

**Address of the Ambassador Gianluigi Benedetti
on the occasion of “Infralab launching 2019 activities”
Haifa - March 6, 2019**

Dear Friends,

Thank you for inviting me to take part in this festive occasion, it truly means a lot to me. I would like to thank Mr. Ernesto Ciorra, the Head of Enel Innovability, who continuously demonstrates Enel's commitment towards the Israeli market.

I acknowledge with great pleasure the presence of Oded Setter, Shikun&Binui VP for Strategy and Economy as well as of Anya Eldan, VP at the Israel Innovation Authority and Head of the Startup Division.

Since being nominated as the Ambassador of Italy to Israel, I have led a very decisive and ambitious agenda to promote the scientific, technological and industrial relations between the Countries, always in the spirit of the concrete and fast pace in which things are done in Israel. As a result, our collaboration today does not speak Italian nor Hebrew - it speaks one language only - the language of INNOVATION.

This occasion is a classic demonstration of that. Two giant industries such as Shikun and Binui on one hand, and ENEL on the other, choose not to rest on their laurels but rather focus all their knowledge, expertise, and excellent manpower, to create an innovative framework for collaboration.

Allow me to stress, in this context, my avid support towards the idea of having a permanent presence and not merely a representation, as a mean to keep the fingers on the pulse of new and promising developments.

Today the activities of Infralab for 2019 will be officially launched. My presence here is an acknowledgement, better yet - a salute! - to the objectives so far achieved and an expression of hope and confidence in those objectives yet to be accomplished.

This lab, powered by Enel and Shikun & Binui, with the support of the Israel Innovation Authority, focusing on the integration between physical infrastructure and digital technologies, epitomises one of the greatest and

long-standing ability of Italians: combining artisan excellence with state-of-the-art technologies in a way that benefits the global social environment.

During the last few years, my Embassy has put an immense effort into offering its full support to several delegations of major Italian companies in order to connect them, in an effective and productive way, with the most dynamic actors playing in the arena of the Israeli innovation eco-system.

We all know that the world of technology is moving at an unprecedented pace and it is therefore of vital importance for our Italian companies operating in the most diverse sectors to interact with those technology hubs that are the main drivers of innovation. Israel, with its more than 300 R&D centres and an ever-increasing number of brilliant start-ups is today one of this hubs if not “THE HUB” where innovative dreams are realized into astounding reality.

The opportunities for strengthening a profitable collaboration between Italy and Israel are real and numerous. Enel and Shikun & Binui have shown the way with their well-known strategic and forward-looking attitude that, I am sure, will inspire and drive the success of future experiences.

We do have reasons to be proud today. The seeds planted by Italy throughout its 70-long-years of diplomatic relations with the Start Up Nation has yielded fruits. This fruit that we are looking at today seems particularly perfectly ripe and promising.

Thank you for your attention.