

Rome, CRUI, June 22<sup>nd</sup>, 2023

Dear Professor Salvatore Cuzzocrea!

Dear colleagues!

On behalf of the Union of Higher Education Institutions of Ukraine, allow me to thank you for the invitation to visit your wonderful country and attend this distinguished meeting!

The Union of Higher Education Institutions of Ukraine unites more than 100 rectors of higher education institutions of Ukraine. The members of the Union are rectors of all the leading universities of our country, which are recognized all over the world. In particular, Taras Shevchenko National University of Kyiv, Karazin Kharkiv National University, National University "Lviv Polytechnic", National Technical University of Ukraine "Igor Sikorsky Kyiv Polytechnic Institute", Kyiv National University of Construction and Architecture, etc.

In the educational space of Ukraine, the Union's role consists in improving the quality of training of specialists with higher education, ensuring the autonomy of universities, coordinating their activities in educational, scientific, innovative, economic, legal, humanitarian and other spheres, increasing the role of higher education institutions in the public life of the country.

But from February 24, 2022, we began to live and work in a new reality.... In the last year and a half, almost 400 educational institutions were completely destroyed and almost 3000 were damaged in Ukraine. Among them, 43 institutions of higher education were damaged and 5 of them were completely destroyed. More than 20 universities are forcibly displaced. Yes, KNUCA, where I have the honor to be a rector, accepted students and teachers of Mariupol State University on its territory. Separate premises, equipment and all kinds of support and assistance were provided for the accommodation of this university.

In addition, the aggressor destroyed: historical buildings and structures, unique equipment and library funds were also lost. As a result of the aggressor's actions, according to available data, 665,000 (six hundred sixty five thousands) students and school pupils (16% of the total number) and 25,000 (twenty five thousands) educators (6% of the total number) left the territory of Ukraine.

Under these conditions, we are very grateful to the Italian state and the entire Italian people for the strong support of our country in this difficult time. I would like to note that the The Italian Rectors' Conference was one of the first to provide solidarity support to Ukraine. And for this we are very grateful to the esteemed President of CRUI, Professor Kuzokrea! We are also very grateful to Professor Maurizio Tira, thanks to whose personal efforts, the academic community of Ukraine received help in the active development of inter-university relations between our countries. In particular, the University of IUAV of Venice is actively working on the development of strategies for the recovery of territories affected by the war. Fruitful work has been started on the creation of a European communication platform supporting Ukraine, where Italy can become a funder.

Reconstruction of Ukraine is our perspective. And the transformation of this perspective into reality is thanks to you. We propose to create a new reality for Ukraine together. Your capabilities and our needs will allow us to form an effective platform for the Reconstruction of Ukraine through the educational and scientific vector.

I really hope that the signing of the Memorandum on Cooperation between our rector's associations will contribute to the development of our mutual relations. I also hope that the CRUI delegation will be able to visit our country at a convenient time for them.

I think that during the following meetings today, we will be able to lay a meaningful foundation for our further cooperation in order to ensure the effective development of the educational and scientific space of our countries.

Thank you for attention!

Prof. Petro Kulikov

Rector of Kyiv National University of Civil Engineering and Architecture-KNUBA  
President of the Union of Rectors of Higher Education Institutions of Ukraine