

Statement by the Ambassador of Italy, Alberto Colella, at the inauguration of the research vessel Kronprins Haakon (Tromsø, 17 November 2018)

Kjære Kronprins,
Klima- og miljøminister, Forskningsminister, Fiskeriminister, Fylkesmann, Ordfører, Direktører for Havforskningsinstituttet og Norsk Polarinstitutt, Rektor ved UiT,

kjære alle sammen,

It gives me great pleasure - and I feel very proud, as a diplomat and as an Italian - to join all of you today here in Tromsø, the Arctic capital of Norway.

We are gathered here to inaugurate the Kronprins Haakon, the new Norwegian icebreaking research vessel, which –as it is known- is owned by the University of Tromsø, the Norwegian Polar Institute and the Norwegian Institute of Marine Research, and was built in Italy, at the Fincantieri shipyards in Genova and La Spezia.

Italy has indeed a longstanding tradition in shipbuilding and also at the Muggiano shipyard in La Spezia, one of the major Italian shipyards, since 1883 Italian workers have made use of their ancient craftsmanship to create some of the finest maritime vessels ever built.

Kronprins Haakon is certainly one of them, being one of the most advanced icebreakers in the world, equipped with state-of-the-art scientific instruments especially designed to monitor the marine environment.

In a way, the ship is an Italian-Norwegian enterprise. It was mostly built in Italy, but it received its final outfitting and sea trials at the Vard shipyard in Norway.

And in this the Kronprins Haakon bears clearly proof of the close and long cooperation existing between our two countries in many fields. Norway and Italy are two friendly and allied countries which share the same values of peace, democracy and security and with complementary economies fully open to and relying on international trade.

Italy is proud to be able to export to Norway such highly technological products like the Kronprins Haakon, realized with the skill and cutting-edge know-how which is required, and rightly so, by an advanced and technology-driven country like Norway.

Norway and Italy are two polar nations, Norway by nature, Italy by vocation.

This ceremony symbolizes also the cooperation between our countries in the Arctic scientific research: a cooperation which in modern times dates back at least 20 years, when Italy decided to open the “Dirigibile Italia”, a permanent research base in Ny Ålesund on Svalbard.

This scientific cooperation is giving outstanding results, as proved also by the very large number of Italian scientists and researchers working and studying in scientific institutions of this Arctic capital, namely the University of Tromsø.

But the relations between Italy and Norway in the Arctic are century-long, and many Italian navigators and explorers have been fascinated by this remote and for many centuries unknown area of the world. Just this morning I paid tribute to the monument erected here in Tromsø to remember the tragic expedition of the Nobile’s airship “Norge” in 1926.

I will not dwell on technical details, but I am very proud also that the Kronprins Haakon has been built according to criteria ensuring minimum environmental impact and reduced radiation of noise underwater, which will make it possible to study fish and marine mammals in a most environmentally-friendly manner.

Environmental concerns are at the core of the current scientific research in the Arctic and Italy is fully committed to it in the awareness that what happens in the Arctic is of the greatest importance to everyone, everywhere in the world.

I am sure that this wonderful new research ship will enable Norway and the international community to better understand these global processes in the years to come, allowing us to gain a deeper and deeper insight and thus helping us in facing the devastating effects of climate change.

With our commitment to a clean and sustainable growth, we should put, at the heart of our modern industrial strategy, scientific work and innovation efforts aimed at reducing and minimizing the impact of human activities on our environment.

Thank you, tusen takk.