COURTESY TRANSLATION

ADDRESS BY MINISTER ANTONIO TAJANI AT THE CONFERENCE OF SCIENTIFIC AND SPACE ATTACHÉS AND AGRICULTURAL EXPERTS (REGGIO CALABRIA, 05.11.2026)

I would like to thank Mayor Cannizzaro and President Occhiuto for the wonderful welcome here in Calabria.

Let me extend my greetings to the Mayors and local authorities, businesses, Presidents of Research Institutions and Associations of Italian Researchers Abroad, and representatives of the academic community. I also wish to greet and thank our Scientific and Space Attachés and our Agricultural Experts. You are the true protagonists of this major event dedicated to research and innovation.

I am delighted to be here in Reggio Calabria, a beautiful city in a region that is particularly close to my heart. Since taking office at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, I have been committed to promoting Italy's regional excellences. This Conference had traditionally always been held in Rome. I moved it to Padua in 2023, Turin in 2024, Naples in 2025 and, this year, to Reggio Calabria, with a programme of the highest calibre.

We chose to hold this year's Conference here in Calabria because the potential of this region, and of Southern Italy as a whole, is extraordinary. The figures speak for themselves: GDP and employment in Southern Italy are growing faster than the national average.

Exports are also growing rapidly. On 16th June, I brought to Bari the preparatory event dedicated to Southern Italy for the National Export Conference, which will be held in Milan in December. We are talking about Regions that are becoming increasingly competitive, supported by new investments, infrastructures and a big human capital. The *ZES Unica* represents a reform of historic significance: a single facilitated area, with simpler and faster procedures for investors.

Calabria is a virtuous example of this growth. It can rely on an ecosystem that has made innovation and research its guiding principles for the development and competitiveness of the territory. Over the past few days, our Attachés and Experts have visited major local businesses. Yesterday, also here in Reggio, we held a full day of working sessions at the Mediterranean University, an academic institution of reference for Southern Italy in many strategic sectors. I had announced this in July, and I am pleased to confirm it today.

The Italian Space Agency and the Calabria Region are working with NASA to establish, in this territory, one of the antennas for communications of the Artemis programme, which will bring us to the moon. The ultimate goal is to create a major Calabrian space hub bringing with ASI, universities, research centres and industry. The University of Calabria's participation in the European Space Agency's Plasma Observatory space mission is another key achievement. A big project to explore the Earth's magnetic shield. This is a source of pride for the entire region and for Italy.

Today we close three intensive days of work, with significant results and concrete follow-up actions. We have made a great teamwork. This is the first Conference of Scientific Attachés to be held following the reform of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Scientific diplomacy is now a fundamental pillar of our growth diplomacy.

Science is a major driver of competitiveness and growth. Artificial intelligence, robotics and digitalisation are transforming industry. Italy must play a leading role in these processes.

With our Scientific Attachés, we are turning our Embassies into outposts of Italian research around the world. This is why I have decided to invest increasingly in this network, which we are expanding across every continent.

We focus on India. In recent months, we have established a Scientific Attaché position in Bangalore. For the first time, we are sending a Space Attaché to New Delhi, and we have also appointed an Agricultural Expert, whose contribution will be crucial, particularly in view of the new EU-India Agreement. On 18th November, together with Minister Goyal, we will organise a big business forum in Rome focused on science and innovation. On Tuesday, I confirmed to Chilean President Kast that, after several years, we will once again be sending a Scientific Attaché to Santiago. In line with our commitment to food security, we will also have an Agricultural Expert at our Permanent Representation to the FAO.

The work of our Attachés is essential to supporting exports and the internationalisation of Italian enterprises, as well as attracting new investments. Export is one of Italy's flagship strengths. Last year, we reached a record €643 billion. This year, growth is even faster, at around +6%. Our target is to reach €700 billion by 2027. Scientific diplomacy can make a very significant contribution to achieving this goal.

