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Welcome address

I would like to welcome you all on behalf of the Academy of the XL and introduce you briefly to our Academy and the origin of its name. Back in 1782, Anton Maria Lorgna, a mathematician and hydraulic engineer from Verona, wanted Italian scientists, who were dispersed in a number of local academies, to have a single voice in Europe. Thus, Lorgna invited the 40 most outstanding scientists from all parts of Italy to join the «Società Italiana» he was founding and to publish their work in the *Memorie di Fisica e Matematica*, nowadays the *Rendiconti*. In a few years, the *Memorie di Fisica e Matematica* became the reference point of Italian scientists in Europe and the «Società Italiana dei XL» established itself as the sole representative of Italian Science. I would like to stress that Lorgna called the Society «Italian» roughly a hundred years before Italy was united; we are very proud of this anticipatory role.

Let me add a few words on the topic of this Symposium and at the same time thank our Academy member Vincenzo Aquilanti and his team for organizing it. Given my background as protein scientist, and my limited knowledge of chirality, let me just refer to Primo Levi and his thoughts on «*Asymmetry and life*» published in the *Bollettino dell'Unione Matematica Italiana* in 1998. Levi dwells on the fact that all the protagonists of the living world – proteins, nucleic acids, sugars – are asymmetric, that the left-right asymmetry is intrinsic to life and concludes that it coincides with life. It seems to me that this conclusion is relevant to one of the scopes of the Symposium, brought up by the continuously increasing number of chiral molecules discovered in space, namely assessing the role of chirality in the origin and evolution of life.

Let me give the floor to Vincenzo for his opening remarks, while thanking you for your attention.

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