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Press release

The new Bellezza Italia (Italian Beauty) program: redevelopment and protection of the river Po

Legambiente and the Unipol Group present the project for the campaign created to promote the restoration and redevelopment of deteriorated areas, to foster a culture of legality and rule of law, synergy between citizens, companies and institutions, and to restore damaged areas for the common good

Among the planned operations are the restoration of pathways, tourism promotion and educational and sporting activities for a first and experimental part of the River Park

Imagine being able to safely hike around the ancient tracks of the river Po, that for years were used to reach the river flood plain but are now forgotten by most and abandoned to decay. This is how we can rediscover incredible natural habitats, rich in biodiversity. Areas that for years were exclusively home to intensive farming but can now be transformed into expansive outdoor classrooms, hiking trails or docks for canoes, granting access to people with motor disabilities.

This is the basic idea behind the **Po River Park 390-410** project, **Bellezza Italia's** new program. **Legambiente** and the **Unipol Group's** new joint campaign that will see the two organisations committing together to propose and carry out recovery and redevelopment measures in deteriorated areas in our country, restoring them for the good of the public.

The initiative was presented this morning at the Giuseppe Verdi hospital at Villanova sull'Arda where there were: Unipol Group sustainability manager **Maria Luisa Parmigiani**, Legambiente general manager **Stefano Ciafani**, Legambiente president for Emilia-Romagna **Lorenzo Frattini**, the mayor of Villanova sull'Arda **Romano Freddi**, the vice mayor of Roccabianca **Alessandro Gattara**, the mayor of Polesine Zibello **Andrea Censi**, **Luca Oddi** and **Massimo Gibertoni** from the Circolo Legambiente "Aironi del Po", NPO Polisportiva Gioco Parma non-profit association representative **Daniele Cozzini** for the *Impossible is Nothing* film presentation.

The name Po 390-410 indicates the kilometres of the development area of this first and experimental part of the River Park that will be carried out by the Circolo Legambiente "Aironi del Po", which has obtained from the Emilia-Romagna regional authorities access to approximately a thousand hectares of this land for the purpose of protection and natural and social development. Most of these areas fall under the Natura 2000 network as Sites of Community Importance (SCI) and Special Protection Areas (SPA).

"With this new Bellezza Italia program - explains **Stefano Ciafani**, Legambiente general manager - we will be able to carry out concrete actions to develop land that has become progressively more abandoned in the last few decades, but that represents unequalled natural heritage and a potentially great tourist attraction. A symbolic initiative indeed, but it is important to keep attention focused on Italy's longest river. Therefore, we must promote its protection and safeguarding, starting from the need to encourage flood safety in cities and villages situated on the riverbanks. We then need to proceed with improving water quality, as well as the redevelopment of the great natural, scenic and cultural resources that this land possesses."

"Rivers, throughout the history of humanity, have always represented extraordinary opportunities for cultural and economic growth; changes to transport systems have altered surrounding communities' interest in the area - underlines **Maria Luisa Parmigiani**, Unipol Group sustainability manager. We believe that river

safekeeping and correct management must continue being a community priority to guarantee environmental safety and quality”.

Specifically, the project is targeting the protection and natural and social redevelopment through the rediscovery of places that will become expansive outdoor classrooms to involve schools in environmental education, and for ecological and hydrobiological research. The project also targets the creation of cycle and walking paths as well as rest and aquatic sport areas, and especially rowing that will be able to include, thanks to collaboration from Polisportiva Gioco Parma, people with motor disabilities. The pathways inside the Park will be restored, as well as the ancient tracks that for years were used to access the river flood plain and that stretch through the Polesine Parmense, Zibello and Roccabianca municipalities.

The project is part of a much wider effort. Legambiente is in fact nominating the middle part of the Po valley as a Unesco MAB Reserve (that includes 32 Italian riverside municipalities in the provinces of Piacenza, Cremona, Parma, Reggio Emilia and Mantova) that will see district mayors, the Po river bank Authority and the Bioscience department at the University of Parma, as well as various agricultural associations and businesses involved.

Collaboration between the Unipol Group and Legambiente continues to be a way to foster a culture of legality and rule of law, to nurture as much synergy as possible between civil society, companies and institutions that are committed to the restoration and renovation of damaged or abandoned areas for the common good. Bellezza Italia is therefore not just the sole collaboration between Unipol Gruppo Finanziario and Legambiente. In fact, it covers various fields, with the dual objective of redeveloping environmental commitment of the Unipol Group in the country and increasing direct stakeholder awareness on the importance of protecting and redeveloping our habitat. It is also a series of projects aimed at developing active policies and appropriate tools for increasing resilience to climate change in Italy.

Information on collaboration between Legambiente and Unipol Gruppo Finanziario is published on the Legambiente national portal, www.legambiente.it in the Company and Sustainability areas, on the website <http://sostenibilita.unipol.it/bilanciosostenibilita> and on the institutional website www.unipol.it in the Sustainability/Partnership/Legambiente section.

To directly follow current and future projects:

*<http://www.legambiente.it/bellezza-italia>, <http://www.facebook.com/progetto.BellezzaItalia>,
<http://twitter.com/BellezzaItalia>*

Videos on: <http://www.youtube.com/bellezzaitalia>