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*56th international wine and spirits exhibition scheduled at Veronafiere until 17 April inaugurated today*

***WINE: 56TH VINITALY INAUGURATED.***

***FONTANA (SPEAKER OF THE ITALIAN PARLIAMENT): AN APPEAL FOR PEACE FROM VERONAFIERE. WINE IS AN IDENTIFYING SECTOR AND VINITALY IS A MATTER OF PRIDE FOR ALL ITALIANS***

***BRICOLO (PRESIDENT, VERONAFIERE): THE VINITALY BRAND HELPS GROW ITALIAN WINE AROUND THE WORLD. 1200 TOP BUYERS IN VERONA THANKS TO JOINT DIPLOMATIC AND BUSINESS PROMOTION***

**Verona - 14 April 2024** "We inaugurate this Vinitaly after a difficult night. I think that, as never before, we must make an appeal for responsibility, prudence and the work of all national and international institutions to achieve peace. I thank the government and the action it is taking. I hope that this international event will also help us work to give our children a world of peace and friendship between peoples." So said the President of the Chamber of Deputies, **Lorenzo Fontana**, today on opening the inauguration ceremony of the 56th Vinitaly, the international wine and spirits exhibition scheduled at Veronafiere until Wednesday 17 April. After commenting on the dangerous escalation in the Middle East, President Fontana also said: “Wine is an incredibly identifying sector. Every wine has its own traditions and history yet is equally a universal commodity, despite the attacks." In his speech, Fontana also thanked "the national and international trade operators attending the show, as well as the institutions that have contributed to the growth of Vinitaly, thereby turning it into a source of pride not only for the people of Verona but all Italians".

With more than 4000 wineries from all over Italy and 30 other countries, Vinitaly confirms its status as the only trade fair brand representing the entire variety of Italian wine-making around the world. This result is also confirmed by the expectations for this 56th edition - set to repeat last year's success with well over 30000 operators in the Exhibition Centre representing international demand from 140 countries: one-third of the overall total.

The President of Veronafiere, **Federico Bricolo**, commented: “Vinitaly is not only a fundamental ally for companies in this sector but also helps improve the positioning of Italian wine in the main strategic areas. This year sees 1200 top buyers from 65 countries ready to meet and begin negotiations with exhibitors. This result is up by 20% compared to 2023 and was achieved thanks to an impressive incoming campaign, developed not the least with the support of ICE Trade Agency, which for the first time also involved all the country's promotion institutions. Business diplomacy to help the sector and companies grow."

Vinitaly is also flanked by other shows opening today until 17 April: the 28th Sol, International olive oil trade show, 25th Enolitech, international exhibition of technologies for wine, oil and beer production, and Xcellent Beers, the exhibition dedicated to craft breweries. These events ensure that more than 4300 exhibitors will pack the sold-out Exhibition Centre.

The inauguration also welcomed speeches by: **Barbara Bissoli**, Deputy Mayor, Verona City Council, **Flavio Massimo Pasini**, President of the Province of Verona; **Antonio Tajani**, Vice-President of the Council of Ministers and Minister of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation; **Francesco Lollobrigida**, Minister of Agriculture, Food Sovereignty and Forestry; **Luca Zaia**, President of the Veneto Region, **Adolfo Urso**, Minister of Business and Made in Italy, **Gennaro Sangiuliano**, Minister of Culture; **Matteo Zoppas**, President of the ICE Trade Agency, and **Maurizio Danese**, Managing Director of Veronafiere

The inauguration ceremony also saw the presentation of the “**Vinitaly Italy Award**”, the “**Vinitaly International Award**” and the new “**Vinitaly Wine Critics Award**" and the "**Vinitaly 100 Years Award**”.

There follow comments by speakers.

**COMMENTS BY SPEAKERS DURING THE INAUGURATION OF THE 56TH VINITALY**

**Barbara Bissoli**, Deputy Mayor, Verona City Council: “*Vinitaly and Veronafiere take Verona, the Veneto Region and Italy out into the world. This is a universal exhibition of an extraordinary product that is not only part of our culture and traditions but also a driver for our economy. Vinitaly has equally helped build bridges around the world, from Asia to the United States and South America. An architecture and a hope for peace that sets off from and comes back to Verona. I especially wish to greet the National Women of Wine Association, whose commitment, amazing skills and creativity have made inroads into this traditionally male sector since 1988*.”

