

Milan & CIIM. A Night of Italian Economic Excellency on Wall Street

Marina Melchionda (May 18, 2010)



On May 13 the Andaz Hotel in the Financial District hosted the presentation of "Impresa Milano - Innovation and Passion" during which Mayor Letizia Moratti stressed the cultural, social, and economic aspects of the city and introduced several reforms and changes she is will enact during her mandate to the audience. During the conference, Tomaso Veneroso, the President and Treasurer of CIIM New York (Confederation of Italian Entrepreneurs Worldwide), was decorated knight of the Republic of Italy by the Consul General Francesco Maria Talò.

Wall Street, the Andaz Hotel. On May 13, the financial center of New York and one of its most luxurious hotels hosted Letizia Moratti, the mayor of Milan, for a presentation of the city in all its fabulous aspects, from culture to fashion, from business to tourism. The aim of "Impresa Milano - Innovation and Passion" was to present to the American audience the main efforts made by the city's government to enhance the economic, cultural, and social life of its inhabitants through a wide range of projects and consistent financial investments.



The public attending the presentation, hosted on the ground floor of the tall skyscraper dominating the Financial District, was extremely various, both as far as age and fields of interest. Italian and American businessmen and students sat side by side with some of the highest representatives of the "Sistema Italia", the network of Italian and Italian-American public and private institutions and foundations based in the New York Area. Among them, the Consul General of Italy in New York Francesco Maria Talò with Deputy Consul Marco Alberti; the director of the [Italian Government Tourism Board in North America](#) [2] Riccardo Strano; the President of the [Italy-America Chamber of Commerce](#) [3] Claudio Bozzo; and the President and Treasurer of [CIIM New York](#) [4] (Confederation of Italian Entrepreneurs Worldwide) Tomaso Veneroso.

The presentation started with an overlook of Milan as the business and financial capital of Italy.

The figures the mayor presented us strikingly show the dynamism and economical activism that have always characterized Milan. "Milan ranks among the top ten world economic centers with more than 280.000 firms specialized in a wide range of diversified industries. It is the city that attracts the highest number of foreign firms and the greatest percentage of FDI in the country. We host about 25% of the headquarters of our national banks and more than 9,000 financial institutions. These and other factors bring our activity rate up to 70% for over 3 million residents and our GDP to 162 billion USD, 44,000 USD pro capita".

In order to support further growth in this sector, the municipality has recently invested over 10 million euros in five different incubators to encourage young entrepreneurs and spin off companies to invest in the city. Daniela Jabes, responsible for the project and President of [NAICONS](#) [5], commented on the success of the initiative: "With such a small amount of money we attracted 73 companies operating in the field of food, biotech & life science, and fashion. I am confident that the city will invest more in this initiative that has proven to be a winning one"

Milan's cultural life is outstanding as well. The day before our meeting mayor Moratti had presented the "[Museo del Novecento](#) [6]" (Museum of the XX century) at the Moma. It will be hosted at the Palazzo dell'Arengario starting next autumn and will feature a number of collections of contemporary works of art. This is only one of the cultural initiatives promoted by the municipality. "Milan has a very rich cultural offer: 24 museums, 26 public libraries, 185 theatres, among which the world famous opera house "[La Scala](#) [7]", and 335 cinemas. We also host the "[Triennale](#) [8]", a major event which began in the early 1930s that hosts collections and retrospectives on the most recent tendencies in the fields of architecture and design". Milan has also become one of the top educational centers in Europe with 8 universities that offer prestigious Master and PhD programs and about 250,000 students. Its 80 research institutes, moreover, make it the Italian hub for hi-tech and bio-tech studies.

With such a vivid cultural life, in 2008 the city was awarded the [Universal Expo 2015](#) [9], whose theme is "Feeding the Planet - Energy for Life". "As we expect more than 20 million visitors, and 150 visitor countries, and will invest about 15.8 billion euros in infrastructure, the expo will give work to about 70.000 people, with an estimated turnover of 63 billion dollars. We see it as a great challenge but also as a huge opportunity for our economy and for the image of our city".

Following Mayor Moratti's speech, the common feeling among the audience is that Milan is the modern capital of Italy, a symbol of re-birth, but also an example to follow for the other economic centers of the country, as Consul Talò underlined: "Milan and New York are so similar, they are both cities of opportunities. You investors, entrepreneurs, young talents that will shape our future sitting in the audience, look at it as an example to follow. Mayor Moratti has focused her mandate on education, without which any growth, economical or social as it might be, can be conceivable".

As he finished his speech, Consul Talò introduced us to Tomaso Veneroso, the President of the Confederation of Italian Entrepreneurs Worldwide. He defined him as a "representative of the new Italian entrepreneurship", and decorated him with the "Stella al Merito della Solidarietà Italiana" making him Knight of the Italian Republic on behalf of President Napolitano. We could not miss the occasion to interview him...

How important is it for you to be recognized by the Italian government for the work you



do through CIIM?

I look at it as a direct demonstration that Italian public institutions want to help young entrepreneurs like me living abroad in their effort to enhance the country's image and create new job opportunities. Personally I am focusing on creating new contacts , jobs , and educational opportunities for Italian new-grads here in the US.

Do you have any particular advice for them, given your multi-year life experience in the US?

Not only must they show great passion for what they do, but they must also be willing to adapt their working methods and mentality to the new work environment they find here. They should have their aims very clear in their mind, and try to reach them with creativity, flexibility and fantasy. Finally, they should carry on their education to the highest level possible, work for a Masters or a PhD and acquire very specific skills that could make of them true assets in their job industry

Why should an American enterprise hire an Italian grad?

Italians first of all are incredibly multi-tasking, they can do several things at the same time and focus on all of them with the same attention. Also, they are flexible, and are willing to accept jobs that maybe their American colleges would never do. This is because they have a 360 degrees education that gave them a number of skills useful in a wider range of fields, but also because unfortunately they had to perform many kinds of duties back in Italy, which were not always very satisfying...

How will the CIIM support their efforts in settling in New York?

We organize a meeting every second Thursday of the month at the Armani Restaurant on 5th Avenue. It's a great opportunity for establishing new contacts for them. We are also planning to open a new branch in Washington DC: we feel it is important to be active in the capital of the United States and represent and defend Made in Italy to our best ability .

We finally finished our chat on the rooftop of the hotel, where Mayor Moratti and the other guests were already gathered to enjoy the view of Manhattan in full spring. A buffet of oysters, Italian prosecco, wines and cheeses, and a full bar of desserts fairly represented the elegance, refinement, and luxury of Milan, Italy's New York.

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