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Discorso del Sindaco di Locarno Nicola Pini all'evento ufficiale organizzato dal Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office (FCDO) di Londra per celebrare il centenario del Patto di Locarno

Excellencies,

It is an honour for me to address you today at the commemoration of the centenary of the Locarno Pact, discussed in October 1925 in Locarno and signed right here in London on the first of December of that same year. An event that links – and will forever link – our two Cities, our two Countries, in the name of freedom, dialogue and peace. This bond has been confirmed once again this year by the presence of the United Kingdom's Ambassador to Switzerland, James William Squire, at the official commemoration on October 4th, and by the meeting held in August between the then Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs and current Deputy Prime Minister, David Lammy, and Federal Councillor Ignazio Cassis. A meeting that took place during Diplomacy Day at the Locarno Film Festival, which this year also dedicated a retrospective to post-war British cinema (1945-1960), entitled "Great Expectations".

On behalf of the City of Locarno, and of its people, please accept our deep thanks for honouring that Pact, and this bond, not only today but always. It is a great privilege for us that this hall is named "Locarno Room". Thank you. We regard it as a tribute not only to the City that hosted the Peace Conference, but above all to the spirit that so strongly permeated it – the Spirit of Locarno,

- which means a yearning for freedom, dialogue, exchange, openness, human dignity and civic engagement;
- which means resolving disputes through dialogue, international law and arbitration – and not through force, violence, war;
- which means overcoming the division between victors and losers in order to forge a shared – even European – vision.

A spirit that took shape thanks also to the wise role played by Austen Chamberlain. A spirit in which we firmly believe. A spirit we still need.

Today, in a world once again marked by tensions, wars and global challenges that put multilateralism and mutual trust to the test, the call of the Spirit of Locarno resonates with strength. It is a reminder that peace is never achieved once and for all; it must be built with determination, courage and humility.

Among the many figures of that time, let's recall the then Mayor of Locarno, Giovan Battista Rusca, a great advocate of Enlightenment values and of the Spirit of Locarno. Mayor for more than forty years (1920-1961), he also served in the cantonal and federal parliaments. He was known as



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Monsieur la Liberté – “Mr Liberty” – owing to his deep aversion to fascist regimes, which led him to support political refugees and the plurality of opinions. He was a Mayor who laid the foundations and seized the opportunities that enabled Locarno to do something truly significant for humanity, organising the Peace Conference in just a few days.

Today, we wish to symbolically seal this bond by offering you a bronze bust of him. May this bust always remind us that every individual – even the Mayor of a small town – can play their part.

Let me add that this gesture is also meant as an encouragement to younger generations: a reminder that diplomacy, respect, and the willingness to understand one another remain the most powerful tool to build a better future.

Thank you to the United Kingdom, and in particular to its Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, Yvette Cooper, for this wonderful opportunity and for the great consideration shown towards our small City – yet also great City – a City of Peace.

Thank you for your attention.

Nicola Pini
Mayor of Locarno