

Introduction

Considerations on the International Congress “Biodiversity, Mediterranean, Society”

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The Congress, held in September 2015 in Noto-Vendicari (Siracusa, Sicily, Italy) (Figs. 1, 2), the Sicilian town declared as World Heritage Site by UNESCO, represented a new opportunity for scientific debate (as in the previous meetings held in 2012 in Palermo and 2014 in Cefalù-Castelbuono, Sicily, Italy), among university researchers and scholars, members of scientific and environmental associations, operators involved in environmental management and territorial planning, managers of protected areas, scholars dealing in energy resources, communication and environmental education.

In particular, the conference focused on: i) plant and animal biodiversity; ii) biological and ecological research, included the anthropogenic impact, particularly in the Mediterranean, placing attention on protected areas and their role; iii) issues related to the debate concerning the sustainability and its perspectives in the field of energy, medicine, education and involvement of civil society.

A further aim of the congress was also to strengthen collaboration, international friendships and networks, already established in previous meetings, as well as to extend the debate on nature conservation to new areas, favoring the formation of a large cultural community who share a common

interest in environmental sustainability starting from a vision of ethics and not a consumerist or opportunistic one.

These themes - the relationship between man and environment and of the development of a truly and not only nominal, sustainable lifestyle - are highly topical and have great importance not only for the conservation of nature, but especially for the survival of our Planet.

Over the past 25 years, globalization has resulted in rapid and profound changes in society, creating many new opportunities, but also generating problems in the implementation of development models and ensuring environmental sustainability.

It is clear that many environmental problems, such as, climate change, the equitable use of resources, mutual respect for the different cultures, conservation of migratory species and the control of the introduction of alien species, require the adoption of global policies and cannot be dealt on a national or local scale. However, this must not prevent anyone from adopting correct nature conservation policies on all levels, including those involving change in personal behaviors.

In this context, the study of biodiversity at all levels, genetic variability, species, communities and ecosystems, it is crucial to understanding the mech-



Figure 1. Noto Cathedral
(Sicily, Italy, photo P. Iuvara).



Figure 2. Vendicari, Salinaro House
(Sicily, Italy, photo P. Iuvara).

anisms that regulate the functioning of nature, set conservation policies and environmental management based on scientific criteria and not merely on aesthetical or worse yet utilitarian basis. On the other hand, it is increasingly evident that it is necessary to rethink the current models of society based on consumism and on uncontrolled exploitation of resources.

For this reason, the publication of the Proceed-

ings of the Congress has been divided into two sections. The contributions of the first section, mainly bio-naturalistic and involving many and varied aspects of biodiversity of animal, vegetation and habitat, are published in the *Biodiversity Journal*, while the contributions of the second section, which examine the relationship between man and environment, will be published in the *Proceedings and Memoirs of Ente Fauna Siciliana*.