

Your Excellence, **(Gen) Godwin George Umo OON**, Ambassador of the Federal Republic of Nigeria to the Holy See,
Excellences, Ladies and Gentlemen,

I'm very glad and grateful to be here today on the occasion of the commemoration of the 59th Anniversary of Nigeria's Independence and the 43rd Anniversary of Nigeria's diplomatic relations with the Holy See: what a better occasion to highlight the importance of solid and stable diplomatic relations and emphasize Culture as a tool to pledge them? Cultural Diplomacy is, in fact, absolutely crucial in today's and tomorrow's Global World and specifically in International Relations, from any angle they may be considered.

The resource of 'Cultural Diplomacy' is so relevant and strategic in the Global scenario that Università Cattolica chose to create the **first European Program in Cultural and Digital Diplomacy**, directed by Professor Federica Olivares, in partnership with Oxford University and University of Southern California - an International Program with an innovative intersection of disciplines, combining three different fields of study: Public Diplomacy and International relations; Soft Power and Cultural Diplomacy for the global reputation of Countries and Cities and as an effective tool in project of reconciliation in conflict areas; Digital Diplomacy and Global Communication for the engagement of worldwide audiences.

This Program is our contribution to create a new breed of **Citizens of the World, able to innovate International Relations and social practices through a Cultural Diplomacy approach and strategy.**

How can we define Cultural Diplomacy? It is surely easier to understand its nature through its impacts and concrete examples.

Cultural Diplomacy is a shared territory where two Countries can dialogue through a **common** language. The idea of "Culture" has always played a crucial role in defining the identity of a Country. What is more recent is its widespread use not only by state-actors but by increasingly non-state actors who began to use it as one of the more strategic tools in global relations as

a universal 'conversation'. Cultural Diplomacy, as I like to define it, is **the 'armed arm' of a Country's Soft Power**, contributing to the influence and attractiveness of a global public Actor, capable, through the universal language of Culture and the Arts, of building a global reputation for a Country, of reopening interrupted geopolitical dialogues and weave Reconciliation projects in post-conflict areas.

In this age of geopolitical tensions, Cultural Diplomacy represents also a strategic tool which can tear down otherwise impenetrable walls and build bridges even between the worst of enemies: it is therefore **a great Stabilizer in International Relations**.

Mentioning the issue of **Stabilization**, we cannot but engage all our efforts so that Culture can become a better tool for Diplomacy in critical areas of the world, which are globally growing in number and intensity. As Pope Francis affirmed, "*It is my opinion, but I am convinced that we are living a III World War to pieces, chapters, everywhere*".

Since Cultural Diplomacy may be described at its best as "**a course of actions based on the exchange of ideas, values, traditions and other aspects of culture and identity, whether to create or strengthen relationships, promote national interests and enhance socio-cultural cooperation**", in more recent years strategies of **Reconciliation, Peace enforcement and Peace building** have identified Culture as the real **cement** in post-conflict situations and in fragile areas of the world.

All these practices and experiences are proofs of how a discipline as Cultural Diplomacy, in its various and innumerable applications, can prove to be not only greatly relevant for today's and tomorrow's International Relations, but it can also represent a varied field of **Innovation of social practices** for the great open challenges that confront our societies.

In a world where Peace is continuously threatened, the theme of this symposium could not have been addressed at a better time. But we must stay hopeful for our next generations: in order to be **capable** of Hope we have to be **competent** and able to create new **Citizens of the world** skilled in the difficult art of mutual understanding and respect. That's our mission, clearly stated by the Motto of our Program in Cultural and Digital Diplomacy:

'We want to be a force for Good to the World!'

Thank you Ambassador **Umo OON**