (painted shelters and rock carving sites 13th BC-10th CE), Archaeological Map of the Swat Valley project, ethnographic studies/documentation of the wooden and Buddhist architecture, documentation/excavation of the prehistoric-protohistoric phases, documentation/excavation of the Turki/Hindu Shahi phases. The Italian Archaeological Mission in Pakistan has been continuously active in Swat since 1956, under the successive guidance of Domenico Faccenna, Maurizio Taddei, Pierfrancesco Callieri, and Luca M.

Olivieri (joint director from 2009). Mission's work is focused on the reconstruction of the life and environment of Swat and the neighbouring areas, from the earliest traces of human settlement to our own times. With a far-sightedness that anticipated what was to become common practice only in the last twenty years, the perspective of the research given by the great archaeologist D. Faccenna was not only historical and archaeological, but also anthropological and environmental, paying due attention to every aspect, including conservation of the monuments. In fact, collaboration between archaeologists, anthropologists, archaeozoologist, philologists, geologists, geophysicists, palaeobotanists, historians and restorers has effectively characterised the work of the Mission from the very outset as an essential aspect of investigation methodology, ensuring a degree of excellence recognised by the entire scientific community and marked by about 400 publications. The work carried out has been made possible thanks to whole-hearted and deeply attentive collaboration with the Department of Archaeology and Museums, which has accorded the Italian Mission its unflinching confidence and support.

From Alps to Himalayas

A message from Italian Ambassador in Pakistan Vincenzo Prati

You wouldn't tell that Agostino da Polenza reached the top of K2, he is the only man who also slept there one night, is a short man and if you observe him carefully, you can recognize that he has a stout physical structure even now that he is beyond the age of 50. We are both from the same part of Italy. He is from Bergamo and I am from Brescia. The two towns are very close to Milano but not too far from the Alps. Everybody in Bergamo and Brescia has some memory of a vacation on the Alps. There is complicity between those who know the pleasure of silence and walking among the trees. Then of course you have the majority, and I am among them who wouldn't dare going beyond the easy roads. But you have also the few, like Agostino da Polenza, who are tougher and go for the peaks. This is something I always admired. This is frankly beyond my capability and of the majority of us. The few who want to reach the top of the mountains, know that they can risk their lives but develop special excitement by doing so. These few supermen were not happy only with the peaks of the Alps which are at most 4000 meters high but are willing to confront themselves with the peaks of Himalayas which are even more than 8000 meters high. This year we celebrate one century of adventure. In 1909 we had the expedition of an Italian team to the K2. The team was guided by a member of the Italian Royal Family, Il Duca degli Abruzzi. What makes the adventure even more important is the fact that in the team of Duca degli Abruzzi, there was a great photographer, Vittorio Sella. Very soon, on the initiative of Agostino da Polenza and of the Italian Embassy in Islamabad, there will be an exhibition of marvelous photos of the K2 taken by Vittorio Sella. They are black & white but still have the flavor of a great challenge that is undertaken with joy and surprise. The mountains of the K2 are really one of the big wonders in the world and a pride for Pakistan, but also a matter of affection for those foreigners who love mountains. I always thought that the special affection of Italians for K2 is one of the strong foundations of the friendship between Italy and Pakistan because it goes deeper than political considerations and economic advantages. Even if friendship is made basically of intangibles like our affection for K2, to be honest, the relationship between Italy and Pakistan developed in many fields and involved political evaluations and economic considerations. I am very happy that Silvia Marrara can speak in another article about some of our main projects of cooperation. Silvia has been in Pakistan for four years with her husband Fabrizio and they got their daughter, Sabrina, here, who is one and half years old now. I consider myself lucky, as an Ambassador, to have had in Pakistan such a good close collaborator. Silvia has the solar beauty of a woman from the South of Italy and has a sense of duty of a very good diplomat. She has been an important part of the success of our projects in last few years, but apart from the sense of duty and professional competence, also in her case the friendship for Pakistan stems from a deeper source. Silvia is from Reggio Calabria and likes to say that she is a Pashtoon from Italy. In Italy and particularly in some regions of the South like Reggio Calabria, we deeply share the same family values and sense of honor that we associate with the Pashtoon people and generally with Pakistanis. Now Silvia is posted to Damascus. So we tell her on behalf of many Pakistani friends: "Buon Viaggio Silvia".



