

The President



*Dear President Prodi,
Dear Commissioner Fule,
Dearest Friends André and Andreu,
Dear colleagues members of the Advisory Council and Heads of the national Networks,
Members of the Board of Governors of Anna Lindh Foundation,*

Welcome to Naples!

A few weeks ago, on October 4th, 30,000 young people from all over the world met near here, at Piazza del Plebiscito, launching the slogan “Once you see Naples, then... PEACE”!

It is with the same slogan that I wish to welcome YOU, greeting YOU on behalf of the members of “Fondazione Mediterraneo”, of the President of the International Committee Predrag Matvejevic, of those responsible for the specialized offices and independent institutes : a network of more than 500 bodies and institutions which, for 25 years, have joined the Euro-Mediterranean dialogue at the European Union’s side.

Some days ago Director Andreu Claret told me : “All this started in Naples, all this will start again from Naples”.

As a matter of fact, today we celebrate several anniversaries :

- The tenth anniversary of “Anna Lindh Foundation”.
- The twentieth anniversary of the “ Mediterranean Award” which, by a decision of the ministerial Conference in 2005, gave rise to the ”Euromed Award”, granted every year by Anna Lindh Foundation and by Fondazione Mediterraneo.
- The twenty-fifth anniversary of “Fondazione Mediterraneo”, created in Naples on 28th October 1989 : a quarter of a century of constant commitment, based on passion and competence, which has produced concrete results, often making the ”Impossible” “Possible”.

I wish to summarize here the main steps of this journey that has rendered Naples one of the centres of the Euro-Mediterranean dialogue :

- 1989: the Fondazione Mediterraneo presents the programme “Greater Mediterranean”, extended to the Countries of the Gulf, of the Black Sea, to Iran and Iraq: topical still today, considering the deep crisis in that region.
- 1994: the Conference in Naples “The Mediterranean and Europe”, with more than 1000 participants who oriented the European Union towards the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership.
- 1995, 1997 and 2003: the “ Euromed Civil Forums”, with thousands of participants from 36 Countries; as well as providing a careful analysis of the needs of the region, they produced concrete projects, most of which put into practice through the Euro-Mediterranean programmes.
- 2001: the idea of “Anna Lindh Foundation” was conceived in Naples and was then put into practice, always in Naples, by the ministerial Conference of December 2003.
- 2003: institution in Naples, at Fondazione Mediterraneo, of the ”Euro-Mediterranean Parliamentary Assembly”, later on become UfM.
- 2004: institution of the “Italian Network” of Anna Lindh Foundation, one of the largest and most active.
- 2008: first meeting, at Fondazione Mediterraneo, of the Advisory Council of Anna Lindh Foundation.
- 2013: institution in Naples of “RIDE- Rete Italiana per il Dialogo Euromediterraneo” (Italian Network for Euro-Mediterranean Dialogue), with main office at Fondazione Mediterraneo.
- 2014: we meet here for the Tenth Anniversary of “Anna Lindh Foundation”.

In these days, as well as weighing the activities carried out, it is urgent and necessary to relaunch the indispensable mission of dialogue and peace to be accomplished by Anna Lindh Foundation.

During the last months I have been for long periods on missions in Iraq, Syria, Palestine and Libya: the gravity of the situation is unimaginable and imposes courageous choices, avoiding sterile bureaucratism and acting on the basis of documented competences and no longer on the basis of diplomatic trimming or specific belonging.

In the last 25 years I have devoted my life and most of my personal resources to social and cultural interaction in the “Greater Mediterranean”.

There are so many difficult moments, when everything seems to be lost, but they are accompanied by moments when a combination of emotion, pride and affection gives rise to hope for our future, and in particular for the future of the youth.

It is what happens in this very moment, when I am going to grant the “Mediterranean Award” to Stefan Fule and Romano Prodi and the title of “Peace Bearer” to André Azoulay.

Michele Capasso