



**CLOSING CEREMONY
OF THE 2024-2025 ACADEMIC YEAR**

PRESIDENT'S ADDRESS

ROBERTO ANTONELLI

Honourable President of the Republic, Honourable Ministers, Distinguished Authorities, Dear Members, Ladies and Gentlemen,

First and foremost, I would like to express my heartfelt thanks to the President of the Republic for his presence today, as every year, at the Closing Ceremony of the Academic Year, during which, along with an overview of the activities undertaken, the Prize of the President of the Republic, the Prize of the Minister of Culture, the Linco Prize and the Antonio Feltrinelli Prizes will be awarded. The Feltrinelli Prizes are the most valuable recognition at the national level for the value, eloquence, prestige, and excellence of the award winners; not coincidentally, they were defined the Italian Nobel Prizes.

Grievously, as we have been compelled to do for several years now, we must begin our Closing Ceremony by recalling the crisis that is tragically disrupting the life of Europe, the neighboring Middle East, and Gaza especially, and that has ramifications affecting large parts of the world, starting from Africa. With remarkable foresight, Pope Francis defined it a world war in pieces and devoted many efforts, as President Mattarella and Pope Leo XIV are now doing, to achieve a beneficial resolution, achieve Peace. Before our own eyes, a world war in pieces that involves us all and could turn into a global war is unfolding. Therefore, we will be discussing from a moral, economic, social, and religious perspective on the topics of war and peace at an international conference in early December. This will

be an opportunity to analyze the situation in depth and attempt to contribute to the *Science Diplomacy* already practiced in past years.

Given the current outlook, measures are urgently needed to overcome all the institutional constraints that prevent Europe from acting as a cohesive and unified entity on the political, social, and military levels, alongside what this would entail from an economic, scientific, cultural, and educational point of view, both in the short- and in the long-term. The Accademia Nazionale dei Lincei has often argued in support of this claim, even since President Emeritus Alberto Quadrio Curzio made the proposal of Eurobonds. Most European governments seem determined to untie the knots that have until today prevented the achievement of the full potential of a political system created to peacefully overcome, for the first time in history, the nationalisms that led Europe to ruin and self-destruction during the first half of the twentieth century. We owe this system - we will never get tired of stating this - to the strategic vision of three great Europeanists, Schumann, Adenauer, and De Gasperi, as well as to the ideal and planning contribution of Luigi Einaudi, who re-founded the Academy alongside Benedetto Croce, at the time President of the Republic, and inspired the authors of the *Manifesto di Ventotene*, Ernesto Rossi, Altiero Spinelli and Eugenio Colorni to whom today's Europe owes so much.

But will this renewed willingness suffice, or will it fade under the pressure of private interests and the various nationalisms and sovereignties? Timing is of utmost importance, and decisions are urgent. The President of the Republic stated it clearly a few weeks ago in Coimbra, and repeated it on May 21 during his visit to the European institutions: "The risks of immobilism on the future of the internal market are well identified in the Draghi Report and the Letta Report: the potential consequences for Europe, such as a retreat in the widespread welfare or an irreversible departure from the technological frontier, would increase its vulnerability on strategic and geopolitical levels, reducing its ability to counter the current and so alarming disturbances of the international order."

Transitioning from a functional to a federal European Union is a complex and difficult process that would also require the audacity of new solutions. Indeed, as a great English historian, Arnold Joseph Toynbee, said and as another great proponent of European unity, the German philologist and critic Ernst Robert Curtius, echoed, there are times when a society is faced with an existential challenge. We now find ourselves in one of these defining moments. *Finis Europae* is not inevitable, as asserted by some: averting it will depend on the commitment of us all and our actions, in an effort that will also be required to avoid substituting the nationalisms of the nineteenth century, the tragedies of the twentieth century and the new nationalisms, for another, perhaps a broader, European nationalism, an unwitting heir to the conceptualization that sees Europe as a fortress or that only focuses on the worst aggressive impulses that have characterized it in past centuries.

