

**Address by the Ambassador Gianluigi Benedetti,
on the occasion of the visit to Israel of a delegation of
Italian start-ups and high tech companies
Tel Aviv, Hilton Hotel – March 4, 2019**

Dear Friends,

Let me stress, from the very beginning, the importance of this initiative for the further development of the cooperation between our countries in the fields of innovation and high-tech.

Just a month after the visit of an Italian delegation of major construction and engineering companies, I cannot be more pleased to see today this new delegation of Italian innovative start-ups and high-tech companies led by Valeria Fascione, a dear friend and the Campania Regional Minister for Internationalization, Startup and Innovation. Thank you Valeria for your commitment towards Israel and for making this mission possible!

I also would like to give my warm welcome to Paola Bellusci, who manages the Export Sud Program at the Italian Trade Agency. Under her guidance, the Program, funded by the European Commission, supports the internationalization of the Small and Medium enterprises located in Southern Italy regions, strengthening their technological development, and enhancing their competitiveness.

Let me then express my deep gratitude to our distinguished Israeli counterparts, here representing the major national authorities in the fields of innovation, technology and business investments.

In particular, I acknowledge with great pleasure the presence of Karin Mayer Rubinstein, CEO and President at Israel Advanced Technology Industries, Nili Shalev, Director General of ISERD - The Israel-EU R&D Directorate at the Israel Innovation Authority and Aviad Tamir, Head of Life Sciences & Healthcare at Invest in Israel.

Of great importance for us is also the presence of Simone Cuni of Infralab, who will give us a speech about a case study of successful bilateral cooperation with the support of the Israel Innovation Authority, the kind

of experience I hope to see replicated in the future, also thanks to meetings like the one we are here launching today.

I would like to finally spend a word of gratitude to Astorre Modena, General Partner at Terra Ventures Partners, who will offer some useful guidelines in order to build a successful fundraising activity, especially for what concerns early stage venture capital.

Once again, a very warm welcome to all of you!

Distinguished Israeli colleagues and friends, here is my simple message for you: our delegation is here with the determination to create a network of collaborations and to build a stable framework for valuable technology transfers.

I do think they have the capabilities, they have the mentality, and, most importantly, they have the willing to make this cooperation real and effective in the near future.

I also have a message for my fellows Italians. Israel is a small country, but it has a long-standing experience in the fields of innovation and advanced technology, with more than 300 R&D Centers opened by big international companies so far and an increasing number of start-ups active on the territory in the most diverse sectors.

We have a lot to learn by the Israeli innovation ecosystem and a lot of opportunities to grab, also thanks to Israeli and Italian public support to promote bilateral academic and industrial projects, startups acceleration and scaling up in each other country, and innovation cooperation agreements.

Most of you might know that we have just celebrated the 70th anniversary of our diplomatic relations and I cannot see a better moment to push this friendship to higher levels, starting here and today by making the most of this event.

Our Embassy, as well as the Italian Trade Commission, that I want to thank for having contributed in the front line to make this event possible, are at your complete disposal for any kind of support you may need in your future interactions.

And now, LET'S NETWORK and LET'S DO BUSINESS!