



# The Ambassador of Italy

to Uganda, Rwanda, Burundi

## **Speech from H.E. Ambassador Domenico Fornara on the occasion of the Italian National Day (Festa della Repubblica)**

**Kampala, June 1<sup>st</sup> 2018**

I thank the children's choir of the Cultural Association of Italians in Uganda for singing the National Anthems.

Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Uganda, Hon. Sam Kutesa, Hon. Ministers, Members of Parliament, Ambassadors, colleagues, ladies and gentlemen, cari italiani, all protocol observed.

I would like first of all to express - on behalf of all Italians - the most sincere and heartfelt condolences to the families of the victims of the Kiryandongo accident. May their souls rest in peace. I hope the survivors will recover soon.

Hon. Minister,

It is a true honor to celebrate with You the Festa della Repubblica. My wife Anna and I are delighted to host You and all these distinguished guests at the Italian Residence.

This year, besides the 72nd anniversary of our Republic, we are celebrating the 70th of our Constitution. It was written between June 1946 and December 1947, in a period of strong democratic uprising that followed World War II and the fall of fascism, and entered into force on January 1<sup>st</sup> 1948.

Our founding fathers wrote the Fundamental Law with the clear intention of building a juridical and cultural fortress which would never again allow space to totalitarian tendencies. They have succeeded. The Constitution gave momentum to the consolidation of the rule of law in our country, it allowed Italy to become a founding partner in the European integration process as well as an active member of the United Nations. After 70 years, the

Constitution remains a safe harbor for all Italians, even when confrontational situations challenge the political arena.

Hon. Minister,

this has been a very intense year for our bilateral relations.

As Uganda was facing increasing refugee flows, Italy - acting beyond pledges announced at the Solidarity Summit of June 2017 - supported the generosity of the Ugandan Government and people responding to the appeals of the United Nations' High Commissioner for Refugees and of several Italian NGOs.

On the development side, besides two important projects in support of the National Health System - which are in their final phase respectively in Karamoja and Acholi regions - the Italian Cooperation has recently funded new initiatives by Italian NGOs in Moroto and Gulu and one by an Italian private company for the electrification of the island of Bukasa. Other calls for proposal are in the pipeline.

Furthermore, a new very substantial initiative of the Italian Cooperation - again in the health sector - is currently in an advanced negotiation phase with the Ugandan Government.

In the security sector, the cooperation between the Carabinieri and Uganda Police Force continues to deliver. As we talk, an important course on counter-terrorism is being held at UPF's facilities in Masindi. Later this summer two other training initiatives will take place on counter-terrorism and on environmental and national park protection.

Hon. Minister, I am particularly proud of the work the Carabinieri are carrying out in Uganda. We place great importance in peace and stability, institution building, justice, human rights and the rule of law. We are honored to support our Ugandan friends as they consolidate their stability, their regional and international standing, and their democratic values.

Hon. Minister,

our bilateral exchanges have considerably grown in the last years. We've recorded an almost 50% increase since 2015, in particular to the advantage of the Ugandan economy as Your exports are exceeding ours.

The most iconic moment in the last months has probably been the signature of the Project Framework Agreement between an Italo-American consortium and the Government of Uganda for the construction of the oil refinery in Hoima. A crucial initiative that will innovate Your economy and further bond our countries.

But, besides the important role of large scale companies, the roots of our economic relations lay on the extraordinary activism of small and medium Italian entrepreneurs (many of which are under the umbrella of the Business Club Italia) and NGOs, who work tirelessly, bonding with their Ugandan counterparts, investing capital and exchanging know-how and expertise.

To meet the demand of these important stakeholders, the Embassy has geared up: a desk of the Italian Trade Agency is now active within our premises. In just a few months of activity, this office has organized fruitful missions of Italian companies in Uganda and vice-versa.

Hon. Minister,

we have also increased the offer of Italian culture in Uganda. Besides the Italian Cultural and Culinary Week and the Italian fashion show, which have become important yearly appointments in Kampala's social agenda, the Embassy has doubled the number of events organized all through the year to promote our literature, music, art, cinema, food and history. In this framework, I would like to welcome the recent foundation of the Cultural Association of Italians in Uganda (CAIU), which quickly turned into a constructive partner for the Embassy in the promotion of Italian culture.

On the occasion of our National Day we are hosting today an exhibition on the expeditions of the Duke of the Abruzzi: the first to climb all the peaks of the Rwenzori range and by many considered one of the pioneers of our bilateral friendship. The exhibition was displayed at Makerere University's Art Gallery throughout May and will be transferred tomorrow to the Kampala Museum.

