

Message of

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President of the Italian Republic

for the opening of ESOF2010

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Il Presidente della Repubblica

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Ladies and gentlemen

I am very glad to have the opportunity of welcoming to Italy and Turin all the distinguished participants to the European Science Open Forum 2010.

Let me start by expressing my best wishes for a profitable work to the eminent and the young scholars, and to all those who made possible this quite impressive Forum. It is impressive because of the number of researchers summoned here, the outstanding achievements of many of them, the variety of disciplines and the large presence of junior scientists. What makes ESOF unique in the international landscape is its capability of putting in touch different research worlds and actors. And this we need, if we want to create the conditions for extracting from the growth of knowledge its full potential for social development.

Chancellor Angela Merkel, when arguing in favor of more public investment in research and higher education even in times of economic crisis, recently stated that "Education and research are the pillars of the future sustainability of our society". I would like to make a crucial addition: of our European society, and of the social model which underpins it. Europe as a whole cannot count on natural resources or underpaid labor, while a qualified human capital and a knowledge-driven economy are to be our main resources now and for the future. These assets must be developed by investments from various sources in a favorable framework of rules. Jeffrey Sachs recently wrote that "governments should explain, and citizens should understand, that mere economic policy cannot do much in the short term to create stable high-quality jobs [...] we need good schools, advanced technology, adequate infrastructures and injections of private capital, factors which are all the result of years of constant and stable investments, both public and private". We may well say the same about research and innovation policies, which require a patient, long term, multi-level and multi-actor commitment.

Luckily "Made in Europe" science is alive and vibrant, and you prove it. But if we want European science to regain the pivotal role it played in the past, we simply need more Europe. As I have recently repeated in a speech to the US

Congress, by Europe I do not mean a collection of Nation-states, but a united political subject. Europe can do much more and much better only if we strengthen our unity and integration.

The same holds true for scientific and technological research. No single European country can generate the investments in research which are needed to achieve the true excellence of results we should aim at. There are positive signs in this direction. The European Commission has deployed and will deploy a series of policy tools and programmes devoted to foster common projects and networks of researchers and centers, to support the mobility of senior and, in particular, junior researchers and students. Other actors, such as regional governments and foundations, can and do contribute to this integration process. I am happy to see that ESOF is also helping in this direction, with the "Career Programme" devoted to young researchers, from Europe and the world, and also through the new "Science to Business" programme, devoted to bridging the gap between the production of knowledge and its economic application. And I am also happy to learn that the continuation of these efforts, together with the capitalization of the Esóf 2010 results, will be jointly supported by a group of European foundations in the context of Euroscience.

But we all know that while all this is very important, it is not enough. We need a common awareness that nation-state based research will no longer work in the future for Europe as the main engine of the growth of knowledge.

At the same time, the need for a truly European research strategy does not contrast with the awareness that scientific Europe must operate in a cosmopolitan context. This is not a contradiction. A more integrated European scientific community, like a more integrated political union, should also be more capable of renovating the historical, fundamental transatlantic bridge with the US, and reinforce the new bridges with the brilliant scientific communities which are growing in the rest of the planet. President Obama recently reiterated his deep conviction that a strong, integrated Europe is a fundamental component of a multilateral international order. I simply add that a more integrated European scientific community is a fundamental element for stronger multilateral research relations.

We cannot, however, expect this to happen only as result of a top-down process, led from above. The European project has to be promoted thanks to the emergence of a truly European civil society and scientists, with their constant drive to overcome boundaries and barriers, can play an important role in helping European society to remain truly open and tolerant. In order for

this to happen, we need events such as ESOF which can reach out to the larger public opinion. Under this respect, I found interesting also the "Science and the City" programme. Cities have always played an essential role in the growth of science, from its very birth as a human endeavor. I am glad that the host city, Turin, with its scientific traditions and its current role in the techno-scientific field, is proving once again capable of organizing and supporting complex events.

Ladies and gentlemen, let me finish by saying again that I would really be happy to be there with you in the next days, also because I am sure that there is much to learn from your lectures and workshops. My intellectual curiosity would surely lead me to take advantage of a "Pizza with the Prof" meeting – and let me thank the organizers for choosing this now globalized dish invented in my hometown, Naples, as a symbol of that informal exchange and mutual enrichment between different generations of scholars which is one of ESOF inspirations. I wish you again some very productive, and hopefully pleasant, working days in Turin.