

An unexpected meeting at the Forum in Viterbo. The reason: the melting of the Himalayan glaciers

Climate, when memories surface from the ice

*The remains of an Italian helicopter that crashed on Everest in 1973 during a rescue mission were found thirty-six years later by Apa and Dawa Sherpa, the two Nepalese guides here in Viterbo per Greenaccord. Today, the son of one of the soldiers who survived the accident shook their hands: "Today is a great day."*

Viterbo, 28 November 2009 – Sometimes, in life, it's only memory that conserves the traces of an extraordinary adventure. Other times, certain testimonies can wait for an eternity before they surface, hidden under the ice that, because of the climate change, are no longer hidden for eternity. In 1973, the Italian Air Force was present with two helicopters and eleven experts in the first Italian scientific-mountain climbing expedition on Everest. Paolo Luanducci, from Viterbo, was present during that expedition. This morning at the Greenaccord Forum in Viterbo, his son Guido gave an emotional account of the experiences of his father, who went missing five years ago. "The helicopters arrived at around 6500 meters of altitude for the logistical support of the expedition. But during an emergency mission at the second camp to rescue the mountain climbers in danger, the helicopter crashed into the glacier. Luckily nobody was hurt – continued Guido Luanducci – but the aircraft was destroyed, and the crew was forced to survive twenty-four hours in minus 25 degrees while awaiting another helicopter, that which brought them to safety."

The metal remains of that twisted wreckage remained silently hidden in the Himalayan glaciers for thirty-six years. But the climate change brought them to the surface. And those weren't the only remains that it uncovered. In May 2009, during the Ecoeverest Expedition, the rest of that helicopter was individualized and identified. Participating in the difficult retrieval were Apa and Dawa Sherpa, the two Nepalese "climate witnesses" for WWF and who are guests at the Forum in Viterbo for the Protection of Nature, organized by Greenaccord.

"It was emotional to meet them here in Viterbo. When I knew that they would come here to talk about climate change I couldn't believe it – underlined an emotional Guido Luanducci – and we were in contact, but I never imagined that I would shake their hands. My father would have liked very much to be here today. Their job is difficult. I know that Apa lived through the explosion of a glacial lake in 1985, lost all of his property, and risked his life. I hope that the world can do something – concluded Guido Luanducci – to contrast the problems of the climate change that puts their survival at risk.