

Remarks by Minister Di Maio
on the 160th Anniversary of Italy-US bilateral relations

Distinguished Guests,

We are here today to celebrate the 160th anniversary of the establishment of the diplomatic relations between Italy and the United States of America. Our relations date back to the very birth of Italy as a unified nation: on this day, 160 years ago, US authorities received the dispatch notifying that Vittorio Emanuele II had become King of Italy.

Italy and the US have a shared history and a common heritage. The same values of democracy, freedom, universal human rights, freedom of religion or belief, the rule of law, open and fair commerce, are the foundation of our societies and the guiding light of our international action.

Our Atlantic allegiance and our commitment to European integration are rooted in that heritage and, to this day, they continue to represent the axioms of Italy's foreign policy.

Central in our foreign policy action is our support for multilateralism. As Presidency of the G20 and Co-Presidency of COP26, we are convinced that close multilateral cooperation is the key to tackle today's global challenges. We intend to work in all relevant multilateral fora, together with the United States and our partners, to raise climate ambition, increase access to vaccines, and promote an economic recovery that is environmentally and socially sustainable.

Italy's commitment to NATO is and remains crucial. As allies, we are resolute in our pledge to protect our collective security and we work together to maintain international peace and stability.

Italy is a global security provider, participating side by side our US allies in security operations in several crisis areas. Under the banner of NATO, UN or EU missions, our Defense and Police Forces provide assistance and security in Afghanistan, Lebanon, Iraq, Libya, Somalia, Mali, Niger, as well as in Eastern Europe, the Balkans, the Sahel, the Mediterranean and the Gulf.

Our bilateral defense cooperation also extends to the industrial sector. The collaboration between Italian and American operators is fruitful, and it helps ensuring that our respective defense apparatus remain effective and fit-for-purpose.

Beyond security, our foreign policy cooperation is intense across the board. Our collaboration is particularly close in the Mediterranean region, in the framework of the "Italy-US Strategic Dialogue on the Broader Mediterranean", which focuses on crisis areas - including Libya -, defense cooperation, counter-terrorism and energy.

Together with the US, we lead the efforts to promote stability in Iraq and we are on the frontline in fighting terrorism through the Global Coalition to Defeat ISIS.

I would also like to stress the importance of Italy-US collaboration in the fight against Covid-19. Our relationship ranges from personal protective equipment to tests, from therapies to vaccines. From the first day, the pandemic hit Italy, the US have been in close contact with us and supported our efforts to contain the spread and save our population.

Our countries are also exceptionally close trade partners. Our production chains are deeply integrated. Our bilateral economic relations can rely on the strong presence of Italian companies.

We are proud of the achievements of our “national champions” in America, where the global value of Italian investment is close to \$33 billion dollars. There are almost 3,000 companies in the US participated by Italian investors, which employ 250,000 people. Thanks to them, but also to an extended network of importers and distributors in both countries, before the pandemic, trade in goods and services exceeded 100 billion dollars.

For all our main production sectors - mechanics, chemicals, pharmaceuticals, fashion, means of transport, agri-food, furniture, construction - the American market represents a reference point in terms of size, spending capacity and innovation. This market is essential in any strategy of trade promotion.

Let me recall just some of the most iconic names, such as FCA (now Stellantis) and Intesa Sanpaolo; Fincantieri and Leonardo; Ferrero and Barilla; Luxottica and Pirelli; Enel Green Power and ENI. Small and medium enterprises, Academia, research centers, startups also contribute to this relationship on a daily basis

Italy is a long-standing partner of the United States in space activities. After the USA and the USSR, Italy was the third Country in the world to put a satellite into orbit in 1964. Since then we have been working side-by-side for over 50 years.

Our rich bilateral relations are also driven by extremely fruitful scientific, cultural and academic exchanges. Italy is among the top destinations for American students. Italian and American scientists, scholars, businessmen and professionals – many of which we will hear from during the course of this event – have a long history of cooperation. The free flow of intellectual resources and professional expertise is a key driver of our Nations' progress and these individuals are the lifeblood of the Italy-US connection.

I also want to mention the Italian-American community in the United States. They represent the rich social fabric that connects the Italian and American people and their contribution to our bilateral relations is outstanding.

We stand in the midst of rapid and profound global changes that are both climate- and technology-driven. To tackle them, we must rethink our economies and our societies, while keeping the needs and aspirations of our people at the center of our attention.

As we embark in the so-called “twin transitions”, the green transition and the digital transition, Italy-US scientific and technological cooperation can greatly contribute to this endeavor. Our cooperation has reached peaks of excellence in many sectors - such as the life sciences, carbon-free productive processes, artificial intelligence, and robotics – and we seek to boost it further.

When it comes to protecting our environment and climate, we are reminded every day of the imperative to make peace with our planet. We commend the Biden Administration for rejoining the Paris Agreement, and we look forward to working together towards the milestones ahead: from the Earth Day Summit in Washington, to COP15 on Biodiversity, to COP26 on Climate. As Presidency of the G20 and co-Presidency of COP 26, we are keenly aware of the urgent need to expand the global coalition for net zero emissions.

Even though the challenges ahead are daunting, I am convinced that together we can tackle them effectively. As Secretary of State Tony Blinken and I wrote in a recent joint Op-Ed, in this time of unique global challenges, the strong US-Italy partnership has never been more important.

I would like to conclude by quoting Professor Madeleine Albright, who is here with us today and wrote in her book “The mighty and the almighty”, «Liberty is our gift and our burden, carrying with it both the responsibility to choose and accountability for the choices we make. [...] The question is whether [...] we have the courage of our convictions and the wisdom to make the right choices».

It is our duty to shape the future in a way that reflects our principles and values. Italy and the United States can lead the way.