From Reggio Calabria, I wish to launch a new key initiative: the first National Strategy for Scientific Diplomacy. Today marks the beginning of a process involving the Ministries, Universities and Research Institutions, with a view to developing a strategic document to strengthen scientific diplomacy and Italian scientific research abroad. We want to systematise and relaunch our action.

Italian researchers around the world, who are true ambassadors of Italy's scientific heritage abroad, will play a key role. For the first time, we have brought together the Presidents of the Associations of Italian Researchers Abroad. Thank you for being here today. I am delighted to announce that, right here in Reggio Calabria, the Confederation of Associations of Italian Researchers in the world is being established today. By bringing this extraordinary pool of talent together in a network, Italy will be able to be more and more influent and at the forefront.

Today, together with President Lenzi, whom I thank for being here with us, we will sign a Cooperation Protocol between the Ministry and the National Research Council (CNR). The objective is simple and ambitious: to further strengthen the great team of the internationalisation of Italian research.

Our scientific diplomacy must place an even greater emphasis on innovation and support for start-ups. Among the many young students here today, I am sure there are many who have an entrepreneurial spirit. Do not stifle this vocation. If you feel, take a risk and create a start-up. We will do everything we can to help you realise your dream and ensure that your potential can be put to work for Italy.

When it comes to cutting-edge technologies, I would also highlight the major work we are doing on Artificial Intelligence. This is a priority that we are advancing at the G7, the G20 and the United Nations, as well as in our relations with partners, always keeping the person at the centre.

At the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, we have launched three working groups for internationalisation dedicated to strategic sectors: biotechnology and life sciences; cybersecurity and AI; and quantum technologies.

At the Export Conference dedicated to Southern Italy, held in Bari on 16th June, we launched a Start-up Lab. We have renewed this commitment here in Reggio Calabria, with a dedicated session involving dozens of start-ups.

We are strengthening our commitment across all strategic sectors. Space is a crucial domain and is essential to Italy's and Europe's competitiveness. I reiterated this point at the Conference for the *Stati Generali dell'Economia dello Spazio*, which I hosted at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs on Monday. In May,

we adopted a National Space Strategy, which we must use to support all of Italy's space industry clusters, from North to South and across Central Italy.

I would also highlight our major commitment to critical raw materials and securing supplies of all the goods our industry needs. For the first time, Italy now has a true foreign policy on raw materials. We have also brought this issue to the European level.

Food security and support for our agriculture are also key priorities. Agricultural Experts can play a crucial role in supporting the *Piano per l'Export* and our diversification strategy. Expanding access to foreign markets is of strategic importance for our export. We must provide businesses with concrete support.

International partnerships will become increasingly central. We will continue to focus on our traditional partners, such as Europe and the United States. However, here too, we must pursue diversification.

First of all, I am thinking of the wider Mediterranean region, which, in my vision, extends as far as the Gulf, India and beyond. I am also thinking of Africa, which is a priority for the Government. The Government is committed to making this vast region more and more an area of stability, dialogue and growth. There are many sectors of action: precision agriculture, renewable energy, climate change, water resources and space.

Italy's commitment to strengthening Europe-Mediterranean connections is part of this strategy. We are at the forefront for the major IMEC economic and logistics corridor. This is a strategic initiative that will connect Europe with major Asian markets. Not only ports and infrastructures. In our vision, IMEC is also a big corridor for science, knowledge and innovation. We make available our excellences, such as our ports, Trieste and Gioia Tauro, and our research centres! This is why we warmly welcome the decision by UNESCO Director-General Khaled El-Enany to transform Trieste into a global scientific centre. It confirms the soundness of our vision, which we are advancing here in Reggio Calabria along an axis connecting the entire Country, with the aim of strengthening innovation and growth.

You, Attachés and Experts, have a key responsibility: to support all these connections, help them grow and become stronger, and create new ones. Making Italy stronger and better equipped to meet the challenges of the future requires a major joint effort by Institutions, businesses and territories. We are here today for this reason. You can count on me. You can count on the Government!