

**SPEECH BY THE PRESIDENT OF RAI,  
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AT THE III CONFERENCE OF TELEVISION  
AND AUDIOVISUALS OF THE MEDITERRANEAN

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- The greeting that I am addressing to the participants in the III Conference of the Mediterranean is not just a formal act, but it is really heartfelt.

As a matter of fact, RAI was among those who have endeavoured the most in order that a meeting like that of today be achieved, providing its contribution of ideas and organization and supporting with a constant effort the cooperation among the various radio and television bodies of the area of the Mediterranean in their various locations.

- When five years ago in Palermo some of the major television networks of the Mediterranean came together for the first time to start an organic discussion precisely about the topic of cooperation, there weren't many who believed that the declarations of principle would have been followed by concrete activities and interventions, as is the case today instead: by this I mean the transformation of the Permanent Conference into a real Association of audiovisuals in the Mediterranean.

In our quality as Italian public service for radio and television, however, we have always been deeply convinced of the positive outcome of this idea. It is a conviction that has its roots in the fundamental role and mission of public television, as we have tried to interpret it over these last years: we have worked to make those demanding and complex positive values prevail which are at the basis of our social life. In fact, international cooperation, tolerance and dialogue between nations and within the nations, solidarity and peace certainly represent the crucial elements that must be carried and proposed by the public services.

- For our country the basin of the Mediterranean stands for a great variety of historical, cultural and economic situations, a real challenge: a challenge with respect to the construction of a fruitful and positive dialogue among the different countries with their specific heritage of different identities, traditions, languages and cultures.

Not just because of its geographical position, but also on the grounds of a precise conviction and a strong political and cultural will, Italy indeed represents a natural link through which it is possible to achieve an agreement of the numerous and complex elements that characterize this entire region. Bringing Europe into the Mediterranean and the Mediterranean in Europe is

therefore one of the top priorities for our institutions and a necessity for the communities in our countries.

These priorities and necessities are even more important at the present moment, now that Italy has the presidency of the European Union.

- The area of the Mediterranean represents for all of us an actual laboratory in which to test the positive dialogue between North and South of our planet, between strong and weak areas, between economies that show a different development speed.

On the other hand, the beginning of the nineties was characterized by a remarkable acceleration of history, which is constantly reminding us of the urgency to establish such a dialogue and exchange: the abandoning of the old mentality of the "big blocks", that had conditioned international relationships for various decades, has allowed the start of a new and extraordinary epoch of peace, although there are many uncertainties regarding the new and definitive political balance that has yet to be defined. This balance cannot be reached except through a common effort, work and engagement that still has its price.

- For those who (like ourselves and like those who are taking part in this Conference) work in the field of communication and media having a power of diffusion and penetration as strong as that of television, these principles have to be considered even more binding, also in the light of the rapid evolution of the communication scenarios that we are currently witnessing together with the globalization process.

If, as we all know, during these past years the spread of a kind of global information (that has overcome any national boundary and any barrier) has certainly contributed in an essential way to the success of a model of an open and permeable society, today, following the convergent trend of telecommunications, television and informatics, the sector of communication probably becomes the determining factor with respect to economic, social and cultural changes.

- The globalization brought about by the "Information Society" must therefore not become another factor of unbalance, that is to say that a handful of countries prevail over all others not only in terms of investments and infrastructures, but also in terms of contents and messages. In this way we would have an outlook on the world which is defined as "global", but which in fact presents the risk of imposing the attitudes, the points of view and the models belonging to privileged sectors of the world's community.
- In this framework there exist specific duties and responsibilities that those working in the field of communication, particularly the public service companies, must assume.

We are convinced that they represent the living guarantee for a balance in which the social values of the whole community are reflected. Precisely for this reason they have the duty to make every effort in order that the speed of technological development shall not become an element of further unbalance; they must build the adequate opportunities so that the success of "Information Society" become a just and shareable process founded on a logic of integration, coordination and cooperation. In this process the different identities must not be denied; on the contrary, they must be enhanced, thus increasing reciprocal understanding and the acknowledgement of those differences that make up the wealth of our planet and, in particular, of the area of the Mediterranean.

- These are the wishes and the strong points on which RAI's participation in the Conference of the Mediterranean is founded. I am convinced that this Conference represents an essential tool in the construction of that process of cooperation, solidarity and peace that we are all longing for.