



ITALY

71st GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE UNITED NATIONS

STATEMENT

BY

HIS EXCELLENCY

THE PRESIDENT OF THE COUNCIL OF MINISTERS

HON. MATTEO RENZI

(NEW YORK, 20 SEPTEMBER 2016)

Mr. President of the General Assembly, Fellow Delegates,

As we approach the close of this day, I feel the responsibility to speak from this podium of the statement offered to all of us, in particular, by the President of the United States, Barack Obama.

In summarizing the past eight years of his Presidency and his relations with the United Nations, he highlighted how the international framework today is riven by a deep division between the world of fear and the world of courage; between the world of resentment and the world of hope; between anger and opportunity.

A new season is thus being opened, a season filled with opportunities, of possibilities, but also with unprecedented threats and difficulties that, until a short while ago, had seemed in all likelihood to be very remote. Foremost among them is the threat of terrorism to our cities, to everyday life. Terrorism no longer strikes only conventional targets but rather the human dimension: a theater, a restaurant, a museum, a stadium. And the risks connected with pandemics, which are sometimes exaggerated but very often constitute grave risks. And risks connected to the environment, risks to which this community of women and men responded by signing the important Paris Agreement this past April.

But there are also risks connected to other events that combine to make the future seem more a time of concern than of hope. From risks connected to natural disasters, one of which Italy experienced a few weeks ago in Amatrice, Cumuli,

and Arquata, to the great questions concerning migration and the problems it instills in the hearts of people, the questions it raises, the difficulties it presents.

The future has thus become more and more a place to doubt, to fear. Yet we need to choose the road of hope, the road of possibility, the road of opportunity. The problems are not in fact theoretical problems that need to be tackled by an assembly of experts. These problems have a face: it is the face of Omran, the Syrian boy, shell-shocked, covered in blood, looking with his big eyes not so much at the photographer's lens as at the hearts of each one of us; it is the eyes of Nadia, the Yazidi girl whom I met yesterday, who escaped from the violence of Daesh, and is today a courageous witness of a battle on behalf of human rights, of women's rights, of freedom.

They are challenges and threats for which borders no longer exist. They are in the hearts of our cities, and sometimes on the outskirts of European cities that have often forgotten the true sense of risk inside our borders rather than outside them. Every reference to what happened between Paris and Brussels is deliberate.

I thus wondered, in conveying the greetings of Italy, which voice from Rome I should bring to these issues. It would be nice, of course, to share with you the words of hope and also of pride that characterize the concrete acts of saving hundreds of thousands of human lives from the Mediterranean – lives otherwise condemned by desperation – by the Italian women and men wearing the uniform of the Navy or the Coast Guard.

It would be nice to bring to each of you the pride and the voice of the Italians who work in the field of culture, education, and research; of Italians who, together with other Europeans, are leading the European mission that, in a few weeks, will see for the first time a European spacecraft land on Mars, on October 19, in exactly one month: a sign of the research that is making Europe not only a place of technocrats and bureaucrats but also a place looking toward the future.

Yet I would like to propose a different, even provocative image. The image of Rome that I would like to propose is that of Aeneas. Aeneas is the man of the journey. Mythology is filled with examples of people who set out on journeys. Some set out on a journey to return home, like Odysseus. And some, like Aeneas, chose to journey to create a new city, a new civilization. Aeneas sets out on a journey carrying on his shoulders his ailing father. A sign of a generation that is not afraid to assume its responsibilities and that believes that the experience of the elderly is still an absolute value, and will go so far as to bear on their shoulders the added burden of history. Aeneas is the man who guarantees his son Ascanius the possibility of going on to live and to found the great history of Rome. But Aeneas is the man who, in the foundation myth, is the bearer of *pietas*, the sense of profound respect, halfway between the religious value and the profound sense of cultural identity that make a community worthy of being called a community. And this is why, to my mind, it is essential that we tackle the challenge launched this morning from this podium by Barack Obama with the great value of *pietas* and the building of communities to which the myth of Aeneas refers.

This is how Italy will tackle the challenges of 2017: by participating in the United Nations Security Council (a Council that will see a new Secretary-General), sharing responsibility with the Netherlands, in the conviction and with the assumption of responsibility that the Sustainable Development Goals, the challenges associated with environmental and technological sustainability, that the building of an ever stronger community will reflect the values that have made our history great. Italy will participate in 2017 in the life of the international community by hosting on March 25 the member Countries of the European Union for the sixtieth anniversary of the signing of the European Treaty – a major date – to make of Europe not an evocation of history but rather a new chapter in a book that must be written with more ideals, more dreams, more horizons, and more vision; not just a tiring and repetitive day-by-day listing of rules by select bureaucracies. Italy will participate by leading the works of the G7, which will take place on a splendid stage – in Sicily, a land of great culture and great values; by the Greek theatre in Taormina, facing Mount Etna and the Mediterranean Sea that bathes the shores of this extraordinary region – focusing the agenda on the actions we have discussed today: increasing contributions to development cooperation as well as investments in education, because we must not forget that if there is a terrorist problem originating in theaters of war there is also a terrorist problem originating in the abandoned outskirts of our cities, and the only weapon that can counter this terrorism is a giant investment in education, in human capital.

We are very proud that the Italian Government has approved a law, with the support of the representatives of Parliament, determining that for every euro invested in security, policing, cyber-technology and cyber-security, one euro must be invested in culture, education, the creation of nursery schools, theaters, places

of the spirit and the soul because this is another way to fight the crisis of our era. And we will make the G7 an important occasion to reflect on values of identity and culture: from the challenge of food in the twin sense of the fight against poverty and starvation on the one hand, and the value of food security and health awareness on the other. But at the same time we are convinced that the challenge of the Security Council, the challenge of Europe, and the challenge of the G7 share the same root and have the same blueprint. We have the duty as Italians to bring our voice and our contribution into the United Nations in choosing and identifying ancient values with a new inflection. Today the *pietas* of Aeneas has become the occasion for building a new world based on hope and not on resentment, hatred, and anger. Our people continue to work, our women and men who serve the ideals of peace; our women and men in diplomacy and politics; the women and men who serve our Country by wearing a uniform in Afghanistan, in Somalia, protecting the Mosul Dam in an area fundamental to the future of our planet and at the same time in the Balkans, in particular in Serbia. They are security professionals with an added gear: the priority they place on humanity. These women and men who make us proud to belong to Italian history know that we do not come from nothing, but rather from the tradition to which I have referred and that finds its highest expression in the Mediterranean Sea. The Mediterranean is the sea that the Romans called “Mare Nostrum” – our sea. It is the sea where today hundreds of thousands of people seek refuge as they flee from war, from hunger, from poverty. More and more it is up to us to take on the responsibility for that part of the world.

Since the intervention last year, we can record progress in Libya, but too little has still been done by the international community, and by Europe in particular, to make the Mediterranean a place where we stake the challenge of dignity because,

if we do not prioritize the values of humanity and *pietas* in that geographic area, in that tiny plot, in that corner of the world, we will have betrayed our tradition. This is why Italy accepts the challenge laid down by the President of the United States to this Assembly today, in saying that we will always be on the side of democracy, of freedom, of values, of ideals, with the concreteness that stems from those who have a great dream, a great horizon, but also at the same time have the deep desire to make politics a noble and concrete activity, by intervening without leaving the responsibility to others and fully embracing the deeper meaning of a challenge that we, for our part, call humanity.

My best wishes to all of you in your work.