

Assocamerestero and the Italian Chambers in Israel and Egypt guests of the January Smart Talk.



The first **Smart Talk** of the new year, entitled “**Business Development and Internationalization in the MED Area. The Support Role of the Foreign Italian Chamber System**”, held on 26 January 2023, was an interesting opportunity for discussion with **Assocamerestero and the Italian Chambers in Israel and Egypt** aimed at highlighting the importance of cooperation between Mediterranean countries.

The event was opened by the President of the Italian-Cypriot Chamber of Commerce, **Giuseppe Marino** with institutional greetings and thanks to the authoritative guests, **Domenico Mauriello**, Secretary General of Assocamerestero, **Clelia Di Consiglio**, Secretary General of the Italian Chamber of Commerce in Israel and **Kerollos Abdelmalek**, Secretary General of the Italian Chamber of Commerce in Egypt.

“The **Mediterranean** has always been a point of reference for the activity of our Chamber in consideration of the natural positioning of **Cyprus as a European Business Hub in the East Med area** and I am sure that today’s Talk will be a first step along this line to develop joint initiatives with the other Italian Chambers present in the area” said President Marino as he introduced the proceedings.

The Vice President of the Italian-Cypriot Chamber of Commerce, **Federico Franchina**, in the capacity of moderator, subsequently started the Smart Talk with the first question addressed to **Domenico Mauriello** about the role and activities of **Assocamerestero**.

Mauriello provided an exhaustive description of the state of the art (84 Italian Chambers of Commerce abroad, representing 61 countries, with 160 assistance points and 20,000 member companies, which correspond to 88% of companies abroad, with 300,000 business contacts, 80% of Italian trade), explaining that **Assocamerestero**, born as a private body from agreements between entrepreneurs and then became an institutional network officially recognized by the Italian Government, plays the role of “connector” between Italian Chambers all abroad, public and private entities and diplomatic representations of the various countries. Its activities are directed to the promotion of internationalization and the implementation of Italian business abroad, connecting the different markets and providing personalized assistance to companies. Recently Assocamerestero has also focused on the development of cooperation in new sectors (Digital Economy, Sustainability, Ecological Transition) also in order to attract foreign investments in Italy. **Franchina** then asked, from the point of view of Assocamerestero, what the benefits could be for the MED Area, determined by the changes that have taken place in the international environment.

Mauriello emphasized some aspects that have a strong impact on transnational supply chains, but also on international trade, such as **investments, logistics, environmental issues and social sustainability**. At present, the **Chambers of Commerce** abroad support companies oriented towards the export of sustainable products and services, within international supply chains, outside Europe, and in the MED Area. They support outsourcing and transfer processes, competition with local supply chains and subcontracting in various sectors (such as food, textiles, chemicals, energy);

promote accessibility and transparency standards, in order to create a responsible supply chain, which guarantees compliance with ESG criteria.

Assocamerestero is working to strengthen the supply chains along the Mediterranean countries, acting proactively with two fundamental measures: 1) **in Italy, in Europe**, including Cyprus, by strengthening the demand for their SMEs to Italian sustainable companies abroad or to foreign companies already part of the main supply chains, promoting standards of transparency and social responsibility; 2) **in the East Med countries**, providing local companies not only with guidance information and training services, but also with operational tools useful for managing sustainability so as to reduce risks along the global supply chain, including Italian and European SMEs.

After **Mauriello** it was the turn of **Clelia di Consiglio**, Secretary of the **Italian Chamber of Commerce in Israel** who focused on the peculiarities, in consideration of the particular characteristics of the country in which she is located, of the role of the Chamber she represents, founded in 1955 and also for this, underlining the role of 'historical memory' of commercial relations between Israel and Italy and the continuous support in the sign of continuity provided to the **Italian Embassy and to ICE**.

Israel is a small country (9.2 million inhabitants), and while the part that lives in the Tel Aviv area has commercial relations with Italy and other countries, the rest needs significant support for political, scientific, commercial. The Chamber offers a complete guide and a holistic approach aimed at supporting Italian companies in the knowledge and interaction with the local ecosystem as well as in the understanding of the areas of greatest interest including innovation as well as the related reference regulations.

