

WELCOMING ADDRESS OF THE PRESIDENT
OF THE ITALIAN REPUBLIC
GIORGIO NAPOLITANO
AT THE STATE DINNER IN HONOUR OF THE G8 HEADS OF
STATE, OF INVITED HEADS OF STATE AND GOVERNMENT
AND OF HEADS OF INTERNATIONAL ORGANIZATIONS

L'Aquila, 9 July 2009

Distinguished Presidents,
Honorable Prime Ministers,
Distinguished Participants in the G8 initiatives,

I extend a most cordial welcome to you on behalf of the country which I represent in its unity, as provided by our Constitution.

The sense of hospitality and the spirit of friendship evident around these meetings reflect the feelings of Italians, in whose name I thank you once more for accepting Prime Minister Berlusconi's proposal to hold the G8 here in L'Aquila. It was a gesture of great

sensibility on your part and of solidarity with the populations recently struck by an earthquake in a city and region which we hold very dear.

The keen interest felt by Italians in observing – broad-mindedly and without any trace of provincialism – this extraordinary international gathering reflects the history of our people. Over the centuries it has, more than other people, mixed with the rest of the world and was marked by the cosmopolitanism of his intellectuals, artists and scientists. And millions of Italian emigrants have left lasting traces in many countries in Europe and the Americas.

Today we feel ourselves called on to face together a moment of grave economic and social difficulty but also to seize a historic opportunity for change in our vision and governance of the world.

Last month, the 65th anniversary of the historic landing of Allied Forces in Normandy was celebrated before the Heads of State and Government of the United States, France, Great Britain and Canada. The Normandy operation opened the way to the final defeat of Nazism and Fascism. The war, which would soon come to an end,

had known no boundaries and spared no continent. The most far-sighted minds of the time accordingly drew the conclusion that the world had become one and that henceforth we would need a world-wide thinking.

But the situation soon changed with the advent of the Cold War and with the world's division into opposing blocs. East and West entered into confrontation with one another and at their side the Third World took on a profile of its own. Many decades were to pass before all parties acknowledged the growing interdependence bringing closer together the farthest reaches of a world that had once more appeared "but one". Later still, we came to know it as a "global" world.

The financial and economic crisis we have experienced over the past year irrefutably proves that what we have to deal with and to govern is a global world. No one country and no one continent can go it alone. No directorate of seven or eight economic powers and nations can ensure the world's growth, salvation and future of the world. New, leading actors have come onto the scene and their role must be recognized fully; at the same time a voice must be given to the countries that

have been left furthest behind on the path to development, to the least-favoured people, many of whose lives are blighted by poverty and hunger.

Let us then draw inspiration from the intuitions and the most far-sighted of the decisions that emerged shortly before the end or in the immediate aftermath of the Second World War, when the United Nations Organization was born, and even earlier the Bretton Woods Institutions were founded. Much has been built since but alas not a little has been lost recently. As the present crisis has shown, key rules of conduct have been abandoned, important common responsibilities have been forgotten and elements of disorder and injustice have been allowed to grow and finally to explode, causing heavy damage to economies and populations, particularly to the weakest among them.

We must therefore find solutions to the present crisis, remove its root causes and prevent similar crises occurring again; even adopting a set of more severe rules and standards regarding the conduct of international business and finance. And that is important also in view of the supreme objective of consolidating global peace.

At the same time, the recovery and development of our economies imply answers to new and increasingly pressing challenges, starting with safeguarding the environment in the context of the hazards of climate change. The path we should follow is not only that of immediate and partial agreements : we must instead move to reform and strengthen international institutions and to support integration and cooperation trends at continental and regional scale. That is the space in which a united Europe can play its new role, one in which we strongly believe.

One of the great protagonists of the Bretton Woods Conference, John Maynard Keynes, paid a significant tribute – at the closing Plenary Session - to the results reached by the 44 countries which had worked together in amity and unbroken concord, and concluded : “If we can continue in a larger task, as we have begun in this limited task, there is hope for the world.” Ladies and Gentlemen, that is the hope which we need to revive and which, I am certain, now guide your proceedings.

The stakes are very high and the test very hard. But in the reconciliation between civilisations who have met

and clashed in the course of history, in the cooperation between the civilisations you represent in all their richness and diversity, may the necessary resources be found to ensure the future of human coexistence and of peace and justice between nations. That is the message – auspice and trust - I extend to you in the name of Italy.