

Speech

Organization of American States



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THE ORGANIZATION OF AMERICAN STATES
VISIT OF H.E. CARLO AZEGLIO CIAMPI, PRESIDENT OF
THE ITALIAN REPUBLIC
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It is with great pride that I express, on behalf of the General Secretariat and of Secretary General Cesar Gaviria, a warm and cordial welcome to you, President Carlo Azeglio Ciampi, to Mrs. Franca Ciampi and to Minister Mario Baccini and the distinguished Delegation accompanying you.

This is the first time that a Head of the Italian State visits this House of the Americas. As was made clear by the welcoming committee of Ambassadors, this circumstance is highly valued by all the governments represented here.

Your presence in this House of the Americas has special and personal significance for me and for my wife Carol, since it affords me the opportunity as the grandson of the first full-term President (1948-1955) of the Republic that arose from the tumult of the Second World War, to receive you, Sir, the tenth President of that same Italian Republic (1999-2006).

Mr. President, before continuing, I wish to record that we grieve with you and with the people of Italy and of Iraq over the tragic deaths this week in Nasiriya.

Mr. President:

We welcome you to this historic House with admiration for your outstanding career: from soldier and man of the Resistance in the Second World War to a brilliant career as an economist and governor of the Bank of Italy, to public official and minister who made it possible for Italy to be eligible for the benefits of a single European currency, and who now as President guarantees the future of the Republic in a united and peaceful Europe.

We also welcome in you the country you represent, a country that has inspired peoples throughout the ages as a creative force in the arts, literature, banking and exploration, law, sciences and culture.

Italy has made many contributions to the Americas, but perhaps the most important has been the men and women who have themselves become part of this New World. Italy was by no means the only source of the large migratory movements that came to the Americas at the end of the nineteenth and the beginning of the twentieth centuries, but Italians were by far the largest single immigrant group to Argentina, and provided critical energy to Brazil and the United States, to Canada and Uruguay, Venezuela and generally throughout North and South America.

My grandfather's first book, published in 1900, *Un Principe Mercante*, chronicled the saga of millions of Italian peasants, textile workers, bricklayers, sailors, metalsmiths, miners, tailors and bakers who brought with them to the New World their culture of enterprise and production – who were, to use his image, merchant princes. In 1961, in prefacing a reprint of this book, he noted that the dynamic had changed. At the start of the twentieth century, migrants with less than modest means and little formal education were the driving force; fifty years later, center stage was occupied by engineers, administrators, physicists, entrepreneurs and technical specialists who were building with their American peers the infrastructure and institutions of modernity.

Today, Italy and the countries of the Americas enjoy a common foundation for participatory democracy, trade and direct investment, security and the rule of law. Italy has one of the world's leading economies, is a staunch ally of one of

our founding members, the United States, and plays a pivotal role in the European Union of which it now occupies the Presidency.

Today, the peoples of Europe and the Americas -- whether they be from the North, from the South, from the Center, or from the Caribbean -- can only gain by further strengthening their ties with each other.

Your Excellency:

Our Organization of American States is the oldest regional forum in the world and a privileged space for the articulation and integration of a crucible of races, languages and cultures which have a common heritage and which aspire to a shared destiny of liberty, justice and development.

Two circumstances in our current history are a source of much pride: the democratic system of governance that is today our common denominator and the various integration movements, true pillars of regional stability, which are gaining strength in all of our sub regions.

Of course, as in other parts of the world and even in Europe, progress has not been uniform and is not everywhere present at the same levels. In some of our member states, conflicts of various kinds persist while in others, problems are more latent, especially when poverty is widespread, financial burdens are out of balance, corruption gnaws away at the social fabric or educational systems are unable to prepare citizens to meet the challenges of this XXI century.

These myriad difficulties notwithstanding, the adoption in September 2001 of the Inter-American Democratic Charter provided definitive proof of a unanimous commitment by the nations of the Americas to democratic principles and values, with an emerging shared responsibility for peaceful solidarity.

Mr. President

The influence of the European Union in today's world is undeniable and for the majority of the member states of the OAS, the EU is a major trading partner and a principal source of direct investment.

Italy's standing as a founding member of the European Union and her accomplishments during her presidencies of the European union since the Treaty of Maastricht, first in 1996 and particularly now, since July, have sought to strengthen Europe's strategic position by institutionalizing dialogue and creating instruments of cooperation appropriate to the new realities in the Americas.

Even before she was granted the status of Permanent Observer by Resolution 70 of this Permanent Council in 1972, Italy followed developments in the hemisphere closely. Over three decades, we have had Italian participation in programs on education, fellowships, regional development, agriculture, communications, the strengthening of democracy, the Peace Fund and demining.

The visit to the OAS this September of a delegation from the European Union and Commission inspired and led by the Italian Presidency, expanded EU/OAS relations at the institutional level as well as Italian relations with members of this Council. The Conferenza Nazionale sull'America Latina held in Milan less than a month ago showcased new academic and commercial linkages.

This mutual respect and mutual influence is not of course entirely new. My grandfather's treatise on the principles of public finance was published in Spanish by Aguilar in 1948, the year he became President, as "Principios de Hacienda Publica." The book was so widely used in the Faculties of Law in Latin America that at the beginning of my diplomatic career, I was often mistaken for the author of that book. Thinking back, it has become clear to me that this was not even primarily a personal matter: I was in fact benefiting from the affection and respect most Latin Americans have for all things Italian. Indeed, I am sure that my Italian roots helped me, a proud citizen of the United States, to be elected to the post I now hold!

What is perhaps new in today's world situation is the growing realization that our

common civilization requires greater cooperation among all of us if it is to survive. As your Excellency said in your June 2 national day message this year, quoting the Luigi Einaudi who was your predecessor, "Gli stati esistenti sono polvere senza sostanza. . . . Solo l'unione puo farli durare. Il problema non è fra l'indipendenza e l'unione, è fra l'esistere uniti e lo scomparire."
("Existing states are as dust without matter. . . . Only unity can make them endure. The issue is not independence or union, it is whether to exist united or to disappear.")

Your Excellency President Ciampi:

We are confident that your visit will resonate significantly and reaffirm the strength and purposedynamism both sides of the Atlantic wish to imprint on ties between the Americas and of Europe.

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