Book Fair

Introducing "Italy in Space"

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I would like to open with an interesting comment made by David Scott, Commander of the Apollo 15 Mission, in his lovely book "Two sides of the Moon" (co-authored with cosmonaut Andrei Leonov, the first man to walk in space):

"Some believe that explorations on the scale of lunar landings happen because technology is so advanced as to be readily deployable to open up new horizons.
Others instead think that it is the result of different converging factors: that a few highly motivated individuals, determination and sufficient resources drive events, even if the necessary technology does not yet exist.
I believe that our experience bears out this second theory".

I concur with what Scott says: only a clear vision turned towards the future can bring together the resources - even when they are scarce, as is the case today - to meet ambitious goals which, with their demand for innovation and for new technologies, enable the entire system to take steps forward which would otherwise require a lot more time.

But that is not all.

Scott also talks of “a few highly motivated individuals”.

It is no accident that the book presented today is subtitled “Stories of men who have seen the stars”.

Indeed, the history of space conquest is mainly the story of men whose tenacity and ideas made possible the achievement of ambitious goals.

This is equally true of our country: eminent scientists such as Giuseppe Occhialini, Bruno Rossi, Edoardo Amaldi and Roberto Giacconi, industrialists such as Antonio Rodotà and Franco Bardelli, and eclectic characters such as Luigi Broglio, to name but a few.

All these - and many more besides - helped, each in his own way, to bring about and develop Italy's space activities and made a key contribution to exporting Italian capabilities throughout Europe and the world.

I would like to remind you that Italy's success in the space arena has always been based on the right mix of technological excellence and industrial initiative on the one hand and adequate public investment on the other.

Indeed, it is precisely the recognised technological prowess of the first Italian companies ever to operate in the space sector, together with the courage and initiative of their management, that enabled the nation's industry to make a qualitative leap from their role as mere suppliers of parts and components to the more ambitious one of *prime contractor* for *payloads* initially and for entire satellites and orbiting structures subsequently.

This trajectory also underpins the increasingly important role secured by Italy's space industry within Europe.

The creation of EADS in the late 1990s was followed by the establishment of the Space Alliance between Alcatel – then Thales – and Finmeccanica which allowed Italy and its industry:

- to have its say in the consolidation process of the European space industry;
- to compete at international level on an equal footing with leading world players;
- to benefit from national investments in research and technological development.

Meanwhile, the political will to invest significantly in the space sector has allowed Italy to acquire over the years a central role within the European Space Agency - to which we have always been among the top three contributors, alongside France and Germany - and within the European Union.

It is precisely the European Union's foray into the space sector, in close association with the European Space Agency, that signalled a significant strengthening of the old continent's presence, bolstered by its solid tradition of scientific and industrial endeavour, with skills ranging from the manufacture of satellites and manned orbiting stations to launch systems, satellite services and applications.

I would like to end by stressing the increasingly important role played by satellite services.

If the first stage of space activities was dominated by science and the strategic conquest of space, the current stage is characterised chiefly by the scope for developing applications that are useful to everyday human life and safety: from telecommunications to Earth observation, from mobile information services to climate and environmental monitoring.

In the near future, we may come up with even more ambitious developments in services and applications involving the use of space, not just nearby space but deeper space as well.

It is my belief, paradoxically, that there is no better time than the current financial and economic crisis to devise new ways to exploit what nature has given us - and what today is finally within reach.

In the past Italy was capable - despite all our country's limitations and difficulties - to make a valuable contribution to the development of the space sector.

And I am convinced that it will continue to do so.

Thank you.