



**First International Footwear Forum:
Promoting collaboration among worldwide footwear representatives**

4th September 2015

Milan, Italy – *The first edition of the **International Footwear Forum** took place today at the MICAM trade fair. Representatives of footwear associations and chambers from around the world gathered to discuss the opportunities and challenges faced by their companies and by themselves in a fast global economy driven by external factors and new consumer needs.*

Delegates from sixteen of the major worldwide footwear associations participated in Milan in the first edition of the International Footwear Forum, a new appointment for the footwear industry launched by the European Confederation of the Footwear Industry (CEC) during the 2014 World Footwear Congress in Mexico. The Forum aims at establishing a regular and structured dialogue, where delegates can openly discuss about the experiences they face with companies and with their administrations, as well as identify joint initiatives that can promote their companies growth.

In his opening speech, Cleto Sagripanti, president of the CEC, underlined *“Administrations and governments around the world are constantly trying to establish partnerships and trade agreements that influence our sector. The collaboration at our level could definitely help to position our industry towards certain decisions that benefit our companies, while we can learn from each other experiences.”*

The debate first addressed the priorities that each association had in order to assist better their respective Members. Participants agreed that for the last years, government advocacy actions had substantially shifted to more customized services to companies like statistics, technical advice and accompaniment in entering new countries, as well as mentoring entrepreneurial skills to industry newcomers. Delegates also underlined the relevance of maintaining constant communication with companies about their activities.

The agenda included the topic of social responsibility standards along the supply chain. Several initiatives were discussed: the code of conduct created by the FDRA; a common declaration of principles of the Latin American Chambers of Footwear, and a European initiative, which has developed an innovative web based risk management tool. Such tool allows companies to evaluate their level of compliance with 5 category of core subjects foreseen under ISO26000 (human rights; labour practices; the environment; fair operating practices; consumer issues; and community involvement and development).

The Forum counted with the presence of a notorious guest in the third and last panel dedicated to e-commerce. The Head of Spain & Italy of Zalando, one of the major footwear e-platforms, illustrated about the latest cyber innovations that will soon offer consumers unimaginable services and products through ingenious software applications on the consumer's inseparable friend: the smartphones.

The event concluded with a first joint project: to work through the identification and alignment of a common declaration of principles on social corporate responsibility in the



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footwear supply chain, to be selected among the existing international initiatives. The declaration would guide companies when establishing their strategies while strengthening the effectiveness of the compliance. *"I am certainly pleased with the outcome of the International Footwear Forum, which has established the grounds for a fruitful partnership",* concluded Sagripanti. *"In the coming months we will work on a proposal, which will be presented to delegates for endorsement at the next IFF's edition to take place in New York in June 2016. We stay in contact until then. It is essential that we maintain this dialogue alive".*

