THE ITALIAN NATIONAL SOLAR ENERGY HISTORY PROJECT

Cesare Silvi, Italian National Committee ‘The History of Solar Energy’ (CONASES), Via Nemorense 18, 00199 Roma, Italy www.gses.it/conases cslivi@gses.it

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INTRODUCTION

This poster presentation introduces “The Italian National Solar Energy History Project” (The Project) to the participants of the ISES SWC 2007. The Project is currently being promoted by the “Italian National Committee ‘The History of Solar Energy’” (CONASES), a multi-disciplinary non-profit entity established in 2006 by the Italian Ministry for Cultural Heritage and Activities.

The Project, whose first phase will be carried out over the four year period from 2006 through 2009, is structured as three main initiatives:

- The National Archive on the History of Solar Energy (Solar Archive).
- 100 solar history events in 100 local communities on “Solar Energy From the Past to the Future. History, Art, Science and Technology.”

100 SOLAR HISTORY EVENTS

This initiative promotes events on the local history and future of solar energy in 100 Italian cities and towns. It was launched nationally on June 14th, 2007 in Syracuse, Sicily, on the occasion of Spoleto 2007. A central space in each of the 100 history events is devoted to rediscovering buildings and urban structures built in times when fossil fuels were still unknown or little used.

SOLAR ARCHIVE

To reconstruct and document in a systematic and easily accessible way the work of the scores of Italian inventors, physicists, chemists, mathematicians, engineers and architects who played a leading role in the history of renewable solar energy, CONASES has promoted the creation of a National Archive on the History of Solar Energy. The Archive, whose units are physically located throughout Italy and accessible through the Internet, is being organized around three main subjects:

- Cultural Heritage and Activities.
- Solar Applications
- Research Libraries

The Archive’s initial core of excellence has been created in the past five years in Brescia, northern Italy, at the Luigi Micheletti Foundation and the Eugenio Battisti Museum of Industry and Work.

At present, CONASES is focusing on the preservation and enhancement of archives and documents that belonged to great Italian solar scientists and scholars of international standing in the 20th century. Examples of recent acquisitions and archives now being inventoried are those of Giovanni Francia (1911-1980) and Gaetano Vinaccia (1889-1971), donated by the heirs.

Their efficient design was dictated by the solar source and by the state of energy technology. Often these constraints resulted in a strong incentive to devise solutions whose value has remained unchanged. For instance, cities evolved compactly and greater attention was given to the orientation of buildings with regards to the sun’s path.

SOLAR CITY TRAVELLING EXHIBITION

Italy is the land of Marcus Vitruvius (90-20 B.C.), author of De Architectura, one of the most studied and cited ancient texts regarding solar architecture and urban planning. The “Italian Solar City Travelling Exhibition” recounts the vicissitudes of cities, of architecture, energy and food-supply infrastructures, and the scientific discoveries and technological developments that marked the major stages in the history of cities, with special focus on day lighting, heating and cooling of buildings.

The first edition of the Exhibition was held on the occasion of the Festival of Science in Genova in 2006. The second edition is already under preparation and the opening expected in Rome in early spring 2009.

CONCLUSIONS

The Italian Solar Energy History Project intends to help create further cultural and cognitive references on the history of solar energy that can facilitate the start of systematic studies on the subject and possibly provide lessons for the use of solar energy in our times and in the future.