

SPEECH

ITALIAN PARLIAMENT

WEDNESDAY, 9TH APRIL, 2025

1. Presidenti del Senato e della Camera dei deputati, Membri del Governo, Senatori, Deputati, Autorità, Signore e Signori:
2. Sono enormemente onorato di essere stato invitato qui oggi, e molto grato al Presidente Mattarella per il suo gentile invito a compiere una visita di Stato in Italia.
3. È molto importante per La Regina, e per me, tornare in Italia per la nostra prima visita dopo l'incoronazione. Il momento è ancora più speciale per entrambi, dato che, oggi, ricorre anche il nostro venticinquesimo anniversario di matrimonio.
4. E, per altro, spero di non stare rovinando la lingua di Dante... così tanto da non essere più invitato in Italia.
5. Above all, it is a signal honour to have been asked to speak to you all this afternoon – the first time that a British Sovereign has addressed the entire Italian Parliament, this fundamental democratic institution.
6. Italy is, as I hope you know a country very dear to my heart and that of The Queen – as it is to so many of our countrymen and women.

1) Presidents of the Senate and of the Camera, Prime Minister, Senators, Deputies, Institutional Representatives, Ladies and Gentlemen:

2) I am enormously touched to have been invited here today, and most grateful to President Mattarella for his kind invitation to make a State Visit to Italy.

3) It means a very great deal to The Queen and myself to return to Italy for our first visit since my Accession. The timing is all the more special to us both since today also marks our twentieth wedding anniversary.

4) And by the way I hope I'm not ruining Dante's language so much that I'm no longer invited to Italy again.

5) Above all, it is a signal honour to have been asked to speak to you all this afternoon – the first time that a British Sovereign has addressed the entire Italian Parliament, this fundamental democratic institution.

6) Italy is, as I hope you know a country very dear to my heart and that of The Queen – as it is to so many of our countrymen and women.

7. I have made eighteen official visits over the past forty years to the Belpaese. It has been one of the pleasures of my life to come to know this irresistible country, and from Turin to Palermo, Verona to Naples, Florence to Trieste, I have learned a little more about this nation and have come to admire it even more.
8. Like any old friend, I have been with you at happier moments and sadder moments in your national life. For instance, I will never forget my visit to Venice with The Queen in 2009, where we saw the magnificently restored La Fenice Opera House – or to Amatrice in 2017, in the aftermath of that tragic earthquake.
9. So I am here today with one purpose: to reaffirm the deep friendship between the United Kingdom and Italy, and to pledge to do all in my power to strengthen that friendship even further in the time that is granted to me as King.
10. Our ties go back over two millennia – to those ancient Roman visitors who arrived on our windswept shores. It was the Romans who gave Britons the idea of putting a King's head on coins – so I am especially grateful to them...

11. My own Coronation in Westminster Abbey took place on the famous Cosmati pavement, laid by British and Italian craftsmen in 1268 - a shared foundation indeed.
12. And another foundation in which Britain is proud to have played its part is the support our country lent to the unification of Italy. As Garibaldi landed near Marsala in Sicily in May 1860, two Royal Navy warships stood watch. Garibaldi was, as you know, hugely admired in Britain. When he visited in 1864 to thank the British people for their support, *Garibaldimania* gripped the country. Some half a million people came to greet him in London. There was even a biscuit named after Garibaldi – the ultimate mark of British esteem!
13. Many of the heroes of Italy's unification – including Cavour and Mazzini – spent time in the United Kingdom.
14. Through the centuries, ever since Italian merchants docked in Southampton in the fourteenth century, and moneylenders from northern Italy settled in the appropriately-named Lombard Street in London, our peoples have traded with each other, inspired each other, learnt from each other.
15. From the wonders of the Renaissance to the Industrial Revolution, to scientific pioneers such as Guglielmo Marconi, who refined his genius in the U.K., before transforming the world. Nearly a third of Shakespeare's plays were set here in Italy, just as Italian artists have drawn inspiration from the Bard.
16. And we have benefitted hugely from your influence over what we wear, what we drink and what we eat. I can only hope you will forgive us for occasionally corrupting your wonderful cuisine! We do so with the greatest possible affection...

17. So we are two peoples, and two nations, whose stories are deeply intertwined – including, of course, with that of our European continent. We are both, after all, European countries.
18. Yesterday, I laid a wreath at the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier. Inscribed on its marble are words recalling the British Forces who fought alongside Italian Forces in the First World War. In a few weeks' time, we will mark the eightieth anniversary of the end of the Second World War in Europe.
19. We will remember the terrible price of war – and of the precious gift of peace. At Anzio and Monte Cassino last year and in Sicily the year before, we have remembered the British and Allied servicemen who gave their lives in the liberation of this country eighty years before – including more than 45,000 from Commonwealth nations, and almost 30,000 from the United Kingdom. My grandfather, King George VI, visited British and Allied troops in July and August 1944, staying at an H.Q. near Arezzo.
20. Tomorrow in Ravenna, as King of the United Kingdom and of Canada, I will have the great honour of commemorating the eightieth anniversary of the liberation of that province, together with President Mattarella, in which British, and Canadian Forces played a key role. And, as Head of the Commonwealth, it will be my signal privilege to recall the indispensable role played by many troops from the Commonwealth, as well as other Allied nations.
21. And we remember, too, the terrible suffering of the Italian civilian population – as well as the heroism of the resistance, including Paola Del Din, trained by the Special Operations Executive and dropped by parachute to carry out her mission in support of the Allies eighty years ago today. I know that we are all thinking of Paola, now 101, on this day – and salute her courage.

22. Permettetemi, anche, di esprimere la nostra profonda gratitudine alle molte centinaia di coraggiosi civili italiani che hanno dato rifugio ai soldati britannici e alleati, rischiando così la propria vita.

