



ITALY

STATEMENT BY
THE PRIME MINISTER
OF
ITALY

HIS EXCELLENCY
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TO THE 67TH GENERAL ASSEMBLY
OF THE UNITED NATIONS

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Mr. President,

I wish to warmly congratulate you on your election to the Presidency of this General Assembly. Rest assured that you have Italy's full support as you assume your crucial responsibilities in the service of international peace and cooperation.

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Mr. President,

Every day and everywhere, people strive to overcome fear, achieve justice, and persevere through hardship and uncertainty to protect their families and livelihoods and to assure a better future for their children. Governments strive to achieve and preserve peace, justice and prosperity in a world gripped by political tensions, civil wars, and a severe economic and financial crisis.

In 2011 the financial markets have shown serious new signs of tension, due primarily to the deterioration of public finances. What we are experiencing is not a recurrent cyclical imbalance: it is the deepest and worst crisis in the history of the European Union.

Other crises have threatened the European project in the past, but each time the Europeans have found a way to continue down the path on which they embarked more than 50 years ago. In his memoirs, Jean Monnet noted that "Europe would be built through crises." Indeed, it is by solving these crises that Europeans have realized how closely integrated their interests are and how interdependent their economies. Today the world has learnt how essential a viable Europe is to tackling global economic and security challenges, and how important the Euro area is to the recovery of the global economy. Today it is clear that "more Europe" is in the general interest.

We cannot overlook the importance of the measures being taken at the EU level to strengthen governance and fiscal integration. It is also essential that European Governments deliver at the national level. Italy will continue to do its part to further strengthen fiscal sustainability and enhance potential growth.

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Mr. President,

Historical changes are taking place in the Mediterranean region. Italy has stood by the Arab peoples in their quest for justice and democracy. In the past months, we have

engaged with the new leaders of these nations. I found in them a deep commitment which inspires hope. Both bilaterally and through the EU, we are lending concrete support to their new Governments to assist their recovery, set mutually-beneficial trade policies, and foster inclusive economic development, thereby promoting stability throughout the region.

There is also an element of self-interest in this pursuit. Instability around the Mediterranean impacts our own security. Conflicts and social unrest on the southern shore spill over to our own shores. Terrorism finds new avenues to reach Europe. Trafficking in human beings has destabilizing effects on the countries of destination and often results tragedies at sea that we can no longer accept. The situation in the Sahel is of grave concern and a top priority for Italy. It is a volatile mix of fragile institutions, and rampant organized crime and terrorist groups. We cannot let the situation deteriorate any further, and Italy, for one, will make its contribution jointly with our partners and the States of the region.

The ultimate goals of peace and cooperation will be achieved only if all the Countries concerned work together on a basis of mutual respect and a shared sense of purpose. A culture of dialogue must prevail over confrontation. Extremism and intolerance must be isolated and rejected. Rights, dignity and opportunities must be offered to every component and member of our societies (especially minorities and women).

Italy is fully committed to implementing such a vision. For us, protecting and promoting human rights is a long-standing domestic commitment as well as a fundamental pillar of our foreign policy. In this vein, we shall continue to pursue the universal abolition of the death penalty, the protection of minorities, the advancement of the status of women, and the free and safe expression of religion or belief. We need to cooperate wisely in firmly rejecting the misrepresentation of religions or beliefs as an instrument of disruption and destabilization.

To achieve this goal, good laws are always necessary but they are not always enough. Tolerance must be promoted through educational programs and consistent grass-roots work, engaging the efforts of both Governments and civil society. I strongly encourage this membership and all relevant international organizations to resolutely pursue such an approach.

The Arab Spring has experienced difficulties, yet it has also scored a number of remarkable achievements. Nothing is easy, yet nothing is impossible.

But nothing can be achieved without good will and good faith, which we will need if we want to put an end to the ongoing massacres and the massive human rights violations in Syria. The regime in Damascus refuses to comply with the Security Council resolutions and it continues to commit indiscriminate violence against civilians. Italy fully supports the mission of the new Joint Special Representative for Syria and strongly urges the Security Council to overcome the stalemate that is preventing effective international action. History will not be lenient in judging those who bear responsibilities.

Nor can we underestimate the increasing danger of nuclear proliferation. Italy supports the IAEA's commitment to obtaining clarification of the true nature of the Iranian nuclear program and we urge Iran to fully comply with all the relevant Security Council resolutions. Italy advocates more effective arms control regimes, and looks forward to concrete nuclear disarmament measures as proposed in President Obama's Prague Appeal.

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Mr. President,

Respect for the rule of law is the basic condition for promoting human rights and maintaining international peace and security.

In this context, Mr. President, I welcome your proposal of the settlement of international disputes by peaceful means as the overarching theme for this Session of the General Assembly.

I am also pleased to announce that Italy is now ready to accept the compulsory jurisdiction of the International Court of Justice in accordance with article 36 (2) of the ICJ Statute.

This is a defining moment for the ICJ, and for international jurisdictions in general, since they are the key institutions for interpreting international law and guaranteeing global compliance with its provisions. More and more, effective actions to assure international order and security demand respect for international law. The same holds true for actions to counter new threats, such as piracy, which is particularly troubling for its impact on the world economy and on the lives of seafarers.

