

GENERAL GRAZIANO, GEN. VECCIARELLI, GEN. PORTOLANO, EUNAVFORMED PERSONNEL, LADIES AND GENTLEMEN, GOOD MORNING TO YOU ALL AND THANK YOU FOR PARTICIPATING TODAY AT THIS CEREMONY.

AS AN ADMIRAL OF THE ITALIAN NAVY AND OVERALL AS A EUROPEAN CITIZEN, I AM HONOURED AND PRIVILEGED TO TAKE THE FLOOR ON THE OCCASION OF MY APPOINTMENT AS COMMANDER OF THE EUROPEAN UNION OPERATION EUNAVFOR MED IRINI.

I STAND BEFORE YOU DEEPLY TOUCHED AND INSPIRED BY THE TRUST PLACED IN ME BY BOTH TO EUROPEAN AND ITALIAN INSTITUTIONS.

I FEEL DUTY BOUND TO EXPRESS MY HEARTFELT GRATITUDE FOR THE OPPORTUNITY I HAVE TO PERFORM THIS CRUCIAL DUTY. I AM PRETTY SURE I HAVE ALSO TO EXTEND MY GRATITUDE TO ALL OF MY SENIORS AND COLLEAGUES WITHOUT WHOM IT WOULD HAVE NEVER BEEN POSSIBLE FOR ME TO BE CONSIDERED FOR THIS POSITION.

TURNING TO THE PRESENT, I AM AWARE OF THE KEY ROLE AND IMPORTANCE OF OUR MISSION TO SERVE EUROPEAN PEOPLE GRANTING PEACE, PROSPERITY AND DIGNITY EVERYWHERE AMONG THE UNION. AS A SINGLE ENTITY, MEMBER STATES OF EUROPEAN UNION FACED AND ARE STILL GOING TO FACE A GREAT CHALLENGE TAKING THE RESPONSIBILITY TO COUNTER SMUGGLING AND ILLECIT ACTIVITIES ALL ACROSS THE MEDITERRANEAN SEA, WORKING TOGETHER IN ORDER TO ENSURE SAFETY OF NAVIGATION AND FREEDOM EVERYWHERE THROUGH OUR UNIQUE BLUE SOUTHERN BORDER OF THE UNION. WE BEAR ON OUR SHOULDERS THE RESPONSIBILITY TO SUSTAIN THE RISING ROLE OF THE EUROPEAN UNION IN FULFILLING EUROPEAN PEOPLE'S EXPECTATIONS FOR PEACE AND FREEDOM FOR ALL OUR COUNTRIES.

ACCORDING TO ME, I STRONGLY BELIEVE WE ARE COMMITTED TO AFFIRM AND PROVE THE EUROPEAN COMMON SECURITY AND DEFENCE POLICY AS A COHERENT AND RELIABLE ANSWER TO THE GROWING DEMAND FOR A STRATEGIC ROLE IN PROMOTING PEACE AND IN THE STRENGTHENING OF THE INTERNATIONAL SECURITY.

I'M NOT CLAIMING THIS IS GOING TO BE EASY, BUT I'M SURE THAT WITH PREPARATION AND A COSTANT SOURCE OF READINESS WE'RE GOING TO DO IT TOGETHER WITH MEN AND WOMEN UNDER MY COMMAND. AND HERE, TODAY I OFFER YET MY THANKS TO ALL OF THEM FOR THE COMMITMENT THEY GAVE ME AND THEY'RE GOING TO GIVE UNDER ANY CIRCUMSTANCES. I AM SURE THAT THE PROFESSIONALISM, ABILITY AND RESILIENCE OF OUR STAFF AND THE STRENGHT

OF ASSETS FORCE PROVIDERS WILL MAKE AVAILABLE, WE WILL BE READY TO ADAPT AND COUNTER RISING THREATS TO INTERNATIONAL SECURITY AND REGIONAL STABILITY, PERFORMING ALL OF THE TASKS ASSIGNED BY MEMBER STATES OF EUROPEAN UNION.

TO ADMIRAL AGOSTINI, SIR I SAW THE EFFORT YOU DID TO LEAD THIS OPERATION AND TO PREPARE ALL YOUR CREWS AND FORCES TO FULFILL THE GROWING EXPECTATIONS OF OUR CHALLENGING FUTURE. I PROMISE I WILL PERSONALLY PROTECT THE INSPIRING LEGACY YOU'RE GIVING US, ALWAYS REMEMBERING THAT THE VERY MOMENT YOU STOP PREPARING FOR AN OCCURENCE IT WILL ALMOST CERTAINLY HAPPEN.

ADMIRAL, ON BEHALF OF EUNAFORMED PERSONNEL, THANK YOU AND GODSPEED AS YOU PREPARE TO START YOUR NEXT ASSIGNMENT.

FINALLY, FORGIVE ME IF I TURN MY THOUGHTS TO MY FAMILY, SENDING THEM MY BOUNDLESS GRATITUDE FOR THE PATIENT UNDERSTANDING AND THE WHOLEHEARTED SUPPORT THEY GIVE ME EVERYDAY, GIVING ME THE STRENGTH TO SERVE ALWAYS UNCONDITIONALLY.