

## WELCOMING ADDRESS

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U M B E R T O L A R O C C A

*President, Società Italiana per l'Organizzazione Internazionale – SIOI, Rome, Italy*

It is my pleasure to welcome you today, on behalf of SIOI. "Società Italiana per l'Organizzazione Internazionale", in English: "Italian Society for International Organization".

As our name implies, we are mainly interested in the organized features of the International Community: this means, essentially the United Nations, the European Union, NATO, CSCE, the Regional Organizations, the world financial institutions, WTO and so on and so forth, including obviously disarmament and arms control.

The forum that our Institute has the privilege to host is an event of the utmost interest because it deals with a matter which has a direct and decisive impact on the issue of peace and security in the world.

Ten years after the end of the II World War, nuclear danger is growing, weapons of mass destruction are proliferating and their delivery vehicles are being manufactured and deployed in increasing numbers. Understandably, concern is growing about the spread of ballistic missiles and efforts are being made to contain it.

The United States plan for a national missile-defense system is an attempt to meet the new threat fostered by the proliferation of ballistic missiles.

Washington claims that BMD is a defensive measure intended to assure US national security against the so-called post-cold-war threats such as regional conflicts, interethnic tensions and international terrorism but this claim is challenged even among some of America's friends and allies who fear the deterioration in international relations and global strategic stability which might ensue.

In this context, the first aspect on which we ought to focus our attention is a realistic assessment of ballistic threats. And, quite rightly this is the first item to be discussed in the opening session of the Forum and, more precisely the likelihood, on one hand, of an accidental or erroneous attack from a great power and, on the other hand, a deliberate attack from an emerging missile State.

The second question we must ask ourselves is whether the answer given by the new BMD-NMD plan to the problem of the spread of ballistic missiles is the right one.

This means essentially assessing the military effectiveness, the technical feasibility and the financial cost of these projects.

In addition it is our duty to take into account the political impact on the international scene of the NMD deployment.

Since the beginning, Russia has been the most determined opponent of the United States missile defense program, although Washington has been eager to stress that in no way a N.M.D system will be directed against Russia. In particular, Russia denies the possibility of creating a national antiballistic missile system while preserving the 1972 ABM treaty as the cornerstone of strategic stability. In an article written for the September-October 2000 issue of "Foreign Affairs", Igor Ivanov, Foreign Minister of the Russian Federation explicitly stated that "If The United States unilaterally withdraws from the A.B.M treaty, Russia will no longer be bound by its obligations to reduce strategic armaments and the very process of nuclear disarmament will be inevitably terminated, if not reversed". As an alternative to the U.S. plan, Russia advocates the creation of a pan-European non-strategic missile-defense system, indicating that similar multilateral systems could be created in the future in other regions.

China, also, fears the destabilizing effects of a national antimissile defense system which could appear as an attempt to neutralize or limit its nuclear deterrent against the United States, although Washington has stated that China has not been figured in the NMD calculation.

Therefore it is to be expected that China would react in order to retain its deterrent by increasing its long- range arsenal against the U.S. and accentuating the threat of its intermediate-range missiles against Japan. A new arms race could be expected to erupt in the Asian Continent.

The European Union, with its present members and its candidate members, is not without concern. As you know, the Europeans are presently engaged in the difficult task of building a credible common defense. At times they look determined, at times they seem to be wavering, but a number of important goals have been reached and the European armed forces are in the making. The European project is to be considered also in the NATO context, bearing in mind the possible impact of a European defense structure on the cohesion of the alliance.

So, the NMD plan adds a further difficulty to the transatlantic relationship because it contrasts with the concept of Atlantic unity. President Bush has stated during his electoral campaign that the NMD system should also protect U.S. Allies but, until now, he has not been specific about it.

Most Europeans are convinced that the U.S. could not withdraw unilaterally from the ABM Treaty but should negotiate with Russia its revision. Moreover, they feel that the negotiating process should be applied to the whole matter of the antimissile defense in an effort to explore the possibility of mutually acceptable solutions.

These brief remarks intended to stress, in our view, both the importance and complexity of the issues your Forum will discuss to-day and to-morrow.

You are here to try and give convincing replies to a number of tough questions, all substantially related to the twin issues of missile threat and missile defence. Probably the key question, mentioned by the organizers themselves in defining the goals of the Forum, is the following: "if the answer to the spread of ballistic missiles is not given by the new BMD-NMD plans, what will be the right answer?".

On behalf of SIOI, I wish a well-deserved success to the Rome Forum.