22) Let me also record our profound gratitude to the many hundreds of brave Italian civilians who gave refuge to British and Allied soldiers, thereby risking their own lives.

23. Today, sadly, the echoes of those times – which we fervently hoped had been consigned to history – reverberate across our continent. Our younger generations can now see in the news every day on their smartphones and tablets that peace is never to be taken for granted. Britain and Italy stand today united in defence of the democratic values we share.

24. Our countries have both stood by Ukraine in her hour of need – and welcomed many thousands of Ukrainians requiring shelter. Our Armed Forces stand side by side in N.A.T.O. We are grateful beyond measure for the role Italy plays in hosting key N.A.T.O. bases and taking a leading role in so many overseas operations. In a few weeks' time, the Royal Navy's Carrier Strike Group, led by the aircraft carrier H.M.S. *Prince of Wales*, will exercise alongside Italian Forces in the Mediterranean – a powerful symbol of our cooperation.

25. So too is our project to build our next generation fighter aircraft together through the Global Combat Air Programme – alongside Japan. It will generate thousands of jobs in our countries and speaks volumes about the trust we place in each other. We work closely together in the G-7 – as we did during your G-7 Presidency last year, whose Ministerial meetings set a new record for energy and activism.

26. Just as we stand together in defence of our values, so too we stand together in defence of our planet. From the droughts in Sicily to the floods in Somerset, both our countries are already seeing the ever-more damaging effects of climate change. The last time I spoke in this Parliament building

was to a special meeting devoted to climate change – I can hardly believe it is sixteen years ago now.

27. So, I hope you will forgive me for saying that the warnings I offered then about the urgency of the climate challenge are depressingly being borne out by events... Extreme storms normally seen once in a generation now characterise every year... Countless precious plant and animal species face extinction in our lifetimes. So much is at stake.

28. Italy's own natural heritage is blessed with extraordinary riches. Indeed, Italy remains home to the highest number of animal species in Europe...

29. Perhaps Rome's greatest poet, Virgil, understood profoundly the respect that was due to Nature. He was, it might be said, the father of sustainable farming, a cause I have supported my whole life. In his *Georgics* he spoke about respecting the natural cycles of the land, the importance of pollination by bees, soil conservation and even the value of composting and organic matter! For example, this from a well-known Italian translation of Book 1:

30. "Purché non ti spiaccia saturare i terreni aridi con grasso letame. Così anche mutando coltura i campi riposano; e frattanto, sebbene inarata, la terra ti darà il suo frutto". [From : Virgilio, *Georgiche*, trans. Luca Canali] [Georgics 1.79-83]

31. So it is deeply encouraging to see both our countries working together to tackle biodiversity loss and cut emissions. I can only applaud Italian entrepreneurs for their pioneering achievements; from the world's first geothermal power plant to the first nationwide roll-out of smart meters. Earlier today, I was delighted to meet with Italian and British business leaders whose collaboration, innovation and investment in clean growth are so vital to our energy transition – upon their success all our futures depend.

32. Ladies and Gentlemen, at the heart of everything I have described is one common denominator, one golden thread, our greatest asset – our people.
33. It is our citizens, and especially our young people, who are adding, piece by piece, to the intricate mosaic that makes up the relationship between our countries.
34. Much of that is thanks to over 450,000 Italians who make their home in the United Kingdom – across Scotland, Wales, Northern Ireland and England - as well as to the tens of thousands of British citizens who live across Italy and the millions who visit in each direction. We are inordinately proud of the fact that London is the city with the highest number of Italians living overseas.
35. Our business ties are flourishing – from green power to life sciences, from aerospace to services.
36. The U.K. is the fifth largest investor in Italy and last year Italy was the U.K.'s sixth largest source of foreign direct investment projects – figures which speak for themselves.
37. Our cultures continue to have a huge impact on each other.
38. Tomorrow, I look forward to seeing this in Ravenna, where Byron is remembered fondly alongside Dante, and to seeing the wonderful Byzantine mosaics of that beautiful city.
39. Where, two hundred years ago, we sent poets, today we delight in each other's music – whether it is the wonder of Italian opera at Covent Garden – or Ed Sheeran at the Stadio Olimpico.

40. Ladies and gentlemen,

41. Italy will always be in my heart. Just as my beloved mother never forgot her wonderful twenty-fifth birthday at Tivoli in 1951 – or her stop in Capaci many years later in 1992, where she paid tribute just days after his murder to your legendary anti-mafia prosecutor, Giovanni Falcone.

42. Ladies and Gentlemen,

43. I nostri due Paesi si trovano alle estremità del continente europeo.

44. Il nostro è un insieme di isole spazzate dal vento, il vostro una penisola baciata dal sole.

45. Diversi sotto molti aspetti.

43 Our two countries stand at different ends of the European continent.

44. Ours a collection of windswept islands, yours a sun-drenched peninsula.

45. Different in so many ways.

46. But we have found, I believe, over the years that those differences complement each other rather well.

47. That has been true in centuries past. And it is emphatically true today.

48. Let that be the spirit in which our two nations come together to approach the future.

49. Fiduciosi che, qualunque siano le sfide e le incertezze che inevitabilmente affrontiamo come nazioni, nel nostro continente e oltre, ora e in futuro, possiamo superarle insieme, e lo faremo insieme.

50. E quando lo avremo fatto, potremo dire, con Dante: 'e quindi uscimmo... a riveder le stelle'.

49. Confident – whatever the challenges and uncertainties we inevitably face as nations and in our neighbourhood, now and in the future – that we can, and we will, overcome them together.

50. And when we have done so, we may echo Dante and say: 'e quindi uscimmo a riveder le stelle.'

~ ENDS ~