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Italy to bring quality to Kurdistan

By Aiyob Mawloodi

06 September 2007 (Kurdish Globe)

Italian officials and Erbil and KRG officials announce the first exhibition of Italian industry and technology, scheduled to take place in Erbil on September 6-10.

"When it rains, we open our umbrellas; when a flight is canceled, we find another; and when an explosion happens, we try to forget about it. We are determined to organize this exhibition despite all the difficulties we faced and may face." Dr. Tanzi Piero, Commercial Attaché of the Italian Consulate in Erbil, told reporters in a press conference held at the Erbil International Hotel on September 2 to announce the Italian Expo.

One of the problems is that Austrian Airlines, which was to bring the Italians to Kurdistan, canceled its service to and from the region. Therefore, a number of Italians who were to arrive in Erbil some time before the exhibition couldn't.

"We have hired a special plane to bring those people (to Erbil) and take them back," Dr. Angelo Caspani told reporters. Another problem is that some of the companies withdrew from the exhibition.

The exhibition, which was organized by Piero, as well as Abdulla Ahmed Abdul-Rahim, supervisor of Erbil International Exhibition, Aziz Ibrahim Abdo, General Manager of Trade in the KRG Ministry of Trade, and Dr. Angelo Caspani, Secretary General of the Italian Expo, was formally announced at the conference.

The Italian Axis Fairs & Services Company organized the trade show for the Italian companies in different fields of industry and technology. It is supported by the Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG) in collaboration with the KRG Ministry of Trade and Erbil International Exhibition Company.

According to Abdul-Rahim, the exhibition was originally set for June, but was "unfortunately canceled due to the explosion that happened in front of the KRG Interior Ministry." This incident caused some of the companies to withdraw from the exhibition; otherwise, the number of attending companies would be even larger.

Around 80 companies have registered to attend the trade show from different sectors, including construction and building materials, machine tools, automation, thermo-climate plumbing technologies, electro, transportation, hotel equipment, environment, agricultural and food technology, furnishing, education, and training and services.

According to Angelo, all of the companies are production companies rather than commerce, which means "higher quality and lower price."

"It is not an easy task to persuade Europeans to bring their business to Kurdistan, since they see Kurdistan as Baghdad and I had to make them differentiate between them."

The aim of the exhibition is to bring the "Made in Italy" products to Kurdistan and to strengthen the relationships and ties between the Italians and Kurds as well as help the nation to develop.

"I want to conclude my speech by saying that Italians and Kurds are and have been friends, and that we want to remain friends and help develop their country," Piero said.

A serious problem that faces the Italian companies is that Kurdistan has been a market for low-quality and cheap Chinese, Iranian, and Turkish products, the prices of which are lower compared to those brought by the Italians. The task of persuading Kurds to consume the expensive Italian high-quality products instead of cheap products is a challenge for the Italian businessmen.

"Europeans also began to turn to Chinese products due to their low prices, but finally they realized that the quality is even lower compared to the prices; thus, they abandoned them and returned to the high-quality products," Angelo told reporters. "Kurdish people must realize the difference and start using high-quality products."

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Regarding the issue of quality, Abdul-Rahim said that people are now turning to high-quality products and the tendency is growing daily.

Abdo said that the KRG is about to prevent low-quality products from entering the region through quality control labs that are set to be established.

"This is to protect the national security of Kurdistan and to protect the capital of its people."

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