From left, Ambassador Prati, Da Polenza, Stefania Mondini, and professor Najam

The Italian Debt for Development Swap Initiative

An innovative way of developing bilateral ties consisting of swapping the debt owed by Pakistan to Italy into development projects in social sectors, economic development, environment and agriculture has been initiated in 2009. Six projects are already being implemented in different parts of the Country. The overall package worth about US\$ 100 million will enable Public Sectors and Ngos to provide a substantial impact on the less developed areas, including an immediate recovery of the livelihood in Malakand Division. The planning and implementation mechanism privileges readiness, flexibility and a co-sharing decision process which may pave the way for future adoption of the debt-for-development swap by the international donor community at large.

Given the importance of the endeavor, Italy has selected to entrust the direction of the program, shared with a Pakistani national, to a sympathizer of the Country, Dr. Marco Marchetti, who is back on his third term. In the eighties he was the founder of the renowned "Crop Maximization Program" along with Parc, and in the nineties pushed the "Environmental Rehabilitation in Nwfp and Punjab" to achieve impressive and sustainable results. Therefore, it is expected that his longstanding professional experience, enriched by his knowledge of Pakistan reality and people, will represent an additional asset that could greatly contribute to the success of the debt-for-development swap initiative.

Embassy of Italy: interviews with first secretary Silvia Marrara

Punjab Board of Investment and Trade (Pbit) and Italian Development Council (Idc) will arrange an exhibition of pakistani products and highlight investment opportunities in Italy early next year. Do you think it would play a part in further strengthening of Trade relations?

Of course. We do believe that such activities and initiatives carried out by private business association of Italian and Pakistani entrepreneurs will build a deeper net of links between the two countries. In these years the Embassy, especially under the guidance of the present Ambassador, has made a tremendous effort to balance the negative wave of fears discouraging the investors to create solid and reliable instruments to strengthen the bilateral commercial relations. It is not the first occasion we had to focus on sectors of common interest ranging from precious stones, to marble to furniture, leather, fashion, agro food, etc. Ice in Karachi, branch of the Italian Institute for Commerce and Trade has organized many business trip to Italy and visit of Italian entrepreneurs to Pakistan. Despite these channels, the Embassy is trying to develop a more structured net of business association, first step to be promoted after three years of productive activity International Chamber of commerce according to Italian laws. We are now thinking to organize an event on energy in Karachi (due to the presence of few but consistent Italian enterprises there), another in the health sector (developing a deeper cooperation in the health and pharmaceutical industry, especially vaccine production and valorizing the already existent cooperation created in some hospitals in Islamabad by the Italian Association of volunteers led by the Italian Prof. Lawrence Falkner expert in bone marrow transplant to treat thalassemia patients, etc.) We had another event in the agro food sector last April and another in the marble sector in Karachi last March. To help developing and spreading also the small and

medium enterprises in Pakistan by strengthening the ties with the Italian companies we have also another initiative which is a credit facility of 7.745 million euro with Ead, Smeda, Sme bank Unido, Min of Industries in Pakistan. Last, I would like to recall that we have a bilateral Joint Commission with Pakistan devoted to these specific aspects of developing commercial cooperation and trade.

Italy has agreed to an immigration quota for Pakistanis at 2000 per year. Are there many immigrants from Pakistan to Italy?