Hon. Minister,

all sectors of cooperation (political, economic, cultural, humanitarian) fall under the umbrella of the Sistema Italia (The Italian System). A network linking Italian Government agencies, private companies and civil society which, particularly abroad, coordinate their action in view of common goals: promoting the Italian way of life (#vivereALLitaliana), supporting our exports

and developing the cooperation with our partner countries. As in previous years, we have organized a stand with representatives of the Sistema Italia in Uganda, here on our right. I encourage all to visit it to learn more on what Italy and Uganda are doing together.

Hon. Minister,

many achievements were recorded this year. If some expectations were not met, I am the one to blame. But all the results were obtained thanks to the incredible Italian human capital in Uganda: on one hand our community, which every single day makes me feel proud of being Italian; on the other the Embassy's staff, the best ever, that makes me look forward to going to the office every morning. I very warmly thank them all.

Hon. Minister,

Allow me to say a few words in Italian to my nationals.

Cari connazionali, ci tengo innanzitutto a ringraziarvi per i tantissimi messaggi di vicinanza che mi sono pervenuti in occasione del recente decesso di mio padre. Ho sentito molte, affettuose e sincere, manifestazioni di calore umano e di amicizia.

Questi primi tre anni a Kampala sono passati in un baleno ed Anna ed io ci sentiamo particolarmente fortunati di poter servire l'Italia qui, con tutti voi.

Vi prego di continuare a sostenere l'Ambasciata, di lavorare con noi con lo spirito critico e costruttivo che ha sempre caratterizzato il nostro rapporto. Insieme, nel nostro piccolo, possiamo dare (e stiamo dando, lasciatemelo dire) un bell'esempio delle potenzialità del nostro stupendo Paese: il piu' bello e ricco di tutti. Viva l'Italia!

Hon. Minister,

Allow me just one more minute to thank the partners that have very generously contributed to the organization of this year's national day: Areg Agrofood and Cheesvi for their delicious cheeses; Campari for the Italian cocktails; CityTyres for the screen (on which they will today also launch the annual Pirelli-Formula 1 raffle); Sterling and Sobetra for helping us in renovating the Residence's look; Thuraya security/CSS who contributed to

our communication package; Linove, Italaluminium and Marte-International who contributed to tonight's food and beverage offer. Thank you all!

Hon. Minister,

I now propose a toast to the good health and prosperity of the people and Government of Uganda, and the President of the Republic of Uganda, H.E. Yoweri Kaguta Museveni.

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**Hon. Minister, I will abuse of Your friendship and patience to mention two further issues which are of relevance to the Italian community in Uganda.**

In the beginning of 2018, the Italian community suffered from a tremendous loss. Francesco Frigerio, a very distinguished member of our community, a good friend, a hard worker and a beloved husband and father, lost his life in a car accident. In this tragedy our community showed a unique sense of solidarity and gathered immediately to support Francesco's wife, Sara, and their children, Luigi, Lucia and Giovanni. I wouldn't celebrate this year's National Day without a moment for Francesco.

In his memory, my wife Anna and I have decided to dedicate to him the pizza oven that Francesco built three years ago in this residence, and name it in his honor. We have prepared an inscribed plaque with the words: "il forno di Francesco" ("Francesco's oven"). We, as a community, often gather in this garden. And pizza is always served at our parties. We think that this plaque will help in keeping his memory alive and, somehow, make us feel as if he was still with us.

I have the pleasure to call Francesco's wife, Sara Pasolini, on the podium to collect the plaque.

Hon Minister,

Last but not least. Each year, on Labor Day, the Italian Ministry of Labour decorates Italian citizens living abroad who distinguished themselves for the quality, the endurance, the honesty and the fidelity that they have shown in

their professional lives, thus representing the excellence of Italian workers in the world.

The decoration I refer to is the title of “Maestro del Lavoro” (“Master of Labor”) under the “Stella al Merito del Lavoro” (“Star to the Merit of Labor”). The requisites to obtain this decoration are stringent: one has to be over 50 and hold no negative penal record, he must have served at least 25 consecutive years in one company with certified positive evaluations.

Only 14 workers have been decorated as Maestro del Lavoro in 2018 in the whole world. One is here in Kampala.

I am proud to call on the podium Mr. Silvano Buson. Mr. Buson is a very distinguished and respected member of the Italian community in Kampala. He has worked very successfully for over 40 years for Stirling company.