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» **Assofermet conference focuses on information**

The autumn conference of Assofermet, the Italian association of traders of iron, steel, non-ferrous metals, ferrous scrap, hardware and similar goods, was recently held in Rome. The meeting, entitled "A changing distribution: from SIP to Skype", was held in two sessions. The morning session was opened by Assofermet president Roberto Lunardi, who emphasized that in the current difficult economic climate it is important to use information to understand and grasp the opportunities of change. This was followed by interventions by Emil Abirascid, Giuliano Noce and Jurgen Nusser. Abirascid, director of Innov'azione, focused on the theme of digital technology, which he said is a "very powerful" and useful tool for companies in order to "expand their business, and improve communication and relationships with customers". Giuliano Noci, marketing professor at the Polytechnic of Milan, referred to three steps required to kick off the revival of industry: communication, managerialization and collaboration. Noci underlined the importance of proximity to the market, building partnerships with end-users, the start of a progressive managerialization and the wise handling of information, in order to control stock levels. In addition, he said the sharing of strategic projects and developing partnerships with suppliers are critical factors. The morning session was concluded by Jurgen Nusser, managing director of Eurometal, who focused on the importance of sharing data and information in order to improve profits.

There were various interventions also in the afternoon session of the conference, which was entitled "Current and future prospects of the scrap, steel, metals and raw material markets". In particular, Antonio Marcegaglia spoke of a "time of confusion" which will last until 2012 before giving way to a "time of normality". Between 2013 and 2020, according to the managing director of Marcegaglia, there will be a more balanced distribution in the value chain, to the benefit of producers and processors, with a reduction of the huge margins currently enjoyed by mining companies. Mr. Marcegaglia said also that 2012 will not be as negative for the steel industry as the fourth quarter of the current year.

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