

**Address by Ambassador Gianluigi Benedetti on the occasion of the Covid-19  
Webinar (7 September 2020)**

Dear Friends,

Good to see you all. I wish to thank each and every one of the panel members, for dedicating - in the midst of this crazy period - your time and energies into this initiative.

Albert Einstein said that in the midst of every crisis lies great opportunity. Taking this a step forward, and in the spirit of his principle of relativity, I would carefully add - the larger the crisis, the greater the opportunity. And THIS CRISIS, as all of us around this virtual round table well know, is large ENOUGH...

We, at the Italian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and in particular at my Embassy, are committed to dedicate all our diverse resources, and all of our goodwill, to try and contribute our small-yet-determined share to the battle against Covid-19. This meeting is a part of it.

Other initiatives we endorsed and promoted include a project between the Università Cattolica, the Policlinico Gemelli, and Afeka College to develop pre-diagnosis applications based on voice recognition and two collaborations aimed at developing therapies based on antibodies isolated from recovered patients' blood, between Toscana Life Sciences, Ospedale Careggi, and the Israeli Institute for Biological Research and between the research teams of the Italian company Kedrion and the Israeli Kamada.

Today we will try to understand what is the right way to deal with the pandemic at the clinical level. How to best treat people who are already sick, how to decrease mortality, how to minimize the permanent damages. What are the best practices in ER, hospitals, ICUs and with patients quarantined at home.

Some utterly terrible moments in the pandemic have hit Italy in the past few months. I particularly recall the horrific announcement made on March 27, 2020, when the civil protection authorities declared that 919 people had died in just 24 hours.

Now, just four months later, life in Italy is nearly back to normal, despite occasional spikes in cases. The death toll has leveled off, with the number

of new reported deaths now less than 10 most days. The total number of daily new cases is well below that in other large European Countries. Face masks are mandatory and social distancing is enforced, but Italian summer is happening and life – I went back to Italy in late July - is almost normal.

So what makes Italy fight so well in this battlefield? Some say it is its realism, inventiveness and solidarity. Certainly our Government's leadership is to be congratulated, in particular its adherence to science over popularity. With each new taste of freedom, the health authorities checked the contagion rate, never permitting more places to open if there was a spike and warning they would lock back down if things deteriorated.