The Accademia Nazionale dei Lincei was born to research *in naturalibus*. Yet, since the presidency of Quintino Sella, who re-founded the Academy after the unification of Italy and whose bicentennial we will celebrate in two years, research in the natural sciences has been joined by research in the humanities more fundamental than ever in the current global outlook. The reassertion and promotion of the very own values of European civilization (starting with scientific research, democracy, tolerance, laicity, freedom, equality, and solidarity) and of the intrinsic connection linking the natural sciences and the humanities arise again, with greater reason, as an essential task for the social function of the Academy. We are also living in an especially challenging period due to the rise of new media (social media) and new technological tools (such as Artificial Intelligence), which, alongside promising positive revolutionary practices and developments, pose serious challenges to essential values of European identity, starting from the management and control of data and news, and thus the relationship with democracy and with the historical-critical attitude to which our civilization owes so much and which we must jealously preserve in educational programs. During the last academic year, all the main conferences of the Academy held on Fridays have been devoted, not surprisingly, to the changes brought to various areas of science by Artificial Intelligence. This is also precisely the reason why we supported, along with our Nobel laureate Giorgio Parisi and the Academies of France, Germany, and Spain, the establishment of a European AI Office, designed with the model of CERN of Geneva in mind, as proposed by President Ursula von der Leyen.

We all know that the development of scientific research is essential for the future of Italy and Europe. Despite the support provided by the PNRR, much work still lies ahead to not fall behind other Western and Asian countries. The documents produced by the working group promoted by Ugo Amaldi for the strategic and therefore multi-year funding to support research in Italy and Europe (the *Programma ventennale per la ricerca pubblica dell'UE*) have been forwarded to the other European Academies and to Minister Bernini, whom I would like to thank for the attention paid to our proposals on research and on university and for a fruitful dialogue, on multiple levels, as also demonstrated by the approval of the amendment on the new contracts for researchers. I would also like to dwell on another, by no means of secondary importance, point on which the Academy has been moving: the welcoming of researchers fleeing from the US, averse to an Administration that is seriously threatening the independence and freedom of research, and the parallel need for the return of our best researchers, pressured abroad by the lack of infrastructure and work opportunities. Many positive changes have already been made thanks to the PNRR and other specific provisions, also fostered by Europe, but much could and should still be done to catch up with the delay begun in the 1930s due to the exodus of our scientists caused by the fascist dictatorships when European science was still an

unconditional leader in the world. With serious difficulties, we are continuing the journey to find new forms of funding for research, in addition to public funding.

Thanks to the work of the University and Research Committees chaired by Guido Martinelli and Annalisa Rosselli, we have started a productive confrontation with ANAC and the Ministry of Education, University, and Research on the procurement policy of universities and research centres, which in its current state is inadequate compared to the policies of other European countries, and that must be freed from unnecessary constraints. Further, we have begun a confrontation with telematic universities, and we are planning a meeting on the dismantling of university bureaucracy in order to free all the energies of a faculty of prime quality as proved by international rankings. We also hope for a fruitful confrontation on the amendments to Law 240 that the proposed reform of competitions proves to have begun with good prospects but still requires further review.

Precisely because of the current great global challenge, in addition to what has been discussed in the many symposia, seminars, and conferences, the Academy has devoted and continues to devote special attention to initiatives on issues that require a long-term perspective and are embedded in a systemic logic. I am referring to the cycle of conferences named the *Future of Humanity* [*Futuro dell'umanità*] and *Futuro dell'Europa*. Regarding the *Future of Humanity*, we have just concluded the conferences *Viral Emergencies: New Challenges Ahead* [*Emergenze virali: le nuove sfide*] curated by Paolo Costantino and Gerry Melino and *Materie prime critiche per l'energia* curated by Gaetano Guerra. For the cycle *Futuro dell'Europa*, we have concluded the first cycle of conferences named *Le Accademie e il futuro dell'Europa*, with lectures given by the Presidents of the major European national academies. As we do each year, we intervened on the sustainability and environmental discourse by hosting an international conference for the World Environment Day titled *Frane: cosa sappiamo e cosa facciamo per difenderci; cosa dovremmo sapere e fare per difenderci meglio*, and another for the 2025 World Water Day focused on Glacier Preservation.

