

# AGENDA AND OFFICIAL MINUTES OF THE 1<sup>st</sup> NATIONAL MEETING OF ISSNAF

Italian Embassy  
3000 Whitehaven Street, N.W.  
Washington D.C.  
February 4, 2008

## AGENDA

### MORNING

1. Welcome of the Embassy, H.E. Giovanni Castellaneta
2. Status of ISSNAF: Goals and Initiatives, Vito M. Campese, ISSNAF President
3. ISSNAF and The Italian Genomic Project Prof. Luca Cavalli- Sforza
4. ISSNAF and The Bologna Project Prof. Giovanni Romeo
5. IMT, Lucca Fabio Pammolli
6. Scuola Superiore Sant'Anna, Pisa Prof. Giuseppe Turchetti
7. What does ISSNAF do for me: Question and Answers. Board of Directors

### AFTERNOON

8. Working sessions A:
  - A1: Activity of the scientific working groups: (Roberto Peccei and Michele Boldrin)
  - A2: Sources and use of fellowships: (Francesco della Porta, Vito M. Campese)
9. Working sessions B:
  - B1: Census of Italians operating in the US: Interface with ISSNAF and Website (Riccardo Rossi and Gabriele Boccaccini)
  - B2: Membership (Roberto Peccei and Vito M. Campese)
10. Open discussion moderated by Dr. Michele Mezza (RAI); interviews to
  - 3.a Grilli (IIT)
  - 3.b. Alessandro Ovi (scientific policy, Italian government)
  - 3.c. Luciano Saccani (Thales-Alenia Space North America)

## MINUTES

1. H.E. Castellaneta, Ambassador of Italy in Washington, welcomed the participants. He recalled that 8 % of current US population is of Italian origin (about 30 million individuals). The scholary level of new immigrants has increased constantly, so that US citizens of Italian descent are today consistently represented in US professions and institutions. The annual rate of immigration is about 5000 per year. Mr. Castellaneta also noticed that the idea of ISSNAF was actively supported from day one by the Embassy, mainly through the work of the Scientific Attache' Prof. Giorgio Einaudi.

2. Prof. Vito M. Campese, President of ISSNAF noted that almost 150 members had gathered in Washington on their own time and money to partake in the first National Meeting of the Foundation. The President thanked them, described the Foundation's goals and briefly recalled the activities undertaken. He underlined the voluntary nature of Board members' activity, the generous support by 30 founding members, and by other individuals who built a website and managed it, obtained a tax-free status to the Foundation, and ensured that the First National Meeting would take place. He thanked the Embassy personnel for encouraging and hosting the event. The President then proceeded to illustrate the program of ISSNAF: encouraging scientific exchanges between Italy and North America by recognizing and rewarding excellence among Italian individuals, initiatives and organizations. He noticed the attendance of Representatives by numerous companies (Novartis, Glaxo, Finmeccanica, Fiat, Enel, Alenia); He praised Alenia Spazio, for funding through ISSNAF one or two scholarships. Through the prestigious network of Italian scientists in the US, ISSNAF can certify the quality of initiatives worth sponsoring. By working with companies and high net-worth individuals, it can raise and direct the required funds. By supporting a network infrastructure, ISSNAF can facilitate access to information, resources and knowledge to industries and institutions on both sides of the Ocean.
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Following the opening speech of Prof. Campese, a few examples of excellence were provided, of the kind ISSNAF might support,

3. Prof. Giovanni Romeo presented the Bologna Project initiative, an international effort to create the permanent quarters for the European School of Genetics. The School is an example of international cooperation among scientists, of the kind ISSNAF should promote and sponsor.
4. Dr. Olivieri of ENEL explained that his company is implementing R&D activities worth \$ 4 billion over a 4-year period, and will seek the support of ISSNAF in assigning funds.
5. Prof. Pierdomenico Perata and Prof. Giuseppe Turchetti of Istituto Superiore Sant'Anna, Pisa reported on the interest of their institution in establishing a productive working relationship with ISSNAF and its members.
6. Prof. Cavalli -Sforza (who spoke in the afternoon) explained how Italian Scientists in North America may support the development of science in Italy. He suggested that initiatives should flow in both directions and provided three personal examples. He expressed confidence that private institutions, private industry and local governments will be the best counterparts for ISSNAF activities and initiatives.
7. Before and after lunch break, members of the Board of ISSNAF (Vito M. Campese, Francesco della Porta, Roberto Peccei and Pierluigi Zappacosta) solicited members' opinions on future direction and activities. Essentially, the Foundation is meant to be a scaffold, available for members to provide resources and content. The members' scientific community is available to advice Italian

institutions and corporations on identifying and accessing the most relevant expertise, and selecting the most qualified use of funds. A thought-provoking debate ensued, dominated by three issues: reciprocity, independence, and quality:

