

## **Ambassador Varricchio Speaks to Italian Journalists: Our Professions are Actually Very Similar!**

Tommaso Cartia (December 13, 2016)



Italian Ambassador in Washington, Armando Varricchio, met the Italian press in New York to wish everyone Happy Holidays. This is a great opportunity for us to reflect together: "It's important not only to closely follow all facets of America's new image, but also to understand how the new Italian administration will be ready to shape productive exchanges and establish fresh diplomatic ties with the United States."

A toast to 2017 with best wishes for the new year. In the main hall of the Italian Consulate, Consul General Francesco Genuardi hosted the meeting between the Italian Ambassador in Washington, Armando Varricchio, and Italian correspondents in New York.



This comes during a time of important transition. 2016 was full of significant sociopolitical events that prompted a fresh look at the future of diplomatic relations between the US and one of its historic allies—Italy. Upon greeting the journalists, the Ambassador focused on the need to understand the nature of the changes that are in progress.

“2017 will feature a very significant calendar of events here in America, as well as in our country and in Europe in general,” Varricchio stated. “Our professions are actually very similar in the sense that we are all moved by intellectual curiosity,” he affirmed to the journalists in the room. “We need to understand the social and political phenomena around us. We are witnessing transitions and changes that are outside the norm, and they result in new perspectives. Something very profound is happening here in America. I see it everywhere I go, primarily outside the bubble of Washington.”

Varricchio began by commenting on Trump’s presidency. He remains confident in the stability of the relationship between Italy and America: “I don’t see any reason that the new administration would not maintain this special relationship with Italy.” We need to create a new agenda for 2017 together. We need to show how important this relationship is. We must be open to a new phase,” stated the Ambassador. “It’s important not only to closely follow all facets of America’s new image, but also to understand how the new Italian administration will be ready to shape productive exchanges and establish fresh diplomatic ties with the United States. There are already some encouraging signs.”

The Ambassador was in New York only for a few hours for both this event and for ENI’s Investor Day where the Managing Director, Claudio Descalzi, presented the perspectives, evolution, and results of ENI’s transformation plan that began in 2014. Mr. Varricchio also spoke about his recent visit to Italy: “I was in Milan and Rome last week, and I had several business meetings. I saw enormous interest in what’s happening in America. I believe some of the initial shock of this unexpected election outcome has dissipated. Now we need to see what’s going to happen. There’s a great intellectual curiosity to understand all this.”

Washington is also recollecting itself after several weeks of confusion. Here’s an optimist perspective, which is also linked to Italy:

“We Italians have an advantage: a long history. We’re not surprised by anything. We’re less rigid on certain stances, and we understand how the pieces of the puzzle fit together. This year has been very positive for the relationship between the United States and Italy. Look at everything that was done: striking economic data, political and diplomatic relationships, collaboration at the international level, concrete initiatives, the environment, climate change, the role that we had in the Paris Conference; we should be pleased.”

The Ambassador hopes to engage the journalists in support of the institutions that are studying and trying to understand the evolution of current affairs in Washington.

“If I may share my thoughts,” Varricchio bids, “at least regarding what we at the Embassy can do, I will tell you that this Congress is very different than the previous one. Aside from the presidential shift, the Republican Party is also very different from the one that is leaving. They have to pretend that they won, but you can’t say that it’s the party that won. It’s Trump that won, and he’s bringing a whole new world with him. Hence, Congress needs to find a new equilibrium.”

It is hard to predict what will happen, but the situation is extremely interesting and stimulating. “When a new administration is formed, the entire Washington think tank begins a great self-analysis. This is why I see 2017 as a year of great intellectual appeal. Italy is a point of reference; we will be there.”

A final note that is very important to the Ambassador: “We must remember that in Trump’s narrow path, there are many Italian Americans.” This is crucial in fostering the dialogue between Italy and the United States.



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