**Flavio Massimo Pasini**, **President of the Province of Verona; “***We have seen many news items concerning a European country which would like to affix labels to bottles of spirits and even wines with "highly dangerous product" health warnings. Well, the country in question has 39 controlled designations of origin (as many as Verona itself). A European country that wants to do this kind of thing should at least have a wine culture. We have such a culture and we are spreading it among our young people as well."*

**Antonio Tajani**, Minister of Foreign Affairs, after illustrating the Government's next undertakings to address the international crisis, starting with the G7 convened by Prime Minister Giorgia Meloni, said: “*All our wine entrepreneurs have to know that they are not alone. They can rely on the support of this government and its efforts to break down customs barriers and unfair competition. I hope that things will also change in Brussels: we defend the Mediterranean diet and we have stated very clearly that it is colossal stupidity to say that wine is a carcinogenic product. It is untrue from a scientific point of view. It is a treacherous attack against wine and the Mediterranean diet which must be repulsed*.”

**Francesco Lollobrigida**, Minister of Agriculture, Food Sovereignty and Forestry; “*Italian wine generates exports worth almost 8 billion euros and consumers on the domestic market choose it because it embodies quality and security. We may perhaps drink a little less - and it is a good idea to drink in moderation because I believe that the best thing is to enjoy quality wines at the right price to remunerate the supply chain, from wine-growers to wine-makers, processors and distributors to give balance and create wealth for the country*."

**Luca Zaia**, President of the Veneto Region: “*It is no coincidence that Vinitaly, the landmark international trade fair, came into being in the Veneto Region, in Verona. The Veneto Region is the leading wine producer and we export approximately 36% of the national total. This is a marvellous opportunity for us even from the point of view of promoting our local areas. Record production must flanked by record tourism: 72 million visitors generating turnover of around 18 billion euros. This is a superb result yet merit equally goes to our wine-growers looking after around 100,000 hectares of vineyards in the Veneto. We must interrupt negative narratives affecting young people, who bring innovation and sustainability to agriculture*.”

**Adolfo Urso**, Minister of Enterprise and Made in Italy; “*Vinitaly is the finest preview you could hope for on the first Made in Italy Day which will be celebrated tomorrow all over Italy with more than 300 events. The most extraordinary thing about this event is that it is not an exhibition show hall, which could be located anywhere else in the world. It is the flavour of a territory where buyers can savour its culture. What has happened over the last 20 years as regards food and wine products, thanks to geographical indications - PGIs and PDOs - which have made Italy great around the world whereby we are perceived abroad as quality producers, will also happen in the next 20 years for geographical indications on industrial products and manufactured goods*.”

**Gennaro Sangiuliano**, Minister of Culture; “*The happy pairing between art and wine also continues. If we look at the works on display here at Vinitaly, we realise that Italian excellence is the outcome of a long historical process, of long traditions that are equally brought up to date. Italy ensures excellence in this field because we have a history, craftsmanship and a production capacity going back many centuries. We are working with Minister Lollobrigida so that UNESCO will also acknowledge Italian cuisine as an intangible asset. This seems to me to be a duty we must pursue. Italy is a cultural superpower precisely because it represents a unique civilisation*.”

**Matteo Zoppas**, President of Ice Trade Agency; “*The world of wine is experiencing a period of great challenges. Given the fine results achieved by Italian produce with our main trading partners, such as Germany and the United Kingdom, as well as emerging partners such as the Balkan countries, the slowdown on American and Asian markets is a signal we must read very carefully. In a context where unpredictability has become the rule, nevertheless authoritative institutes are currently forecasting a recovery for the second half of 2024 extending into 2025. The activity of this Government very evidently attributes great importance to Made in Italy. This approach also strengthens and facilitates the work of the ICE Trade Agency*.”

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