These are just a few examples of the Science Diplomacy attitude that the Academy has been successfully undertaking for several years now thanks in part to our Foreign Secretary, Cristina Marcuzzo, and our outstanding International Relations Office. The topics covered in our conferences and in G7 and G20 meetings are often quite sensitive because the boundary between science and politics is sometimes quite slim. Since the time of Federico Cesi and Galileo Galilei, the key focus of the Academy has always been scientific research and evidence, though inevitably complex due to the very nature of science which proceeds gradually and produces results that are sometimes confirmable only over time. Therefore, the consequences, decisions, and responsibilities of our documents are based on the facts and their most correct scientific interpretation. Yet, the operational consequences are the competence and responsibility of political power, even if operating so that public opinion is correctly warned of what is at stake pertains to our scope as per our mission. In these past years, this has been the case for Xylella,

the vaccines, the environment, and the lack of funding for research. This year, the conference named *La crisi dei servizi sanitari universalistici: paesi a confronto* and promoted by the Health Committee and its President Carlo Patrono, has produced a statement on the crisis of public health in Italy, its delays and the dangers that overhang it. On this topic, we shall proudly mention Minister Schillaci's availability for an upcoming discussion which will also be an occasion to understand the motivations behind Italy's decision to abstain from the vote for the WHO Pandemic Agreement. Similarly, the document on end-of-life issues handles its topic with the same care, being it such a divisive topic. Not surprisingly, the Bioethics Committee of the Academy, chaired by Antonino Cattaneo, worked on the document for about two years.

This is a sign of how a centuries-old institution directs its service towards institutions and primarily towards the Presidency of the Republic, which decreed in 2006 for the initiatives of the Academy *L'alto Patronato Permanente*. Once again, we would like to thank President Mattarella for the careful attention with which he follows our work. We would also like to thank all the key institutions of the Republic, from the Constitutional Court to the Supreme Court of Cassation, the Council of State, and the Court of Auditors, which has honored us with a lecture of their own given by its Presidents Margherita Cassano, Luigi Maruotti, and Guido Carlini. In this regard, I would like to point out that thanks to the support of President Lorenzo Fontana we have signed an agreement with the Chamber of Deputies, which just came into effect since has been activated with a lecture by the fellow Massimo Inguscio on the concept of time, while we hope for a similar agreement with the Senate.

Let us never forget that we are an institution at the service of all citizens, that is therefore open to their requests and expectations, with the duty to counteract the many false news stories on the Web and to respond to society's increasingly strong desire for keeping up with progress. In this regard, through its Foundation *I Lincei per la Scuola*, the Academy pursues its duty even at the level of specific bodies such as schools, for which we have organized courses for STEM subjects, Italian language and literature, computer science, and even a course for kindergartens on correct lifestyles.

On the topic of schools, we must mention the recent document titled *Materiali per il dibattito pubblico* proposed by the Ministry of Education which addresses an approach to debate that we hope for: we will devote the attention that such topic deserves during a conference, as we believe that a type of education harmonized on an European and global scale is needed.

For several years now, we sought to remove from public, and hopefully also from policymakers', opinion the image of an out-of-reach scientific academy with centuries-old prestige, the oldest in the world, but precisely because of such excellence and difficulty of the research it hosts and promotes, too distant from the society and immersed in a self-referential dimension. Indeed, among what I believe has affected the ways in which people now perceive the Academy, also

with the help of a new commitment to communication, which we owe to our head press officer, Mariella Di Donna, there is a continuous attention to the interconnection between science, society, and development, the seminar series of the "*Centro interdisciplinare linceo Beniamino Segre*" the series *L'Accademia incontra*, the dissemination of each event via streaming platforms, the use of social media, the organization of many events open to the general public, the *Lecture Corsiniane*, the *Lectio brevis*, the simultaneous translation of specialized conferences, in short, the unlocking of all our doors, including those that hold extraordinary artistic and bibliographical treasures in the Corsiniana Library, the "*Leoni Caetani*" Foundation, and the *Villa Farnesina*.

