



Welcome from the Co-Chair  
of the Organizing Committee  
the President of CRUI **Enrico Decleva**



Dear Colleagues Presidents and Rectors,  
Distinguished Delegates from so many Countries  
Honourable Guests

The last decades have represented a time of radical change in Universities worldwide. The isolation in which academic speculation prospered over the centuries has slowly given way to a broader involvement of Universities in the historical dynamics of their Countries of belonging. Ever committed to the creation of knowledge through research and to its dissemination through teaching, Universities have an intense network of relations with social and production partners. By heeding to and predicting the needs of the human community Universities have put their competence at the service of the general improvement of the living conditions of human groups in an ever-more globalised and inter-connected world through the collaboration with their institutional counterparts in other countries.

In this perspective, the first G8 University Summit meeting held in Sapporo, Japan in 2008, represented the natural evolution of this new phase. Universities have chosen to play an active role in singling out timely and effective solutions to the problems of Humankind and of the planet. They are thus resolutely taking on the challenges that are currently taking shape. On the other hand, Universities are also aware of the responsibilities that their enhanced role entails and declare their readiness to shoulder them in order to achieve a now unrelinquishable goal, in the pursuit of which the participation of academia is crucial: the global sustainability of human societies. In this outlook, the G8 University Summit represents a historical event in which Universities might consolidate and renew their institutional role at international level.

For the Italian academic system, the G8 University Summit 2009 represents the occasion and privilege of making a significant contribution towards consolidating the experiment launched at Sapporo. The initiative promoted in Japan has had the unquestionable merit of symbolically positioning Universities at the side of the topmost authorities of the most influential Countries, in a peak opportunity for debating the most relevant issues of the future. At this point, it is necessary to convert this experiment into a routine, to consolidate participation and to outline the procedural standards that are liable to enhance the effectiveness of the Summit's proceedings and the subsequent implementation of its resolutions.

Economics, Ethics, Energy and Ecology will represent the main axis around which the whole discussion will revolve and will be tackled with not as four isolated items but as the four pivotal points of a complex and integrated structure, through which international relations between nations and the impact of human societies on the environment can be changed towards sustainability.

Science and academic disciplines are naturally endowed with an international vocation. The communities of scholars and researchers have always overlooked the boundaries existing between Nations, in order to share their knowledge and extend the frontiers of knowledge. This makes it easier to pool together eminent Institutions around an academic rather than a political summit debate. Universities thus aim at extending the variable geometry debate to Countries that are non G8 members. Especially at a time in which the problems at issue concern the future of the world as a globally integrated system and in which it is necessary to make sure that the solutions set forth are actually effective, it is adamant to share and to assure the active participation of a broader representation of the inhabitants of this planet.