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13 July 2021 - The Embassy of Italy in Pretoria, South Africa, in partnership with Camera Nazionale della Moda Italiana, Polimoda, Centro di Firenze per la Moda Italiana, Lineapelle, SAFW (South African Fashion Week) and the Italian Trade Agency (ICE), with the support of Nelson Mandela Forum Firenze is proud to announce the launching of: **'Fashion Bridges – I Ponti della Moda'**.

This innovative, ambitious project aims at laying the foundations of a sustainable, inclusive, strategic, long-term cooperation between the Italian and South African fashion industries.

The project is structured on three pillars:

- 1. Cradle of fashion:** Favours talent-recruitment by establishing an academic cooperation between some of the most prominent and more internationally renowned fashion schools and entities in Italy and in South Africa. SAFW and Polimoda have matched three of the most talented neo-graduates from several South African fashion schools with three of the most talented neo-graduates from Polimoda. The six junior designers will participate in a virtual training programme developed by Polimoda, with the contribution of Camera Nazionale della Moda Italiana. The young designers will be paired up and their teamwork will culminate in a joint capsule collection to be showcased in Milan, during the Milan Fashion Week in September 2021 and in Johannesburg during the South African Fashion Week in October 2021. Lineapelle, the most important International Fair dedicated to leather, will provide materials to be used by the designers for their creations.
- 2. Young lions:** Promoting and expanding the market for young, but already established, Italian and South African fashion designers. Two emerging designers, one for each country, will be assisted in identifying business opportunities in South Africa and Italy and establishing a contact with local agents.
- 3. Mining for fashion materials and tools:** Round-table discussion and business-to-business meetings between South African and Italian companies operating in the fashion and textile industry. At the end of October in Johannesburg, the Embassy, with the support of the Italian Trade Agency in Johannesburg, is organizing a match-making event focusing on producers and buyers of raw materials, fabrics, leather, textile machinery, aimed at strengthening technical skills and supply chains of the fashion industries in both countries, with a special attention for quality, sustainability, consistent with the innovative approach of circular economy.

The Visual Diary

A virtual Visual Diary of the project has been created on the Some Other Label platform run by Errica Iacopini to showcase the stories behind each of the designers and their development and growth on and through the Fashion Bridges project. It will also provide information regarding the initiative itself, the creative talent presented and the institutions and entities involved.

The dedicated web page can be accessed here: www.someotherlabel.com/fashion-bridges

The logo

The Logo is the graphic representation of a new inclusive and sustainable co-operation between Italy and South Africa in Fashion. The design depicts the "Ponte Vecchio" bridge in Florence, as a reference to Italy and in particular to Polimoda, main actor of the special training program, and the traditional South African "shweshwe" fabric dating back to the 1800s, that fills the bridge frame, as a reference to South Africa and its style.

This logo represents a new platform of creativity between Italy and South Africa, aiming at future business developments, through an exchange of cultural heritage and opportunities.

Fashion Bridges: connecting people and visions.

For further information on the project, use the following email address of the Embassy of Italy: pretoria.eventi@esteri.it

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