

UNICA STUDENT CONFERENCE

*Opening address by Prof. Guido Fabiani,
Rector, Roma Tre University*

22nd of Spetember 2010

14:00

Dear students, Distinguished guests, Ladies and gentlemen, Good afternoon,

I am delighted to be here with you today, for the opening the UNICA Student Conference.

First of all, let me convey my thanks to the UNICA member universities, to the Steering Committee and Secretariat for their contribution to the organisation of the conference.

I am pleased to know that the universities of the capitals of Europe are represented in this event by almost 250 students. You have an impressive agenda for the next three days.

Debating on the role of universities in Society today is a complex task, when the pressure is greater than it has been for many years.

We are all familiar with the challenges of the European Higher Education Area, and I know you will be dealing with these matters in the following days, in fact the topics selected are a keen representation of the various tasks we have to cope with.

At the same time we are all aware of the consequences of the financial crisis within our universities, and I am sure this will be discussed in the conference.

Nevertheless there are also more general issues to consider:

- the direct contribution universities might make to the wider world of which they are a part,
- the strong belief that universities should 'reflect' that wider world, and should contribute to its progress, in a concrete and practical way.

Higher Education is a fundamental force guaranteeing sustainable development, economic progress and social improvement.

Universities are engines of progressive social transformation, contributors to the wealth and prosperity of society; places to grow the new generations of engineers, doctors, lawyers (or whatever it might be)... I should probably just say capable and cultivated human beings.

You are here to discuss these issues and possibly offer decision-makers a declaration that reflects your point of view; a fundamental point of you, through our students' eyes.

Of course, this will take place in a very special location: the city of Rome, where old and new melt together in a singular mixture. It is a wonderful social, cultural, architectural and natural environment. Then there is the punctuality – but you can't have everything.

I guess some of you have already visited Rome, some of you are here for the first time. Rome is a beautiful and rich city, it has a lot to offer to students and scholars and I truly believe that you are about to begin a unique and enriching experience on various levels.

I can still recall my experience as student, the sensations and impressions. I therefore know that you will return home filled with newfound knowledge and enthusiasm, new perspectives and approaches, contacts, information and many other things. But more than anything else, it is that sense of permanent possibility that we carry away with us that makes these years so important. It also leaves us with one of the things most worth having in life: A mind and thoughts of your own.

Without any further ado, I thank you for being here today, and again, Welcome to Rome, we are honoured to have you here and I wish you success on your deliberations.