

Speech by Giorgia Meloni at the Conservative Political Action Conference in Orlando, United States.

February 26, 2022

Dear friends of CPAC, dear American conservatives, I was supposed to fly from Italy only a few hours after Russia started bombing Ukraine. And I must confess that I had mixed feelings about whether to leave or give up being here with you all at CPAC. In the end, I decided to be here because faced with this unacceptable attack, being here is the best way to clarify where we stand on this conflict.

We are on the side of international law. We are on the side of freedom. And indeed, we are on the side of a proud nation that is teaching the world what it means to fight for freedom.

Of course, as many of you will agree, no one gets it out of my head that without the outrageous withdrawal of troops from Kabul yesterday, we would have never seen the tragic siege of Kyiv today. And certainly no one would be preparing to see Taiwan occupied tomorrow. For in foreign policy, when it comes to defending strategic interests and core values, a display of weakness is not an option. The ancient Romans used to say, *civis pacem parabellum*, if you want peace, prepare for war. Still, we will have time to talk about mistakes.

Today is the time to be united and take a stand. And we very well know that our side is the Western World.

Dear friends, this is the second time I stand on this stage. The first time I was invited here as the leader of a small but proud Italian Conservative Party. Today I address you as the president of the European Conservative Party, a party that brings together 44 patriotic and conservative parties in Europe and the rest of the world, including the American Republican Party. And I address you as the leader of Fratelli d'Italia, which since then has grown to be the main Italian Center Right Party and according to many recent polls, even the largest party in the country.

I say this not because I am proud of what we achieved. I say this because it shows that the truth of our ideas is ultimately what people are looking for. We live in a time in which everything we stand for is under attack. Our individual freedom is under attack. Our rights are under attack.

The sovereignty of our nation is under attack. The prosperity and wellbeing of our families under attack. The education of our children is under attack. In front of this, people understand that in this age, the only way of being rebels is to preserve what we are. The only way of being rebels is to be conservatives.

We are going to say it loud. We are not going to care about the labels they stick upon us. We are fed up of a left that presumes to lecture us even on what the right should be, what it should do,

how it should behave, and even how it should define itself. The left would do better to try recovering its own identity. We on the right know exactly who we are and what we stand for.

It's the same all over the world, so-called progressives use the power and the arrogance of their mainstream media to force their political opponents to change, to be allowed into their inner circles. Except that, once right-wing men and women are admitted into progressive inner circles, they will have changed so much that conservative people will no longer recognize them and will stop supporting them. And that's exactly what they want: a right wing on a leash, irrelevant and trained as a monkey. But you know what? We're not monkeys.

We are not even rhinos.<sup>1</sup> We won't be part of their zoo.

We will not be part of their inner circles because we prefer the public squares. And we will not be part of their mainstream because we are on the side of the people. You in America and us in Europe and our friends on other continents. We are proud of our identities, of what we stand for. And we know that our adversaries operating globally, applying the same tactics and the same ideology to destroy our identities and what makes us who we really are.

I see unbelievable things happening on the border between the United States and Mexico. And I think of our own Sicily. Thousands of migrants allowed to enter without permission, who end up crowding out the slums of our towns and cities undercutting the salaries of our own workers and in many instances, engaging in crime. Will we surrender in front of this? No, we won't.

We will fight it standing tall. I see cancel culture fanatics, not only in the street violence, but also in our institutions, tearing down stages, tampering with books and comics, changing street names, accusing of guilt a shared history that they would like to rewrite. Will we surrender in front of this? No, we won't. We'll fight it head on. I see the woke ideology destroying the foundations of the natural family, attacking life, insulting religion, changing words, and even imposing new graphic signs. Only a few months ago, European Union bureaucrats wrote a document hundreds of pages long telling us that in order to be inclusive, we had to exclude all references to Christmas, Jesus, Mary and all Christian names were to be removed from all official communication.

Will we surrender in front of this? No, we will not. We will fight it. We will fight it standing tall.

Each of us has a role to play in defending all these things. And the good news is that here, as in Europe, more and more people are choosing to react. They are reacting against their Chinese model, against their fake news media, against their politically correct dictatorship. The true Europe will not give up. The true America will not give up.

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<sup>1</sup> Rhino may also refer to the acronym RINO (Republican In Name Only) to indicate that they are true conservatives.

We will be awakening many more like ourselves. And there will always be more of us. They will try to take everything away from us, but they can't take away who we are. And you know what? Cherishing who we are, knowing what we stand for is all we need to face this challenge.

Do not fear the truth, my friends. As a great conservative author like Gilbert Chesterton wrote, "fires will be kindled to testify that two and two makes four. Swords will be drawn to prove that leaves are green in summer." The time of that battle has come, but they will find us ready for the battle. Thank you very much.