



**Rome | 29-30 July 2021**

**THE SPEECH OF THE ITALIAN MINISTER OF CULTURE  
DARIO FRANCESCHINI**



CULTURE UNITES  
THE WORLD

ROME | 29-30 JULY

Mr. President, Ministers,  
Distinguished delegates.

We are very happy to welcome you to Italy, to Rome. Tomorrow our work sessions will take place in the galleries of **Palazzo Barberini**, among the masterpieces of **Caravaggio** and **Raphael** and right under the splendid fresco by **Pietro da Cortona**. Today, we wanted to open the G20 proceedings here on the **Colosseum arena**, the most symbolic place in our country and the heart of ancient Rome.

We meet at a crucial moment: the pandemic has made it even more evident how **interdependent** we are, how necessary it is for **countries to work together**: because global problems require global responses. At the same time, the pandemic has also made us realize how much **culture is the lifeblood of our lives**. The empty squares, closed museums and cinemas, theaters, libraries, have made our cities sad, dull. This is why we now know that culture will be the key to restarting, the engine of innovative, sustainable and balanced growth.

Today's appointment, therefore, fits fully into the G20 agenda and with the priorities indicated by the Italian Presidency: **People, Planet and Prosperity**. I thank **President Draghi** for believing in culture so much that he puts it at the center of his government's program and action, through the **National Recovery and Resilience Plan** and with this G20.

The **protection of cultural heritage**, the **technological and digital transition**, and the **cultural and creative industries** are all challenges that define our time. Challenges that can be faced only through a new season of **multilateralism** and **cooperation between peoples**. A global commitment to promote more culture, more education, more knowledge. Italy strongly believes in **cultural diplomacy** as a **bridge between peoples and nations**. Not only among the closest and most aligned countries. But also among nations that are distant and which, even in times of difficulty, can find and keep open a space for dialogue. It is our belief that they can find that space in culture. Because, well before government action, **culture speaks to the people**. The emotions that the Arts give us have the power to deliver the sense of a common destiny to the whole of humanity. It is a concept we strongly believe in. For this reason, during the Universal Expo in Milan in 2015, we invited ministers of culture from all over the world and in 2017, we hosted the first Culture G7 in history, in Florence.

For the **G20**, being able to build an **effective and innovative common agenda** together is an even



**CULTURE UNITES  
THE WORLD**

ROME | 29-30 JULY

greater challenge and we have all taken it up with enthusiasm. Because we know that culture has the power to unite the world.

I want to say it here, in the millenary setting of the Colosseum that projects the eternal force of history and the arts onto us: protecting the heritage of humanity means protecting humanity itself: its identity, histories, art, beauty. This is why when a thousand-year-old monument, an archaeological site, a museum, a contemporary creation, are threatened anywhere in the world, we all, wherever we live, feel wounded, we feel involved, it concerns us. Because we recognize that we are part of the same human family, whose history we share, traced since the beginning of our species by gestures of beauty such as the hands that paint on the walls of a cave. Those hands are the hands of all of us. For this reason, **protecting culture**, as UNESCO does, means **contributing to international dialogue**, to the **recognition and respect for diversity**.

Italy is proud to have called for the response of international organizations to threats affecting its heritage, from terrorism to natural disasters, and to illicit trafficking. **The Blue Helmets of culture**, national task forces that all 20 of us could form in coordination with UNESCO, aimed at protecting heritage in the face of calamities or after crises, can be a formidable answer. This was the spirit in Italy already after the end of the Second World War when, still in the midst of rubble and suffering, the constituent fathers included among the fundamental principles of the **Italian Constitution, Article 9** which reads: "The Republic promotes the development of culture and scientific and technical research. It protects the landscape and the historical and artistic heritage of the Nation."

After all, even today, after the pandemic, we are all like after a great war. We are living in a time of great concern but also of great hope. We know that worries must never prevail over hope. Culture will help us. It will be the decisive tool for economic growth and sustainable development of our societies. It is the frontier for building **innovation, creativity** and the **opportunities of the digital age**. It will be the memory of the past, but also the compass that will show us the course for the future.

Thank you. Grazie

**Dario Franceschini**  
Minister of Culture of Italy