

Dear friends,

I wish to thank Adnkronos for organising this initiative and for choosing to create a new editorial and information project that is wholly dedicated to the family and the birth rate, two issues that are particularly important to myself and the entire Government.

This is also why I am truly sorry that I am unable to participate in person, but I nevertheless wanted to send you my contribution and my reflections. My thanks and greetings go to those who will be officially representing the Government today: Minister of Labour and Social Policies Calderone, Deputy Minister of Economy and Finance Leo and Undersecretary of State to the Ministry of Health Gemmato.

My greetings also go to all the authorities, institutional representatives and representatives from the worlds of science, manufacturing and communication who have accepted this invitation from Adnkronos and are present today at the Palazzo dell'Informazione. The fact that this event is being attended by such a high-level group of distinguished experts from across different fields provides an indication, and confirmation, of the growing attention being paid to the demographic emergency in our nation. Indeed, one of the first things we have to do is keep the spotlight on the central role of demographic policies for Italy's future and on how important it is to raise public awareness.

The Government has put natality and the family at the heart of its commitment, and it has done so with a systemic vision, carrying out work across all Ministries and considering children a fundamental criterion in all areas. This vision has inspired the many measures adopted so far, from the increase in the 'assegno unico' ['single allowance'] to the regulations on mortgages for young couples, from strengthening parental leave to including household composition and the costs incurred to raise children in the principles of the tax reform enabling law. This is only the beginning and there are many measures in the pipeline.

All this, however, needs to be accompanied by a cultural change. We want to give Italians back a nation in which being a father is no longer considered out of fashion and being a mother is not seen only as a private choice, but a socially recognised value. A nation in which having a child means recognising that you have done something wonderful, that is bigger than you, that doesn't take anything away from you, that doesn't deprive you of anything and that doesn't prevent you from realising your dreams; something that contributes to accumulating those years of the future, that 'demographic GDP' which is essential to ensure that generations continue to flow.

Children are life and hope, like the seeds that need to be planted to make a forest grow. For decades, the dominant culture has told us the exact opposite. The time has now come to break this narrative and reverse the trend, by promoting the beauty of parenthood and building a new social imaginary that puts the birth rate first.

As Pope Francis reminded us, overcoming the demographic winter means fighting something that goes "against our families, against our country, even against our future".

This is our challenge. An ambitious challenge, but one that we are not afraid to take on. The Government is here and is ready to do its part.

Thanks to all of you and I wish you all the best with your work.

*[Courtesy translation]*