International efforts to protect sea lanes and fight piracy can be effective only if all nations cooperate in good faith, according to the established rules of the international customary law and UN conventions, including those protecting the jurisdiction of the flag State in international waters.

This august Organization can expect no less from each member State, and especially from those members that aim to have a decisive influence on the rules of global governance.

Any erosion of the sending State's exclusive jurisdiction over servicemen on official duty would jeopardize the status of our agents on international missions. Consequently, it would also undermine the sustainability of UN peacekeeping missions.

By the same token, we must not tolerate any breach of diplomatic missions, whose inviolability must be respected. And we firmly condemn any proposition that violence is an acceptable response to speech.

Transnational organized crime also requires a collective response grounded in the rule of law and the principle of shared responsibility. With the UN Office on Drug and Crime, Italy has actively contributed to, and co-financed (with Colombia), a Digest to promote implementation of the Palermo Convention by illustrating best practices. The Digest is a practical tool for law enforcement officials and prosecutors. It will be officially presented next month in Vienna, on the occasion of the Sixth Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Convention Against Transnational Organized Crime.

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Mr. President,

The United Nations is called on to play a key role in conflict prevention, the settlement of disputes, and assistance for crisis-management and nation-building, in cooperation with regional organizations.

Despite the current financial juncture, Italy continues to do its part in crisis-management, peace-keeping and stabilization missions. Our expertise and resources – both military and civilian – will remain engaged in a number of critical theatres, especially Afghanistan and Lebanon. This commitment constitutes a heavy burden, but one we deem a worthy investment for the sake of the common interest.

In this light, helping Somalia to recover its integrity and dignity will remain high on my Government's agenda.

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Mr. President,

The Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) have played a crucial role in changing development cooperation policies and practices. But since they were first agreed upon, the development landscape has changed deeply: new challenges have emerged and other issues and processes have come to the fore.

The “post-2015 Development Agenda” will thus have to take these trends into account. It will have to include important dimensions of development such as: reducing inequality, fostering credible democracy, promoting human rights, good governance, equitable growth, migration, employment, and decent jobs, and tackling climate change.

We are very pleased with your decision to constitute a High-level Panel to discuss this fundamental issue, and to appoint three important leaders to conduct the international debate. We are confident that the process of defining the pillars of the future development agenda will be as inclusive as possible, avoiding the “top down” assumptions that emerged in 1995.

In our view, the post-2015 MDGs will have to be harmonized with the inputs that came out of Rio+20: the three dimensions of sustainable development – social, economic and environmental – will be part of the scenarios we face in the future. We will also have to work within the framework of the new Busan Global Partnership for Effective Development Cooperation.

In the area of climate change, sound and balanced management of land and marine resources, involving strengthened trans-boundary cooperation, deserves closer political attention and common application. All Countries bear a joint responsibility, beyond what has been done so far, for the sustainable development of oceans, and the preservation of their resilience, biodiversity and ecosystems.

Some challenges are particularly pressing. Tackling climate change through coordinated emission-reduction policies is a prerequisite to substantially reducing - and possibly stopping - the serious degradation of planet Earth’s fragile ecosystems, on which our lives depend. With that in mind, let me reiterate our strong concern over the future of the most vulnerable countries - such as small island States - which contribute little to nothing to global pollution but are particularly vulnerable to the effects of global warming.

In line with our joint strategic objectives to overcome the financial crisis, we attach great importance to innovative sources of financing for development. Italy has helped promote a number of significant initiatives, particularly in the health field. Migrant remittances play a key role in the development of many countries: this process will be facilitated by achieving the G8 and G20 commitments to reduce the average global cost of transferring remittances from 10% to 5% by 2014.

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Mr. President,

Food security is a priority for the Italian Government's development assistance policy. In 2009, under Italy's presidency, the G8 adopted the "L'Aquila Food Security Initiative": a new and inclusive mechanism that has been joined by more than 40 Countries and funded several food security projects for an estimated 22 billion dollars. We are still paying careful attention to policies aimed at mitigating the effect of agricultural price volatility.

The availability of high-quality, healthy and sustainable food for all humankind is the historical and concrete challenge being taken up by Expo 2015 in Milan. The theme, "Feeding the Planet," is crucial to the global agenda – from the Millennium Development Goals to Rio+20 and its Zero Hunger Initiative, as well as the G8 and G20 processes – and is particularly relevant to the work of the United Nations system.

All UN Member States have been invited and so far almost 100 Countries and international organizations have confirmed their participation. The United Nations has been among the first to adhere, also by lending added quality and substance to the preparations.

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In closing, Mr. President, I wish to respond to the appeal you launched in your opening address. Yes, Italy will make an active contribution to the efforts aimed at "revitalizing" this body [*the General Assembly*], by enhancing its role and efficiency.

Today more than ever the world needs the authority of the United Nations. The reform of the Security Council is a key element of this agenda, and we are very much counting on your assistance in making it happen. An effective Security Council is crucial not only to meeting challenges to peace, but also to creating a better international order. An equitable reform of the Council is a matter of continuing legitimacy rather than of increasing the national power of select member states. The principles of accountability, consensus and regional empowerment must continue to inspire our commitment.

Thank you for your attention.