

Speech by Mr. Campos

Distinguished guests and delegates, ladies and gentlemen,

It is a great honor for me to address and welcome, on behalf of the entire International Society of Hydrothermal Techniques, to the 39th Congress of this organization; and the 9th World Days of Thermalism.

And first of all, I want to thank and congratulate the Organization Committee, with Mr. Ennio Gori, Mr. Constantino Miravalle and the Tourist Board of Valsugana for the excellent work done for organizing this event here in Levico. I am sure that this Congress is going to set a new reference for all of us for future events.

Our warm recognition also to Mr. Lorenzo Dellai, President of the Provincia Autonoma de Trento, Mr. Carlo Stefenelli, Major of Levico Terme, and Mr. Claudio Miorelli, President of Trentino Spa, for their kindness, support and help for making possible to have this conference in the city of Levico, one of the regions in Europe with more tradition when talking about thermalism. This is also a great opportunity for many of us to get to know a little bit closer this great region, its culture and its traditions.

And finally, I want to thank all the many persons and companies that have collaborated in one way or another in the arrangements for this meeting, which is already a success in terms of participants and quality of the different panelists attending the event.

As you know, the aim of SITH is to stimulate and promote in all countries the research, study and application of hydrothermal techniques (thermal and mineral) within disciplines such as natural sciences, engineering, economy, geology, bacteriology or any other discipline with a direct or indirect connection to this field.

The foundational purpose of our organization is, more and more, becoming of a greater importance. Almost every day we are seeing the challenges that mankind is facing in terms of the preservation of nature and natural resources. Climate changes due to the development of our society is creating a whole new set of problems, not faced in the past, and that for sure will require a big effort in order to address them wisely and in a satisfactory way. In particular, governments and supranational organizations define as one of the greatest challenges that humanity faces the maintenance and rational use of all water resources.

Our focus is in the use of waters for a very specific goal: This is Health. We are talking about one of the oldest practices of medicine.

The curative virtues of Thermal Waters have been known for centuries, and still now remain as a popular practice. Probably, more than sixty million people use every year thermal waters for curative purposes, and millions more in the so called “wellness” centers, also with this kind of water.

It is our obligation, as professionals of thermalism, to address the challenges that new times and this increasingly larger number of users post on us. SITH has an International Prize in order to promote and recognize the work of researchers on mineral waters. Every year, we received papers from countries from Europe, Asia, and America, a consequence of the increasing interest that this discipline has at university levels in many countries, in all continents.

And it is the purpose of conferences like this that today starts, to encourage research, share information across countries and professionals, and to publicise and promote as much as possible the collaboration among different organisations involved in the area of hydrothermalism. And all this because it is our responsibility to help governments, universities, companies and people in making a better and more rational use of thermal waters worldwide.

Two years ago, we held the 38th Congress of SITH in Beppu, in Japan, a city with more than 3.000 natural springs, constituting the

largest thermal area of that big country, and one of the largest in the world. In that event, we had the opportunity of meeting our colleagues from countries with very different traditions and economic development: Japan, Korea, Mongolia, India, Taiwan, etc. Nevertheless of this differences, what we were able to realize and share is the concern for the preservation and rational use of thermal waters in all places.

It was very interesting to listen how thermalism has evolved in countries like Japan, were starting from a pure curative approach developed towards a concept closer to what we know as “wellness” during a great part of last century. Nowadays, even though the wellness concept is still very strong in the new generations, the interest is shifting again for applications related to certain kind of diseases, many of them related to quality of life of elderly people. And a lot of research is being done at universities about the benefits of this kind of therapies with mineral waters.

Other countries, probably not as developed as Japan, were focusing the use of thermal waters as a way of attracting tourism, and thus, contributing to the economic development of the regions were they are.

From the economic side, thermalism is a sector of a very special interest because of its characteristics.

First, and from a medical point, it's a natural therapy, with no secondary effects that contributes to a better health, both from a curative and a preventive side. This quality has been applied for many centuries, I can say, in all the world, and nowadays has renewed its applications with non-aggressive therapies for certain diseases. Let me recall again that almost sixty million people go every year to spas with a curative purpose.

Also as an engine of economic development of the regions where springs are located, many times small rural places. Many towns are very popular, promoted by national authorities and known by general public because of the fame of their thermal resources. The economy of these towns is almost dependant on the existence of this waters. And finally, as a tourism activity, in which the main goal is wellness.

This last characteristic is making of spas a small vacational resort, as mainly young people identifies it as their preferred choice for short holidays, substituting other more traditional destinies.

No matter of the main reason behind the use of thermal waters, what we all share is the concern and the goal of their correct use, both in

terms of preservation of the quality of the resource itself and the rational use of it, in order to contribute to the development of the places where they are located.

And here the role of international institutions, and let me say in particular in Europe, where we are lucky to have such a large number of thermal springs, is key to harmonize and set the standards for all economic agents involved in thermalism, mainly the owners of the thermal resources. Only with a common standard we will be able to transmit to the population of our countries the benefits of balneotherapy. We must do a big effort not to confuse people, and make them aware of the big difference between the benefits of thermalism and the benefits, which also exists, of the use of other kind of waters.

Finally, I do not want to conclude without a very special mention to Mr. Enrico Chiostrì, also present today in this hall. Mr. Chiostrì, is, without any doubt, the person with more extensive knowledge of thermalism worldwide. Over more than five decades he has visited almost every country in the world in which there are thermal waters, cooperating with governments and institutions in order to promote and develop the use of these assets for human health.

I am very proud to give this mention and recognition here, in his own country, for a job that has gained the respect of all professionals related to balneotherapy and thermalism in the world. And it's an honor to have him here again in this Congress of SITH.

Thank you very much.