



ACCADEMIA NAZIONALE DEI LINCEI

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Opening address of the President of the Accademia Nazionale dei Lincei

Alberto Quadrio Curzio

at the Conference of the

Prime Minister

Matteo Renzi

on

Science, culture and art: the role of Italy

1) Mr Prime Minister, I am glad to welcome you to the Accademia Nazionale dei Lincei; our Sodality holds in high regard your institutional concern towards this Academy that ranks in our Republic's classification as a scientific and cultural "**institution of High relevance**" whose **statutory purpose** is - I quote – "to promote, coordinate, integrate and spread scientific knowledge at its highest level in the framework of the unity and universality of culture".

Our activity is carried out today under the aegis of the Ministry of Culture and National Heritage, here represented by Minister Dario Franceschini whom I warmly welcome together with the Minister for the University and Research Stefania Giannini.

Since 1992 the Academy stands as scientific and cultural advisor of the **President of the Republic** who, on his own initiative, has since 2006 granted the Academy his High permanent Patronage. This is recent history, yet it draws on a long-established custom dating back to the "Linco" Luigi Einaudi, President of the Italian Republic in 1947; this tradition has strengthened until recent times with presidents Carlo Azeglio Ciampi and Giorgio Napolitano and we trust it will continue with President Sergio Mattarella who has already visited us at the conclusion of the past academic year and who has also received me recently. These are the grounds on which the Lincei can provide public authorities (both on demand and on their own initiative) with opinions in the fields of their competence.

2) The Lincei can also boast a statute of autonomy that reflects a four-century long history that I know is held in high regard by President Renzi who, it should be remembered, was mayor of Florence, the city of freedom and of the Renaissance.

The Academy of the Lincei was indeed founded in the late Renaissance by Federico Cesi and was made famous by the universal genius of one of its most prominent fellows, the "Linco" Galileo Galilei; the Lincei were then re-founded by Quintino Sella and Terenzio Mamiani della Rovere in the Risorgimento. Suppressed by the fascist regime, the Academy was finally re-established with the Italian Republic by Benedetto Croce, Luigi Einaudi and Guido Castelnuovo.

The history of the Lincei, along with the scientific prestige of a large number of its fellows, has made the Academy an authoritative and worldwide recognized institution, acknowledged as an expression of cultural and scientific wisdom in its deep trust in the “**freedom of philosophizing in naturalibus**”, just to quote one of Cesi’s aphorisms on which we often happen to reflect.

The Accademia dei Lincei is well aware that cultural and scientific progress serves the common good and the human development. The Academy is also aware that it represents Italy before other National Academies in the liaisons with European and international academic institutions and in bilateral agreements with single national academies of other countries on which the policy and diplomacy in the field of science and culture often rely. The importance of such institutions is not only assessed through the indicators, albeit important, that are applied to the single scientists, but is also weighted by their capability to **unitarily represent the culture of a Nation and its history**.

3) For this reason, the subject “**Science, Culture and Art: the role of Italy**” that you have chosen for your Conference fully embraces our vocation, also in its referring to art. Such a vocation has a long-standing tradition in the Academy that I wish to continue and, if possible, reinforce by reasserting our joint competence to promote dialogue and put forward new issues abroad.

I am therefore particularly glad to announce, in your presence today, that 2017 is going to be a very important year for the Lincei as we shall host the «**G7 of the National Academies**» with the participation of representatives of many other academies, including those of emerging countries, as auditors.

In 2015, at the closing session of the G7 in Berlin, I could appreciate Chancellor Merkel’s active participation in the debate and I realized how close the collaboration between the German government and the German National Academy “Leopoldina” had been in the preparation of the scientific G7. When, in February, I take part in the G7 of the academies in Japan to submit our plans for 2017, I will be glad to say that our Prime Minister Matteo Renzi, in the presence of two ministers particularly close to the interests of the Lincei, has opened, after the President of the Academy, the year 2015-2016. I am sure this will have a substantial impact on my colleagues and the Japanese Prime Minister whom I presume and hope will attend the final meeting of the G7 of the academies as did Chancellor Merkel.

4) For these reasons the Lincei are now going to set to work in order to prepare some topics, to be presented at the 2017 G7 meeting, upon which the other Academies will no doubt agree to focus their attention.

One or more of these issues will eventually reach the **political and institutional Summit** only if the Prime Minister and his Ministers involved are fully informed of our work and are convinced that it is worthy of attention.

A particular topic is currently being considered: that of **Art Cities, their conservation and their resilience** in case of extreme natural events. We are confident that this subject will be accepted by the other academies throughout an interdisciplinary scientific-cultural approach; in fact Italy can offer the largest artistic and cultural heritage in the world (consider that only in Rome there are as many as 40 foreign academies and cultural institutions, many of which are represented here today); moreover, we have the appropriate skills and a worldwide

expertise in the artistic and cultural dialogue. To prepare for this issue we will promote an International Interdisciplinary Conference to be held on 11 and 12 October 2016 to coincide with the 50th anniversary of the floods in Florence and Venice. This event will take the title *Florence 1966 to 2016. Resilience of art cities to natural catastrophes: the role of Academies* and will be characterized by the participation of important national and foreign academies and of international institutions such as UNESCO and the InterAcademyPanel that groups 107 academies from all over the world.

At least a second topic will have to be developed soon and I hope this might embrace the interdisciplinary issue of **science and technology for the development** and quality of life, in relation to survival in the southern areas of the world (a subject already dealt with in the G7 of the Academies in Berlin) and / or aging in the northern countries.

5) Of course, the history of the Lincei will not end in 2017; accordingly, the Lincei should strengthen their relationship with the National Academies of the **emerging countries** for which Italy and Rome, because of their ancient history, are very appealing. We are a European and a Mediterranean country, and we should therefore make the most of our being a sort of “bridge” between the northern countries, with their science and techno-sciences, and the needs of the South in terms of development. In many of these more or less emerging countries Italy has always done well in the fields of our competence, from archaeology to medicine, as well as in humanitarian missions, for the sake of civilization.

The growth of northern countries cannot go on at the same pace as in the past, while the South must speed up its development. This is the 21st century challenge that we are called to meet by the United Nations’ recent Agenda for Sustainable Development of 2030.

There is then one more good reason to listen with deep interest and with an open mind to the Conference of President Renzi who, in his institutional appointment, has often indicated culture, in its widest meaning (including education on which the Lincei are also at work, thanks to a courageous initiative of President Lamberto Maffei), as one of his government’s missions and who has endeavoured also to reinforce Italy’s “bridging” role. Despite appearances or fabrications, Italy is a country to which our **young scientists** are deeply tied to; they are women and men who operate at the highest level of research in the world, as evidenced by this meaningful letter - which I shall now read out – that I have received, among the many messages of support, from a colleague of ours: a fellow of the Academy and an Italian woman.

«Dear President, dear Alberto, dear colleagues “Lincei”,
due to my commitments that keep me in Geneva, I cannot unfortunately be with you on the very special occasion of the visit of our Prime Minister.

I deeply regret to miss the words of President Renzi who, with his foresight, his brilliant intelligence, his enthusiasm and sense of humour, always knows how to convey a positive and encouraging message. Last July, during his visit to the CERN, the President has captivated our young researchers and managed to bring them faith in the future and motivation to move forward on the difficult path of the scientific research.

Best wishes to all of you for a pleasant and inspiring day. Fabiola Gianotti».

And now, Mr President, the floor is yours.