



Address by the Permanent Observer of Italy
to the Organization of American States
Ambassador Roberto Nocella

Sports diplomacy event at the OAS
“Fencing as a peace bridge between the Americas and Europe”

Washington D.C.

May 12, 2025

Thank you. Good evening.

It is a great pleasure to be here with all of you.

I want to thank, first of all, the Secretary General of the Organization of American States, Luis Almagro, for the opening.

I also want to thank the Permanent Mission of Panama and the Permanent Mission of the United States, as we have been working almost daily during months for the achievement of what should be considered a collective result based on cooperation.

I especially want to acknowledge the support and commitment of Ambassador **Ana Irene Delgado** and of the interim representative of the US mission to the OAS, Mr. **Thomas Hastings**. It has been a pleasure and an honor to work with you and your respective teams. As we say in Italian, "*l'unione fa la forza*": unity is strength.

I welcome the Italian Fencing Federation and thank the President **Luigi Mazzone** and the Honorary President **Giorgio Scarso**, who is here today, for investing in this initiative by bringing to Washington the Italian National Team of epee, coming here directly from the late fencing tournament, the Grand Prix, organized in Colombia. The team comprises the coach **Daniele Pantoni** and the fencers **Valerio Cuomo**, **Enrico Piatti**, **Davide Di Veroli**, and **Gianpaolo Buzzacchino**.

In addition, a very young and promising Italian fencer, **Melissa Raggi**, is with us today. I wish her and the other young opponent from the United States, Maria, all the best.

Moreover, I want to highlight the support of the Milano Cortina 2026 Foundation and the Italian National Olympic Committee.

At the same time, I want to express my appreciation and happiness for the presence today of my fellow colleagues of the Italian Embassy in Washington – some of them have been instrumental in organizing and promoting this initiative – and the Italians living in Washington DC.

At the end, Ferrero, a well-known brand which has a dual collaboration both with the Italian Fencing Federation and the OAS, will kindly offer us a cocktail.

As you know, Italy is going to organize the next Winter Olympics in Milano and Cortina in 2026 and it will be a great opportunity to promote our beautiful territories and cultural heritage. Los Angeles will follow in 2028. We are looking forward to these big events. In the same vein, we are looking forward to the next FIFA world cup.

At the Olympics, fencing can be considered the flagship discipline of Italian sports: Italian fencers have won 50 gold medals, 49 silver medals and 36 bronze medals. This impressive medal count makes Italian fencing a point of reference all over the world. From this perspective, we can say that fencing is part of the Italian soft power.

But allow me to elaborate briefly on today's joint sports diplomacy initiative, that combines a panel discussion on the Olympic values, the architectural beauty of one of the most fascinating buildings in Washington, and a live sports performance.

The Hall of Americas has hosted Presidents, Prime Ministers, Ministers of Foreign Affairs, diplomatic negotiations, receptions and cultural events, like concerts, but never a sports event, despite its long history. Our goal is not only to entertain, by displaying something unprecedented.

We would like to look further, since sport can contribute to the strengthening of the four pillars of the OAS (democracy, human rights, integral development and security) by offering a tool for individual and collective growth, a vehicle for peace and international cooperation, as well as a way for bridging differences.

If sport is considered a universal language, this is the main message that we wish to convey.

The ambition is to create a new space for international collaboration within this historic international regional organization and pave the way for future initiatives, also with the active involvement of civil society and like-minded private actors.

In this endeavor, Italy, as an active permanent observer of the OAS since 1972, will play its role.

Thank you for your attention.

Roberto Nocella