

Ladies and Gentlemen,  
Prof. Manfredo,  
Colleagues and friends of the University of Sassari, the Colorado State University, the University of Denver and the Central China Normal University,  
Representatives of local institutions,  
And Mr. Valdez of the UN.WTO. - Themis Foundation,

It is a great pleasure for me to meet you all here in Sardinia for several reasons.

On a personal note, because Sardinia, in a way, feels like home. I was not born here, but I have spent and enjoyed over 10 years on this island. So, welcome to our land.

I hope you will see with your own eyes that Sardinia is the perfect place for a conference on ecological integrity and tourism sustainability. It is a place well known for the beauty of its beaches, its ancient traditions and its wild nature. It is a Mediterranean island of great potential to attract tourists and nature enthusiasts from all over the world.

As you know, today we all face great challenges:

- to achieve direct and tangible results to boost economy
- to combine growth and environmental protection
- and to teach new generations the importance of a safe environment, a sustainable growth and an eco-friendly approach to all sectors of our economy.

We all need do our share to make the difference.

Today, there are core issues which affect us all

- deforestation and forest degradation
- the lack of environmental services
- the threats to biodiversity and endangered species
- water, soil and air pollution,
- ocean acidification.
- soil erosion
- but also (and this is particularly true in Sardinia) forest fires

As Universities and public institutions, we need to be part of the solutions that our leaders seek, we need to provide the mechanisms and the architecture to tackle these problems on a permanent basis.

Tourism is an instrument that can secure the future of new generations, but uncontrolled conventional tourism poses a potential threat to our natural heritage.

What we need today is to develop a new strategy that takes into account the threats posed by uncontrolled tourist flows and reduces the impact of tourist development to reasonable levels.

And we all know that actions that involve thousands of stakeholders are always challenging. For this reason active participation and sharing bold targets is essential.

Our researchers scientists, engineers, investors, the civil society, must all be empowered to find joint solutions and to work together. We are all ready to take on this challenge.

Events like the one that we are attending today, represent the best chance we have to make the difference.

Ladies and gentlemen, let me conclude by welcoming you once more to Alghero, to Sardinia and thank you for all the work that you are doing to advance the causes of environmental protection and tourism development.

Thank you on behalf of the University of Sassari and our academic community as a whole.