Being also in charge of the Consular and visa section, I have experienced a tremendous increase in the migration flow of Pakistani citizen to Italy. One figure is quite evident. From the approximately 6000 visas issued end 2006 we have already reached more than 20.000 cases, most of them family reunion and work permit cases, clear signal of an expanding community, very well established in Italy, and mostly concentrated in Lombardia, Toscana, Veneto, Bolzano, Emilia, Lazio, and some part of the south.

The past few years in Pakistan have been extremely traumatic starting with the Earthquake in 2005. What was Italy's role and approach to the various crises?

I remember very well the earthquake aftermath and as soon as arrived the Italian Government had already sent humanitarian flights to address the immediate needs of the affected population, in addition to the funding to the UN agencies involved. Moreover, we have always tried to implement initiatives which not only focus on the relief aspect of the crises but also target the restart of the socio-economic activities in the hit areas to provide the population with new tools to go back to the ordinary life. We have therefore approved an emergency initiative in 2006 (we have signed the MoU in November 2006 and the renewal this July 2009) still ongoing in its second phase, which on one hand rebuilt, in close coo-

peration with Erra, some schools and libraries, on the other it provided some training in very remote areas of Nwfp relying on the experience and cooperation of our Italian Ngos. Some of them have a long history in this country, being here since 1999. They enjoy a great support from the local communities and this is one of the reasons why we were able to go to places of difficult accessibility with certain easiness. They have helped us in establishing fully equipped camp hospitals we donated to the local authorities and have also cooperated with the UN agencies receiving Italian funds for these emergencies. Nowadays the initiative which was started in 2006 has shifted from Manshera, Balakot, Ghanoor to AJK and Bagh district were three Ngos are now working implementing some more projects in the area.

Italy was the first country to send substantial aid to Pakistan. Will there be more contribution?

We have sent two Italian humanitarian flights here in May and June 2009 and we have provided funds to UN Agencies involved in the Idps emergency. In addition to this we have also decided jointly with the Pakistani Government to devote 10 million of the debt swap funds to the Idps crises, selecting and approving projects which are meant to have a broader approach. Moreover, Italy has pledged in the occasion of the Tokyo Conference for Pakistan of April 2009, a 62 million Euro financial package for interventions to be carried out in the Microfinance (Rural Development), Education (Vocational Training) and Agriculture (olive oil production) sectors. All this new investments are related with anti poverty strategy of Pakistan but at the same time, they will play an important role in terms of contribution to the stabilization of the situation in the most critical areas of the Country, thus having also a regional impact. The recently started Pakistan-Italy debt for development swap amounting at more than 80 million

Euros is also addressing poverty with a similar focus in terms of stabilization effects. Other activities are currently under implementation in the rural development, private sector support and environment protection sectors.

What is the general approach of the Italian development cooperation in Pakistan?

As it has been underlined in the Blue Book, Italy has been devoting increasing attention to Pakistan for the last 3 years. Italian Development Cooperation strategy has been therefore reviewed to address poverty reduction and development efforts as necessary step to reinforce the Pakistani democratic process and improve security conditions in the Country with positive regional implications. Such a comprehensive strategy aims to better integrate and support the efforts of the international community for the economic development and the political stabilization of the South Asia. Being socio-economic development and security interconnected, particularly in Pakistan and Afghanistan, it has also been agreed that intervention strategies shall better consider broader regional issues, which require specific attention. In this perspective, as G8 Presidency, Italy dedicated the Ministerial outreach session in Trieste last June to specific issues and areas of cooperation (border management/countering illicit trafficking, economic and social development, rural development and enhancement of human capital) that are all inter-related and are part of a comprehensive strategy that seems now to be widely shared and more ready than in the past to be implemented. Considering the above Italy moved from its traditional single-Country-approach towards a broader framework that includes the regional dimension. Therefore, in addition to the intervention in Afghanistan and Pakistan, new interventions have been recently identified and existing initiatives have been re-oriented according to the new regional dimension of the Italian approach to South Asia.



Silvia Marrara and her daughter Sabrina