

**UNDER EMBARGO UNTILL DECEMBER 10, 11.00 AM**

**Her Majesty Queen Rania Al Abdullah  
Sapienza University of Rome  
Rome, Italy  
December 10, 2015**

*Buongiorno.* It's such a pleasure to return to one of my favourite countries and to be with all of you here in the prestigious Sapienza University of Rome. Especially, in this hallowed hall...where the weight and wonder of history is all around us. It's incredible to think that much of this artistry that we enjoy today has, over the centuries, inspired and nurtured some of Italy's finest scholars.

So, I couldn't be more grateful for this honorary degree today. And I'm humbled that you've invited me into such a distinguished alumni. Thank you very much; I will treasure this.

The contributions of your alumni have and will continue to shape progress and enrich society. Because wisdom, *sapienza*, comes not only from recollections of past knowledge and experience...but from responsibility to the future. Our past motivates our future. That spirit, encapsulated in this fine institution's motto, *Il futuro e passato qui*, the future has passed here, is the foundation of human progress.

And right now, the world needs collective wisdom. We need institutions like this, and dynamic, young people, like you, more than ever. Because our past, that which grounds us and guides us, is, in some places, being demolished. And our future and the global values on which it is built, are under attack.

I'm talking, of course, about the rise of irreligious terrorists whose sole aim is to destroy the civilised world. We've seen it most recently in California... Paris... Lebanon... Tunisia...and Egypt. Families and communities ripped apart. Lives cut short or forever changed. Entire nations on edge.

And they're not only killing thousands of innocent men, women and children, they're destroying our shared cultural heritage. From the ancient city of Palmyra, a Roman trading post around AD 200,...and the 12th century Khudr mosque in Mosul...to the 7<sup>th</sup> century St. Ahoadamah church in Tikrit...and so many more.

These are more than attacks on pillars and stones, these are attacks on millennia's worth of archaeological heritage and human co-existence...all with the aim of eroding one of the richest and most diverse cultural landscapes in the world. They're targeting our collective history...the foundations of our civilization... In essence, humanity's very memory. They're deluded enough to think that they can author a new era, AD, After Daesh, and brainwash future generations.

Well, over the last two years, these groups have given us a glimpse of what their dark world would look like.

We've been haunted by scenes from Syria and Iraq: communities robbed of life; livelihoods destroyed; childhoods lost; schools and hospitals deserted; torture and mass murder.

Haunted by images of children's bodies washing up on shore. And by the idea that we could live in a world where people die in restaurants. Or at concerts. Or kneeling while they pray.

As unsettling and upsetting as it is, this glimpse into the future has been a revelation. It's given us a renewed appreciation for what we have...what we value...and for what we must fight.

So, it must be a turning point for humanity.

And I use the word, "we", advisedly. Because this is about all of us. It's not about Muslims versus Christians. Or conservatives versus liberals. Or East versus West. This is not any one country's war. This is every country's war. Because for the first time in history, the civilised world has a common enemy.

And a common enemy demands a concerted response. Not a half-hearted response. Or a delayed response.

How many more Paris-style attacks...how many more Lebanese car bombs...how many more Russian aeroplanes will blow up before we say, 'enough'?

We need an alliance of action...a can-do coalition. And we need a new way of thinking. Namely: courage to change our minds about things we thought we knew. Courage to work with people of whom we were once suspicious. Because sometimes, it's only when we're forced together in unlikely setups, with unlikely partners, that we find new ways of doing things and lasting solutions. Where we all find common ground, for common good.

So, let this be an opportunity for business unusual. For bold, new coalitions between lapsed friends, old foes and untapped resources. For political leaders to prioritize this fight...and unify. For religious leaders to seek consensus...and unify. For populations all over the world to understand what's at stake...and unify.

But this is more than a physical war. We have to fight on many fronts. And defeating Daesh depends on understanding their tactics and twisted mind sets.

They're waging a psychological war. And their weapon of choice is fear. Contagious fear. It's what Bruce Schneier has called a "*crime against the mind*." You could call it the ultimate weapon of mass destruction. It paralyses cities and closes businesses. Cripples economies and brings public transport to a halt. Most damaging of all, it sows seeds of mistrust and intolerance between people of different cultures...threatening our hard won progress to live together in peace.

Make no mistake, if we let fear take grip, they win. And, yes, fear may be contagious. But so is courage. We strike them a blow every time we go to the cinema with friends or shop in a mall. Enjoy a football match or visit a Christmas bazar. Create art or make beautiful music. When we show them that we will not be intimidated.

Another tactic they employ is to justify their actions by invoking Islam. There is nothing Islamic about these terrorists. But the more they attribute their actions to Islam, the more they provoke intolerance against all peace-loving Muslims. So that as well as fearing terrorists, we begin to fear each other. Again, the moment we let suspicion take grip, they win. So, please let's continue to treat each other with respect and openness. As you're doing today by honouring an Arab...Muslim...woman.

Let that be the final irony. The extremists who sought to tear apart our social fabric and turn us against each other, actually bring us closer together...with a renewed appreciation for each other and all that we hold dear.

And where better than in the eternal city of Rome, steeped in hundreds of years of history and beauty, to recommit to our shared future. A city where scholarship and science... culture and creativity... art and architecture... have endured and thrived for centuries. Rome offers us a blueprint of hope: together, we can ensure that the future that passes here, and everywhere, is a safe, secure and beautiful one for all of us and for our children.