

Your Excellency Pavel Filip, Prime Minister of Moldova,

Your Excellency Chiril Gaburici, Minister of Economy and Infrastructure of Moldova

Your Excellency Zurab Pololikashvili, Secretary General of Unwto,

Dear Colleagues,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

I am very sorry I am not there with you to attend the 3rd UNWTO Global Conference on wine tourism in Chisinau.

Wine and gastronomy are becoming increasingly relevant for the development of tourism territorial strategies, playing a pivotal role in the development and diversification of destinations, beyond the main attractors, encompassing innovation, sustainability and digital transformation as the key drivers.

At this particular moment in history, Italy has decided to endorse this approach, embedding it in the current government strategy, which features the pairing of tourism with agriculture, both key industries in the economic, social and cultural development of our Country.

With tourism flows increasing steadily in Europe (in Italy we had a record year in 2017, with over 123 mil arrivals – increasing by 5.3% compared to previous year and an expenditure increase of 7%, which brought the balance of payments to a positive increase of 5.7%) mainly by arrivals from the East, enlargement of destination developments and incoming strategies, diversification through “agricultural” leverages supported by digital transformation are the pillars of a new, more organic approach to sustainable development.

With regards to wine, according to recent international studies, Italy is second only to Spain for what concerns competitiveness of our product and only in USA we were able to increase exports in 2018 by 11,5%. Also, if the harvest of last year was seriously hit by climate change, this year we can proudly say that we are expecting to record a two-digit increase, with HL increasing by 15% compared to last year, reaching 49 million. This is for us a great result but in order to exploit all the market potentials though, we need to incentivize growth by investing on research and innovation and a serious simplification of bureaucracy. This will allow our companies to be more competitive on international markets. Wine is a product which has a great appeal on international markets, it's a real Ambassador of Made in Italy, a tool and a symbol of the quality and uniqueness of Italian products in the world.

I am extremely proud of my position of Minister of Agricultural, Food and Forestry Policies and Tourism and especially happy for having been able to bring tourism within this new governance structure, because I truly believe that tourism needs a solid background to layout its main synergies, especially considering the true assets of our beautiful Country.

Under my tenure, tourism will become a department (until now it has been a Directorate) and will therefore feature a higher level of responsibilities, a bigger structure and a very strong operational plan which will put a stronger focus on promotion, innovation, sustainability, high level training and support for the industry.

Within the incredibly positive trend in the numbers of global tourism, among all the ones about tourism expenditure, Italy is playing a leading role, which we intend to capitalize upon and augment, making sure all the Country's potentials are reflected in its position as a true superpower in the travel and tourism industry.

Coming from a tourism background, I truly believe that tourism is the main engine of economic growth, with responsibilities which cross over all aspects of modern life. The synergies that I intend to develop with agriculture will bring a new solidity into our vision and will allow us to increase contribution to our GDP both in monetary and occupational terms.

I have been a sincere admirer of the initiatives that UNWTO has carried out throughout the years and am of course particularly interested in the focus on wine and gastronomy, as a key attractor and main strategic component of tourism demand and offer, also through "the eyes" of innovation and digitalization.

I truly believe in the work that Italy can do with and within this incredibly important international platform and am a true supporter of the new vision and governance which will guide UNWTO and all of us Member States into a new Era.

I am really looking forward to meeting all of you very soon at one of the official meetings of UNWTO and, possibly very soon, in our beautiful Country, Italy, which I would like to propose officially as host of one of the future Global Conferences on Wine Tourism and/or on Gastronomy tourism.

Let me wish you all a great Conference and Salute!

Gian Marco Centinaio

Minister of Agricultural, Food and Forestry Policies and Tourism