

Rome, March 16<sup>th</sup> 2009

Dear all,

It is with sincere emotion that I talk to you, young representatives of eight great nations with the aim and responsibility of sustaining the world's economic and social progress. I apologize for not being there, but other important issues prevent me from being with you during this important G8 Event, which could have been a good chance to reciprocally get to know each other.

Knowledge: this is the key-word of the present and the future. Knowledge is based on meeting other people, sharing opinions and experiences; it means having access to awareness. Free circulation of ideas and experiences is the key to progress. Greeks, in ancient times, used to say: "Gignosko kai gignomai". To know in order to be. A thorough reciprocal acquaintance and cooperation with emerging nations is in fact the aim of the Heiligendamm Dialogue Process. Counterparts of this process are Brazil, China, India, Mexico and South Africa, countries representing alone almost half of the world's population. We cannot even imagine not interacting with them because it is on humans we have to focus.

The objectives and goals of the Declaration of the Millennium, eradicating poverty, fighting the most devastating diseases, guarantee education, gender equality and environmental sustainability, are the rules set by men to ensure a future to their own species. Among the crucial issues we find environment protection and climate change. The Kyoto Protocol, the meetings in Rio and Bali and the forthcoming in Copenhagen are the main phases of the uneasy path governments are facing in their effort to conciliate economic progress and the safeguard of environment. My idea of "sustainable development" is to preserve and bring value to the environment and make of it a concrete source of wealth. Resources are to be exploited, not wasted.

Large areas of Africa, Asia and South America are the victims of an unequal world wealth distribution. However, when I refer to resources I refer to both human and moral resources. These intangible assets, also protected by a UNESCO Convention in 2003, as local cultures, idioms and traditions, social customs and traditional handcraft, are elements of which these areas are rich. The combination of this heritage with the extraordinary environment is an opportunity that cannot be missed.

We still lack an essential condition: education and training; in a word, knowledge. It is our precise duty to spread knowledge, since it is an essential instrument to gain prosperity. We cannot let the present financial crisis worsen the situation of the already suffering populations. Often crisis is an opportunity to change: we have to exploit it and make labour regain its real value. Our society has abused of the opulence it is living in and thought financial markets could be exclusively based on money. We have now the opportunity to restart, to go back, rely on the unlimited and invaluable richness of human geniality.

I greet you, dear all, convinced that none better than You can conceive a development more respectful of the Planet and of its inhabitants' needs. Youngsters know that the destiny of the remotest place on Earth is equal to the destiny of the entire world.



Giorgia Meloni

Italian Minister of Youth Policies