

November 4, 2009 - Italy – Support for Amazonia



(ANS – Rome) – On the evening of October 30 at the Palatium Regional Winery in Rome, VIS (Volunteers for International Development, a Salesian NGO) organized an evening to support projects aimed at conserving bio-diversity in the Amazonian forest, in particular in Ecuador and Peru.

The Amazonian forest has a priceless human richness in the many different tribes and languages. Many of the native peoples have never been colonized by Europeans, given also the almost impossible task of finding them in the forests.

For these peoples the forest is their life in spite of the great pressures from countries which in recent years have tried to get hold of the natural resources, devastating the forests in the process and at the same time preventing the native peoples from benefiting from modernization, the markets, and any access to the benefits of globalization.

VIS is already involved with scientific research projects in Ecuador and Peru, as well as higher education and setting up small businesses for the production, transformation, and commercialization of the derivatives of the natural resources. In this way it is contributing to appreciation of the bio-diversity of the Amazonian forest and to the improvement of the living conditions of the indigenous communities in the forest, linking economic development with preservation through products derived from the transformation of plants and fruits. In particular, new and alternative sources of income have been created which, on the one hand, make good use of the huge local sources of wealth and, on the other, encourage the use of the natural patrimony of the area in a way which both conserves and is sustainable.

“Bio-diversity is the real challenge for this century,” Massimo Zortea, president of VIS declared, “because we are being called to combine wisely the conservation and the use of natural resources. The alternative would be a rapid and irreversible loss of bio-diversity on the one hand, or the marginalization of hundreds of thousands of the Indians on the other. VIS is responding to the challenge by putting education at the heart of its strategy; by offering the local populations the education to appreciate bio-diversity and promote human and sustainable development.”