

A Welcome from the President



Ladies and Gentlemen:

In 1309, master weavers fleeing political persecution in the Tuscan textile town of Lucca sought refuge in the lagoon city state of Venice. The production of silk soon began to flourish in the northern Cannaregio district, and in the early sixteenth century the skills required in silk weaving began to be applied to wool.

The wool from the lands across the Lagoon, although not the same quality as prized English wools, were suitable for the weaving of heavier cloths.

Today, a trip from Treviso in the Veneto, just across the road bridge from Venice's Piazzale Roma, along the via della Lana, reveals a very vibrant woollen and worsted industry, where some of Italy's key spinners, weavers and retailers have been established since the first half of the 19th century. These mills, now weaving antipodean merino, have been supplying the haute couture trade ever since the fashion runway was invented.

For this 88th Congress, the theme of "Wool in Excellence" embraces not only this rich heritage but also the technology that will ensure our industry's prosperity.

Featuring the latest research and development in wool applications, the programme highlights sustainability, traceability, wool décor and health and wellness, while visits to the headquarters of Benetton and Marzotto offer delegates a look inside two icons of the Italian wool textile industry, both of whom came to the global stage – albeit in very different ways – in the 1980s.

Italy spearheaded the emphasis on environmental excellence several years ago with the active participation of the country's leading trade bodies, particularly Sistema Moda Italia.

Although wool leads the environmental agenda through its natural, inherent qualities, challenges are never very far away as other fibres, endowed with seemingly inexhaustible funding, seek to steal the sustainability limelight.

The IWTO very much looks forward to the discussion and debate of all the issues around the subject, and warmly welcomes you to Venice in April.

With my good wishes,

Peter Ackroyd