- a) RECIPROCITY: ISSNAF fund-raising efforts shall sponsor in equal measure fellowships in North America and in Italy (the “come back” issue)
- b) INDEPENDENCE: ISSNAF should establish close partnerships with a small number of centers of excellence, and avoid any influence by government or partisan organizations
- c) QUALITY FILTER: ISSNAF role is to provide a “certified” opinion on individuals, companies and research institutions with regard to their excellence and competency. ISSNAF selection will be synonym of merit and scientific relevance.

Four separate workshops took place in the afternoon: in the points 8 and 9 below are some of the most useful suggestions

## 8. Fellowships; Scientific Counsel

### 8.1. Sources and uses of Fellowships

- ISSNAF should act as a clearing house between fellowships offered and interested students, in either direction
- ISSNAF should promote “come back” by instituting ISSNAF professorships in selected Italian learning institutions; proportion should be 50-50.
- ISSNAF should also promote “come back” to Industry, by screening the most qualified opportunities for scientists in the Italian private sector
- ISSNAF should promote short term exchange, by sponsoring sabbatical leave, visiting scholarships, and very short fellowships (1 week)
- ISSNAF should act as “quality filter” and pass through
- Through the Scientific Advisory Boards, the members of ISSNAF will guarantee the quality and relevance of ISSNAF recommendations
- ISSNAF should refrain from aiming at generic goals, such as changing the culture of Italian universities, or reversing brain drain, or generating its own fellowships
- Rather, ISSNAF should aim at specific reachable goals, such as educating young scientists and addressing the scientific needs of the private sector (large and medium industry) and fostering the best possible use of resources
- Brain circulation is worldwide: ISSNAF should not restrict its dealings to scientists of Italian origin.
- Funds for fellowship may either be collected or administered on behalf of third parties. Other funds may be raised by providing services to medium and big companies through credible individuals and institutions
- Professional management should be hired and compensated by retaining 20% of all fellowships under management as “G&A”

## 8.2. Scientific Advisory Boards (6 work groups) presented:

- 8.2.1. Earth and Environmental Sciences
- 8.2.2. Engineering and IT
- 8.2.3. Humanities
- 8.2.4. Medicine and Biology
- 8.2.5. Physics, Mathematics and Chemistry
- 8.2.6. Social and Economic Sciences

## 9. Membership, website and census

### 9.1. Membership

- Members should be 50-50 industry and Academy
- The website should offer multiple membership payment options (paypal does not work well)
- A special category of “foreign members” should be created for Italians or other nationals who don’t qualify for full membership
- ISSNAF statement of purpose should be bold in order to attract younger members
- ISSNAF US members should provide mentoring services for young researchers
- Local chapters should be developed in the US to facilitate meetings and cooperation
- These minutes should be published on the website for a public debate

### 9.2. Website and Census

The structure and mechanisms of current Issnaf website and time based built in structure of database were presented by Riccardo L. Rossi on behalf of the web development team (R.L. Rossi & M. Bondioli). Recent improvements to the registration and user password retrieval systems were highlighted and future improvements pointed out: namely the possibility to register and pay through PayPal without having to open a free PayPal account, step that is now required. Riccardo Rossi asked for a stronger effort in collaboration among members to volunteer for the news driven section of the website: the creation of an editors group to manage the content management system in the website was encouraged. The census of Italian scientists and scholars with visual geographic and chronological features was introduced as an independent project (Progetto MaRE) currently waiting to be launched from its own website ([mappacervelli.org](http://mappacervelli.org)) and interactions with Issnaf (such as a privileged exchange of non anonymous data and cross website promotion) were proposed.

As a peculiarity of the Issnaf census Gabriele Boccaccini remarked the possibility to introduce the historical perspective, considering Italians that worked in the US in the past; moreover, he proposed to adopt an invitation method for the census in order to reach a wider number of Italians scientists/scholars indirectly through professional acquaintances.