



Consolato Generale d'Italia
Melbourne

2023 SISTER CITIES NATIONAL CONFERENCE (October 12, 2023)

REMARKS BY THE CONSUL GENERAL

Distinguished Guests

Ladies and Gentlemen

It is my distinct pleasure to be here with you today for the 2023 Sister Cities National Conference

I would therefore like to thank Sister Cities Australia and Wyndham City for inviting me and for giving me the opportunity to share my remarks with you

Allow me to start by acknowledging the Kulin nation, the Traditional Custodians of the land on which we meet today, and pay my respects to their Elders past and present. I extend that respect to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples here today

On behalf of us all, I would like to offer the Acknowledgement also in Italian as an appropriate opening statement for remarks by an Italian diplomat on the importance of Sister Cities relationships

Riconosciamo la nazione Kulin, Custode Tradizionale del territorio su cui ci incontriamo quest'oggi. Rendiamo omaggio ai loro Anziani, passati e presenti, ed estendiamo questo rispetto a tutte le persone aborigene e indigene delle isole dello Stretto di Torres qui presenti

Ladies and Gentlemen

While the view that only states act as global actors still prevails, significant diplomatic and cross-cultural activity is taking place in cities today

Economic growth and fiscal experiments all occur in urban contexts

Political reforms, social innovation, protests and revolutions generate in cities

Criminal activities, terrorist actions, counterinsurgency, missile attacks, and wars are centered in big cities

They are sources of global pollution as well as of environmental transformations such as urban gardening

Knowledge production, big data collection, and tech innovation all spur from intense interaction in cities

They are the meeting points between different cultures, religions, and identities

These increasingly international cities develop twinning networks and projects, share information, sign cooperation agreements, contribute to the drafting of national and international policies, provide development aid, promote assistance to refugees, and do territorial marketing through decentralized city-city or district-district cooperation

Cities do what “municipalities” used to do many centuries ago: they cooperate but also enter into intense competitive dynamics

To understand current sociopolitical dynamics on a planetary level, we need to have two mental maps in mind: the state-centered map and the nonstate centered map

We must take into account the existence of a complex diplomatic regime based on different overlapping levels—the urban and the state

In light of the above and of what you have seen in the video promoting Rome’s candidacy to host the World EXPO 2030, there is a new game in town, and it is called „City Diplomacy“

Cities have evolved into fully fledged actors of international relations

Cities are the level of governance closest to the people

They play a crucial role in shaping national agendas and in addressing global challenges

They engage and represent their interests on the international stage

At times where a different action is required to address the many challenges posed by the new multipolar „world disorder“, Cities are indispensable platforms for leadership development, beneficial to the whole world

Allow me here to recall that one of the greatest figures in post World War II history was the first German Chancellor, Konrad Adenauer, former Lord Mayor of the City of Cologne

In short, despite the latest terrible news coming from the Middle East, Diplomacy pays

Because diplomacy opens doors, bridges differences, offers pathways to solve also the most difficult controversies

In this context, the role of Diplomats is indispensable: they are independent by definition, facilitators by profession, well versed in connecting people and in expanding networks, extremely flexible and adaptable

Allow me here to share with you one success story, the Sister City relationship between Melbourne and Milan, dating back to 2004, without neglecting the many other Sister City Relationships that exist between Italian and Australian Towns such as Hobart-L'Aquila and Sidney-Florence

In the case of the Melbourne-Milan Sister City Relationship, the role of the Consul General of Italy in Melbourne has been instrumental to forge the initial bond,

to support the rolling-out of institutional visits,

to preserve the contacts between two geographically distant Parties,

to shape the agenda of the institutional dialogue around issues of common interest,

to scout reciprocal benefits,

to put down to paper the initial sketches of the Sister City agreements,

to exchange the texts and to facilitate their signatures

In the case of Melbourne and Milan, their Special Relationship has been recently enriched by the signature of a Strategic Partnership at State level. Since October last year Victoria and Lombardy, the two economic powerhouses of Australia and Italy have decided, as it is written in the Preamble of the MoU, to foster dialogue and cooperation between subnational actors as key for enhancing sustainable growth and competitiveness.

Ladies and Gentlemen

The future is for us to design and is already around the corner.

Next year Melbourne and Milan will celebrate the 20th anniversary of their Sister City Relationship.

Milan, as you will see in one last video, is already working for greatness.

This greatness is human mobility, urban food security, sustainable Urban Development, Education to global citizenship, with a specific focus on women and youth, all platforms of global engagement on future policy decisions.

Thank you for listening!