

THE CHALLENGES OF CULTURAL DIPLOMACY

by Plenipotentiary Minister Antonio Morabito

H.E. Ambassador Godwin George Umo Oon

His Eminence Cardinal Francis Arinze,

Excellences Ambassadors,

Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen

A warm thanks for inviting me here at this important celebration as friend.

My best greeting and thanks to you dear Ambassador G.G. Umo, for organizing such important moment of reflections and celebrations in honor of Nigeria Nation and History.

Very pleased to take the floor at this event, which represents an important moment of public diplomacy.

Cultural Diplomacy has a strategic role in the current geopolitical scenario. It is not only simple cultural initiative in the framework of international relations, is, in reality, a crucial tool of foreign policy in a bigger contest of "Soft power strategy".

Cultural Diplomacy, as a tool for prosperity and global peace, has to be reached by every human being on this Earth; an integral development of Human being as declared at Encyclical of “*Popolorum Progressio*”.

The recent interest of institutions and university proof the economic impact of Cultural Diplomacy on the competitiveness of a country. Culture attracts investments, infrastructure and cultural tourism from abroad, as well as the flow of international students. It is therefore not surprising that City Diplomacy - a form of diplomacy that disintermediates the Cultural Diplomacy of Governments - is increasingly at the center of the virtuous cycle of the economy of the cities of the whole.

Allow me to brief you how Culture plays a crucial role in Italy.

First, I would like to emphasize that excellence in education is a historic vocation for Italy. From the foundation of the first university in the western world in Bologna in 1088, to the “University La Sapienza” in Rome, “Normale di Pisa”, in Venice, in Florence, Italy has provided a decisive contribution to the development of the arts and knowledge. A contribution that embraces all fields, from literature to the arts, from natural sciences to applied technology. The spirit of Leonardo and Galileo, Michelangelo and Dante Alighieri lives today in the work of our researchers and our scientists, in Italy and abroad.

The protection and safeguarding of the cultural, material and immaterial heritage, for the benefit of the entire Humanity, have always guided the action of the Italian Government on the subject on a bilateral level as in the UNESCO, where we promote the adoption and implementation of Conventions to combat the illicit trafficking of cultural assets.

- The centrality that Italy gives to cultural heritage allows us to deepen

our ties with international partners and to share a wealth of traditions and knowledge, putting it at the service of the collective memory of all the Countries.

Italy has also promoted many initiatives to combat the *illicit trafficking of cultural assets, as shown by recent Italian successes in returning illegally stolen art objects*. It is a confirmation of our commitment to intensify international collaboration to protect our common cultural heritage, the genetic code of our identity.

Allow me to present an important example on this field.

A few kilometers from the city of Aidone, in Sicily, there is the archaeological site of Morgantina, among the most important of Sicily albeit little known to many. Ancient strategic center, which has become of considerable importance during the Greek period, it was unearthed in 1955 thanks to a series of excavations carried out by the University of Princeton U.S.

In Aidone, about 5 km from Morgantina, is the Regional Archaeological Museum, which houses the beautiful Venus of Morgantina, sculpture of the classical period often exhibited in the most important museums in the world. An history of

*“The Goddesses Return”. The museum in the 2010s is at the center of events of historical importance. The Italian State has succeeded in obtaining the return of precious artefacts stolen by “tombaroli” and, through the clandestine market bought by the main American museums. On 13 December 2009, two acroliths (two heads, three hands and three feet in marble) from the Greek archaic period, probably belonging to the goddesses **Demeter and Kore**, very revered in antiquity in Central Sicily, returned from the University of Virginia Museum. December 5, 2010, was the turn of the return from the Metropolitan Museum of New York of a service of sixteen pieces in silver for ritual and table uses, belonging to that Eupolemos, as revealed by the inscriptions engraved in votive arula. Finally, in the spring of 2011, the so-called “Goddess of Morgantina” returned. It is a statue of a treacherous limestone school with an acrolithic technique, in which it is more probable that the goddess Demeter should be recognized. Now it is exhibited at the Regional Archaeological Museum of Aidone, visible to the public.*

The Goddess of Morgantina is a statue illegally excavated from the archaeological site. Purchased years ago by the Paul Getty Museum in Malibu, it was returned to Italy on March 17, 2011 at the end of a dispute that lasted for several years between Italy and the United States.

The Venus of Morgantina (more probably Kore or Demeter) is a statue 2.25 m high, carved between 425 BC and 400 BC in Sicily. The author would be a direct disciple of Phidias, operating in Magna Graecia. The material used to sculpt it is marble, used for the face and for the naked parts of the body, similar to the Metope of Selinunte. The drapery is instead in calcareous tufa, which has been ascertained to come from Sicily.

The promotion of Italian culture in the world is one of the priorities of Italian foreign policy, and consequently one of the main axes of the action of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation.

The integrated promotion plan "*Vivere ALL'italiana*", covers different sectors:

language, literature and publishing;
design; cuisine; visual arts, with particular attention to the contemporary; cultural and creative industries, including cinema; live show; science, research and innovation; university system; archeology and heritage protection; museum system; tourism and territories; economic diplomacy.

Allow me to recall and thanks the previous speakers for their some very deep contribution at today symposium.

His Eminence *Card. Pietro Parolin* at his important speech has underlined the dangers of global forgotten conflicts and the fragmentation of a new war of intolerance that gradually endanger and poison human dignity on this Hearth, Urging people to “break walls and built bridges”

Prof Bede Ukwuije speaking about the danger of communication and the fake news has recalled the first of the history at Genesis, the first sin of man and women. The confusion of truth that endangers human being.

Dr Paulinus Chukwudi Nwewue has illustrated the status of Cultural Diplomacy in Africa. The challenges of African integration and social assimilation and the importance for Africa to reevaluate all his great Culture, involving food and traditions.

Prof Joseph Ukemenan, analyzing the last historical period has unfazed how “peace is not absence of war but is ongoing process and Cultural Diplomacy is part of it.

The experience presented today by University Cattolica del Sacro Cuore, with the first level master on Cultural Diplomacy “Art and Media for International Relations and Global Communication”, promoted and directed by Prof. Federica Olivares, is a great challenge.

Among the main objectives, two are today, to me, of great impact:

1. Reopen dialogue, realize project of Reconciliation post conflicts.
2. To be a crucial instrument for reconciliation between different cultures and tribes and ethnic groups in order to create international cooperation and support local economies.

In conclusion repeating the words of *Dr Paulinus Chukwundi*, “economic results of Cultural Diplomacy has long term benefits. It is crucial to promote it”.

As a result and follow up of this meeting today I wish the *Università Cattolica del Sacro Cuore* and the Institutions today present here, could continue this exchange of experiences focused on Cultural Diplomacy.

Bright Future and prosperity to all the Institutions and the people of NIGERIA, on this important day of celebrations.

Allow me to finalize with the motto of Cardinal Francis Arinze. *“May the Kingdom of Christ flourish”, together with Peace and Justice on this Hearth.*