Thanks to the scientific and artistic exhibitions, no longer limited to exceptional events, Palazzo Corsini and Villa Farnesina are now visited and explored with interest by all citizens. The opening of Villa Farnesina to the first three pathways of the *Artesia - Progetti Terapeutici museali*, aimed at transforming the museum into an open and welcoming environment where the artistic experience is not only aesthetic but also an opportunity for well-being for people with cognitive disabilities, was emblematic and highly significant. We owe this initiative once again to President Emeritus Lamberto Maffei and to the President of the Bioethics Committee, Antonino Cattaneo, as well as to the expertise and care of the Curator Virginia Lapenta.

However, I must mention the intense activity of the *Villa Farnesina* Committee, including Antonio Sgamellotti's interdisciplinary research on the decarbonization and sustainability of the Villa, and the discovery of artifacts of the seventeenth century, which has been the inspiration for the Conference on the Farnese period of Villa Farnesina, curated by Alessandro Zuccari.

Since 2016, every year has been marked by more than an exhibition: from *I libri che hanno fatto l'Europa* to the *Trittico dell'ingegno Italiano*, the latest promoted by President Emeritus Alberto Quadrio Curzio to celebrate the centennials of Leonardo, Raffaello, and Dante; to the next exhibitions that will be devoted to three pivotal years in the history of Italy and Europe: 1525, the year of Pavia battle that precedes the anniversary of the Sack of Rome (1527), two turning points events of Italian and European history; 1626, year of birth of Christina, Queen of Sweden, who played an important role for Palazzo Corsini, where she lived, and above all for Italian and European cultural history because of her image as a free and freedom-seeking woman. All these initiatives are supported - and this needs to be emphasized - by Intesa Sanpaolo and the Association "*Amici dell'Accademia dei Lincei*" chaired with a constant commitment by Umberto Quadrino.

The exhibition marking the centenary of Marco Polo's death, titled *Le vie dell'Oriente... e dell'America*, which opened in October 2024, closed in January 2025 and it has been requested by other cultural institutions on a loan. Further, this exhibition represents a possible drive towards the acknowledgment in school curricula of the importance of such a figure, Marco Polo, and book, *Il Milione*. Both are very representative of Italian civilization and its openness to the world. Indeed,

during *Lo dicono i Lincei*, one of the talks promoted by the "*Corriere della Sera*", Daniele Manca proposed the introduction of a *Marco Polo Day* [Marco Polodì] modeled after the *Dante Day* [Dantedì].

The exhibition dedicated to the dialogue between the Renaissance magnificence of the Villa Farnesina and Gianfranco Baruchello, a great contemporary artist, has just ended: this was the first experiment in this regard and the beginning of a path that we will continue. On the other hand, the exhibition dedicated to the celebration of the centenary of the "*Leone Caetani*" Foundation and its founder, Duke Caetani, will end in the Corsiniana Library on June 29. The Duke has been one of the greatest European scholars of Islam, and he was reinstated as fellow of the Academy by the General Assembly last March after his expulsion decreed by the fascist dictatorship and the king. Further, an exhibition dedicated to the trains of the Popes named *Sulle vie del Giubileo. Pellegrini, Treni, Papi* will be inaugurated on July 2. This exhibition will open the activities dedicated by the Academy to the Jubilee celebration, from the conference on pilgrimage routes to the exhibition on prayer books, the first in the world dedicated to *Books of Hours* [Libri d'ore]. Thus, an exhibition that promises to be a significant event, thanks to the assiduous care of the Library Director, Marco Guardo, and all the staff of the Academy, who do their utmost to ensure the success of the events with a dedication that goes beyond their duties.