With regard to what the economic-commercial developments between Italy and Israel could be in 2023 and how Cyprus, as a connection point between the EU and the East MED Area, could support Italian companies that from Cyprus look to Israel with growing interest, **Di Consiglio** underlined the importance of developing relations with neighboring countries in the Mediterranean, recalling various triangulations that took place in previous years between Israel, Italy and other countries. Last year a mission was organized in Dubai on Innovation in Israel, with the participation of Italian companies in the search for innovation, Israeli innovators and investors from the United Arab Emirates. Currently Israel produces innovation with ideas and patents; given the absence of large manufacturing companies and high internal costs, Israeli companies carry out manufacturing in Italy or Germany.

Furthermore, Israel has a great interest in the tourism sector of Cyprus: many are buying hotels, resorts, because Cypriot tourism covers a large area of its economy. The energy sector also offers good prospects. While Italy lays the foundations for a gas trade with Algeria, Israel, being on the Adriatic side, could find partners in this sector in Egypt (with which it is already collaborating) and Cyprus.

Kerollos Abdelmalek, Secretary General of the **Italian Chamber of Commerce in Egypt** began his speech by describing the role of the Chamber which, founded in 1927, has historically worked to develop an important network of contacts as well as various meeting opportunities for business and 'import-export between Italy and Egypt.

When asked about possible business developments, in 2023, **between Italy and Egypt** also in the context of the East Med Area and on the role of Cyprus as a bridge between Italy and this area, **Abdelmalek** replied that Italy is considered the most important among European countries as a trading partner for Egypt; this year, according to the new strategy adopted by the Egyptian government, actions have been implemented to attract investments, increase exports and limit imports. Italian companies have a good chance of investing in the Egyptian market, thanks to the trade agreements signed in Africa and in the East-Med. The infrastructure and new technologies industry are two important Italian sectors, from which Egypt is trying to learn the know-how, so as to carry out various projects in Egypt, and then transfer them to Africa and the East-Med.

Focusing on trade between Egypt and Cyprus, there are interesting opportunities to develop with the Italian-Cypriot Chamber of Commerce, creating a triangulation between Italy, Cyprus and Egypt,

in the industrial sector. One of the most important sectors is that of energy (natural gas, electricity) and, thanks to Italian technology, extensive development of projects between Israel, Cyprus and Egypt is expected in the coming years as well, which could attract investments.

Given that Israel and Egypt have the same approach regarding encouraging the presence of Italian companies in the East-Med Area, **Franchina** asked all the guests for an overview of existing relationships and prospects with particular reference to the possible contribution that the Italian-Cypriot Chamber of Commerce, together with the other Chambers could provide to forge economic relationships and contacts for more complex projects in the East-Med Area.

Di Consiglio highlighted that the interesting aspect of the Smart Talk was comparing two types of economies (Egypt and Israel) so different from each other, with respect to the cost of living, human resources and what they can offer to companies and to Italian investors. Egypt and Israel can complement each other by working together: Egypt, with a large well-trained population, can thrive with Italian industry locally or abroad; the second can provide the innovation useful for creating connections. It is therefore important to organize meetings and bring delegations to the three countries. It is great that in the same area of the Mediterranean there are so many different countries with different offers for Italian industry, while in Europe (France, England, Germany) the economy is more uniform. "Precisely because of the richness of variety that distinguishes our countries, we should start to learn more about this year's programs and analyze how to create a concrete collaboration, because in Israel we really want to do business and do everything to make it happen".

Abdelmalek appreciated Di Consiglio's point of view, saying that business missions, connection activities need to be discussed in a practical way, and focus on ways of cooperation. Cyprus, Israel, Egypt will ascertain the sectors in which it will also be possible to cooperate with Italian companies.

Mauriello concluded his speech by clarifying what the **Italian-Cypriot Chamber of Commerce** is, and how it differs from the Chambers represented by the other two guests: it is based in Italy, it can bring together the needs and trends of Italy towards the of the East-MED, functioning as an access door; but above all, being the country closest to Cyprus, and to this part of the Mediterranean, Italy can act as a bridge to the East-Med Area, supporting concrete cooperation between the various institutions of Israel, Egypt and Cyprus.

Finally, Vice President **Franchina** concluded the Smart Talk by thanking all the guests for their participation and briefly mentioning some of the Chamber's activities included in the 2023 programming which can be worked on to develop joint activities.

For further insights on this article and other information on the activities of the **Italian-Cypriot Chamber of Commerce**, please write to: segreteria@camcomitacipro.it