

Madame Minister, Madame President, distinguished colleagues, students & guests, Ladies and Gentlemen,

I speak for everyone at the University of Udine when I say that we all personally feel very proud and honoured to welcome you to Palazzo Garzolini di Toppo Wasserman, for the momentous occasion of this G7 Higher Education Summit.

This Meeting is one of many events connected to the G7 in Taormina.

To underscore the global significance of our being Here, let me just mention that present now are representatives of over 100 universities and research institutes from Europe, North America, and Asia, and also, of more than 60 organisations from the sectors of Education, Economics, Politics, Administration and Culture.

Coming together like this provides a vital opportunity for engagement between universities, institutions and ministries of education from many countries, to develop a very supportive and fruitful relationship, as we work in unison to achieve universal access to learning.

The Jesuits realised long ago that the best strategy for assisting people in the world was giving them access to education, as the most powerful instrument to change the world and to give people power to unshackle themselves from ignorance and misery.

Later the Salesians maintained the Jesuit's mission, guaranteeing education for the children of the poorer classes.

Today all committed educators know that the transfer of knowledge empowers individuals, communities and entire societies to better themselves.

Having access to education, being able to read and write, being able to understand, to reason and evaluate the consequences of one's decisions, is totally empowering.

Education is the basis of democracy, self-determination, and freedom of choice, which gives people everywhere the capacity to make informed choices about the fundamental issues that govern their lives and futures, and those of their children.

Access to education creates a fertile field, where enlightenment can be cultivated, and this is the terrain on which to shape a fair and just society.

The fruit of this conference will be the manifesto of "Education for All – Actions for a Sustainable Future" - a set of principles and guidelines for Universities, Institutes of Higher Education and Ministries of Education throughout the world.

It carries symbolic significance that this manifesto be written here in Italy, home to the first university in the world, and especially for us, in Friuli Venezia Giulia, because of this region's unique role in Europe as meeting point of three different European cultures: Latin, Slavic and Germanic.

Education is the best way to equip forthcoming generations for the challenges of the future and to achieve a sustainable society.

The University is a key institution which enables social cohesion, and the formation and dissemination of truth via research, knowledge transfer and education.

This is an increasingly important role in this age, with new challenges for tolerance and integration.

Education for sustainability is an ideal coupling, because the greatest risk to Humankind - and to the planet - is the folly of not recognising the importance of sustainability.

Thanks go to our minister for her presence and the support of the Ministry of Education and Research.

Thanks also to the President of Friuli Venezia Giulia for her backing, as well as to the Fondazione Friuli.

Additionally thanks must go to CRUI, to the president Gaetano Manfredi and the board of CRUI, with whom we envisioned a project which sees the G7 as an imperative opportunity to debate and develop the direction in which collective interests can go hand in hand.

I wish most especially to express my gratitude to all of you here present, for your participation, for bringing your ideas and perspectives so generously to these round tables.

I would like to finish now, with one of my favourite quotes, which my experience has shown to be true:

One's mind, once stretched by a new idea, never returns to its original dimensions.

Long Live Education!!