Exhibitions of the Academy have always been designed following the highest scientific standard and have therefore led to incredible developments as the attribution and the recovery of undervalued works, such as Leonardo's Mona Lisa Torlonia. Further, the attribution has been also confirmed by studies funded by Banca Sella and presented at a conference held at the Academy. And yet, our exhibitions have always been also designed to appeal to the broader public, and to young people and students. The number of visitors and the profit realized allow the organization of new exhibitions. The average number of visitors recorded per exhibition is 25,000 persons: a remarkable figure, considering the need to preserve Villa Farnesina and the Library. Thanks to their quality, which is not only purely spectacular but even able to provide a clear and compelling sense and narrative thread of the exhibited materials, the exhibitions of the Academy have opened a strand entirely consistent with its history and its new horizons.

Due to time constraints, I will not be able to talk about the many international specialized conferences and seminars sponsored by the Academy. You will find them in the booklet at your disposal. It will suffice to mention that every week, excluding the month of August, an average of two to three events are held, most of them even broadcasted. I will limit myself to mention those held last month: *La Interdisciplinarietà Sistemica: la Fisica Matematica di Michele Caputo per l'Economia Strutturale e la Geodinamica*; *Geodesy and Planetary sciences: a Geodetic conference for Geodesy and Astronomy*; *Viral Emergencies: New Challenges Ahead* [Emergenze virali: le nuove sfide]; *Allostery turns 60: A discussion meeting on the past and the future of Allostery*; *Materie Prime Critiche per l'Energia*; *Le Sinestesie: fenomeno percettivo e/o*

artificio retorico?; Meccanica Quantistica: da filosofia della natura a tecnologia del futuro. Furthermore, I would like to mention our efforts to celebrate the anniversaries of Giovanni Gentile, Guglielmo Marconi, and Giacomo Matteotti, Luigi Einaudi, the excavations of the Italian mission at Ebla, and the centenary of Quantum Physics. The organizations of the celebrations of the latter are being overseen by fellow Massimo Inguscio, who is also preparing the celebrations for the bicentenary of the death of Alessandro Volta. These events have all in common a characteristic which distinguishes the Accademia Nazionale dei Lincei from other national Academies: the close relationship between the natural sciences and the humanities, as well as the consequent practice of interdisciplinarity, which is increasingly necessary right now thanks to the extraordinary and rapid scientific and technological development. On the very topic of Interdisciplinarity is based the *Biblioteca digitale lincea*, which is our contribution to the PNRR, and it is where the digitalized versions and the metadata of the manuscripts up to the fourteenth century of the Corsiniana Library, the publications of the Academy up to 1999, and the entire collection of the drawings of the "*Fondo Corsini*" are collected.

Finally, as I do every year, I would like to extend special thanks to the Association "*Amici dell'Accademia dei Lincei*," which, thanks to the guidance of its President Umberto Quadrino, is continually including new Friends and is always present in every moment of the life of the Academy with both its own initiatives and the support of the activities of the Academy itself.

Due to time constraints, I will have to refrain from presenting the new reforms implemented to modernize and renew the Academy, starting with the attention devoted to gender equality, according to which the Statute was modified, and I will not be able to mention the many publications of the Academy and the excellent beginning of the activity of the *Young Academy* [*Centro Interdisciplinare Linceo Giovani*] from which we expect so much. Nor will I be able to mention all the Members and friends who have contributed to the activities of the Academy. I will therefore limit myself to mention the Vice President and President of the Class of Physical Sciences Carlo Doglioni, without whom the Academy would not be so attentive and active, the Presidency Council, to whom I truly owe so much, all the Committees of the Academy (almost twenty), the working groups for the G7 and G20, and the General Director, Dr. Francesco Paolo Fazio, to whom we owe the rigor, efficiency, and serenity that allow us to work so intensely.

And thank you all for your attention.