

Scientists and experts in Viterbo for Greenaccord's forum agree on a single text of sensational relevance for today

From the past to the future: the climate alarm

The increase in population will run head-on into rising drought, while the planet has to deal with the melting of the glaciers and the threat of extinction for many species of animals.

Viterbo, 26 November 2009 – From a history lecture to the difficult reality of the present. The melting of the glaciers compared to the situation in the Mediterranean basin. The morning session of the second day of the Seventh International Media Forum On The Protection of Nature put forward scenarios and debates that both involved and animated the international crowd of journalists present in Viterbo.

From the fundamental role of microcredit, shown yesterday by **Stefano Zamagni** to be a fifteenth century Italian invention, the focus of the session was again cast towards the past with the lecture of Brian Fagan, archaeologist and professor of anthropology at the University of California. "From the height of the Mayan period to today, our climate and its 'whims' has had a strong influence on the destiny of entire civilizations." And today more than ever before one of the dangers that threatens humanity is drought. "I believe that in the short term it is the biggest risk that humans have to face – declared Brian Fagan – especially in the semi-arid zones of Spain, the western United States, and in vast areas of Central America and Africa. The next fifty years will be critical. The fact that we are putting greenhouse gases into the atmosphere in unprecedented quantities makes current climate change unique compared to problems we have experienced in the past. There can be no doubt that we are in a phase of global warming, much of it caused by mankind. The climate change that we have to deal with now will be different from the past primarily because now there are more of us, and we live in densely populated cities."

Antonio Navarra, director of the Euro-Mediterranean Center for Climate Change, drew out a roadmap for the future on the basis of projections made by Project Circe. "Despite the fact that the models made heretofore were all quite pessimistic – emphasized Navarra – it seems that the trend of the evolution of climate change is destined to go well beyond even the darkest predictions." How to hold back the worsening of the system?

"Future evolution will depend on our capacity to react promptly to climate change: mitigation methods and techniques will be fundamental, with all possible resolutions from the political, social, and economic spheres, to eliminate or at least reduce the emissions of greenhouse gases, which are responsible for the rise in the earth's temperature." Navarra continued: "The last eleven years (1995-2006) were among the hottest ever recorded since recordkeeping began (i.e. 1850). To better understand this, think of the torrid summer of 2003: that will be a normal event, not exceptional anymore."

And if the heat goes up, the glaciers melt. **Joellen Russell**, professor of geology in Arizona, knows the problem well. "The plausible explanation for the melting of the glaciers in the Antarctic seems to be the excessive production of terrestrial heat. And this heating is caused by the pollution of motor vehicles and the greenhouse effect: it's a threat for our health, the economy, and the environment." Russell continued: "The devastating effects of the melting of the glaciers in Antarctica won't be noticed just there but will change the lives of all the planet's species. Mankind must find a solution to drastically decrease the combustion of fossil fuels; if we fail we may have to

face a rapid and tragic extinction of many species of animals. The next three generations will have to work hard simply to combat the effects of the greenhouse effect." In the afternoon there will be time for the people in attendance with the "Climate Witness" campaign of the WWF. Live: the stories of people who deal with the effects of global climate change every day.