

**SPEECH BY**  
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Mr. Chairman and dear friend,

let me express my appreciation to the Norwegian Presidency for the kind invitation to attend the 2009 Arctic Council Ministerial in Tromso.

I would like to greet also the former US Vice President Al Gore, the Members of the Arctic Council, the distinguished Representatives of the indigenous peoples and the Delegates of the Observers as well.

The new situation in the Arctic resulting from climate change and the dramatic increase in the rate of ice melting is a matter of growing concern not only in the Arctic region and underlines the geopolitical, economic, scientific interest of the High North. The Italian Government and the Italian scientific institutions pay a great attention to the issues concerning the Arctic and the surrounding areas. The Arctic is an area of opportunities and challenges, related to protection of environment, safeguard and sustainable development of the local populations, exploitation of fishing and mining resources, the new shipping routes, the scientific research, security and governance. The new shipping routes, for instance, in the next decades may allow this region to become accessible to large-scale economic activity to a degree never experienced before and may give new shape to the international trade between Europe and Asia.

Italy is confident that the High North challenges may have the potential to promote cooperation rather than confrontation in the region. Satisfactory systems for search and rescue, pollution control, surveillance and navigation, defence against terrorism and transnational criminality can only be handled through multinational cooperation. In this regard fruitful exchange of expertise and experience could be envisaged among Northern Organisations and similar Organisations active in the Adriatic sea, such as the Ionian Adriatic Initiative and the Central European Initiative.

From the scientific point of view the polar regions are extremely important to carry out studies on climate change. The Arctic is considered by the scientists as a privileged

area which offers a unique opportunity to better understand global climate evolution. Arctic issues are of crucial interest also for non Arctic States since they have global environmental consequences that can more effectively be dealt through international cooperation.

Italy has a long tradition of presence in the Arctic, since the exploration of the Duke of Abruzzi in the second half of the nineteenth century and the flying across the North Pole by Umberto Nobile on the airships "Norge" and "Italia" in 1926 and 1928. To Umberto Nobile is dedicated the scientific base of the Italian Research National Council, which since 1996 is active in that region with a scientific station in Ny Alesund in the Svalbard island. Other Italian academic institutions have their own observatories at the Thule US Station and Zackenberg Danish Station in Greenland. The National Research Council is setting up a new scientific installation in Ny Alesund, the "*Amundsen and Nobile Climate Change Tower*" for international cooperative studies on climate change and ice melting, which I will have the pleasure to inaugurate to-morrow together with the Norwegian State Secretary for Foreign Affairs, Mrs Walaas. Moreover, the National Research Council published the 2009 Science Plan in the Arctic in which a number of core projects have been identified, such as a network of modular marine underwater sensors operable remotely by Internet and studies of genetic and biochemical mechanism of adaptation in marine organisms and bacteria. During the International Polar Year Italian teams coordinated a number of IPY projects and are now engaged in the legacy phase. Italy leads the European Polar Board and is involved in all its initiatives such as the European Joint Programme on polar climate change. Italian scientists are involved in the project ERICON aimed at building up the European icebreaker *Aurora Borealis*.

Other prominent Italian scientific institutions – such as the Institute for New Technologies, Energy and Environment (ENEA) and the Institute for Oceanography and Geophysics – are active in research activity in the Arctic. In 2009, the Italian geophysical vessel "Explora" has carried out surveys in the Barents sea.

In the economic field, ENI has a strong presence in the area. In the recent past also EDISON started a promising activity for mining research. In this context I would like to remind the recent joint Seminar between Italy and Norway held in Ravenna and focused on a sustainable energy future in the Arctic region.

As I already mentioned the impacts of climate change in the Arctic are already being heavily felt. Most recent satellite data show that the region is warming more rapidly than scientists had previously expected. The sea ice cover continues to shrink and become thinner, while the new data suggest that the Arctic may lose its summer ice altogether as early as 2015. Therefore, it is even more urgent to reach a global agreement on climate change.

Within the G8, the Italian Presidency is determined to provide political impulse aimed at fostering a positive outcome of ongoing UN negotiations in view of the Copenhagen Conference in December. We are actively working with all our partners to promote an agreement including both industrialised and developing countries, based on the principle of common but differentiated responsibilities and respective capabilities.

We welcome the US reengagement in the United Nations Climate Convention process, based on the acknowledgment of climate change as one of the world's most pressing problems. Italy supports the strengthening of the re-launched Major Economies Forum Process, with a tight schedule of meetings in order to prepare for the L'Aquila Summit. MEF meetings could represent an important opportunity to promote convergence, in a smaller format that brings together the G8 and the major emerging economies.

The recently approved EU climate–energy legislation is the best guarantee that Europe will be capable of confirming its leadership in global negotiations on climate change. Success in Copenhagen will depend on the acceptance of comparable reduction commitments by all industrialised countries and of commitments to deviate from projected emissions by the advanced developing countries.

Mr. Chairman,

Italy wishes to confirm its willingness to contribute to the activity of the Arctic Council and to the ambitious goal of developing the region into a source of stability, community of interest, cooperation and sustainable development.

While expressing my appreciation to Norway for its valuable commitment in performing the responsibilities as Chairman of the Arctic Council, I would like to express my sincere wishes to the incoming Danish Presidency of full success in its important task.