

**European Inter-University Centre for Human Rights and Democratisation
European Master's Programme in Human Rights and Democratisation**

***Graduation Ceremony for the Awarding of
"Joint Diplomas of European Master's in Human Rights and Democratisation"
for the Academic Year 2010/2011***

Scuola Grade di San Rocco, Venice, Italy, 25 September 2011

Address by

Dr. Angela Melchiorre, E.MA Programme Director



Distinguished guests,
Esteemed colleagues,
Dear masteroni,
Dear masterini,

It is a great honour for me to have been appointed E.MA Programme Director. The world-wide prestige and impact of E.MA are so renowned and established now that anyone working in human rights would feel honoured to be involved in it. Nowhere else in Europe (and in the world) is it possible to find the same key features of E.MA: genuine inter-university cooperation, constant curriculum development, combination of theory and practice within an interdisciplinary approach, and relentless synergy of great minds sharing

inspiring ideas and expert knowledge. These features alone are already very good reasons for wanting to be part of E.MA. If one adds the many achievements over time and the forward-looking ideas for the future, one cannot but feel energized about this unique programme. So this is how I feel, indeed: honoured and energised.

But I also feel privileged and this is for more personal reasons. Twelve years ago I was sitting on one of those chairs. The ceremony was in Palazzo Ducale then, but I was like you, a masterina eagerly waiting for the E.MA course to start. Little did I know then that E.MA would change me and my life so profoundly. Not only did I learn a great deal about human rights and democratisation, but also about myself, my interests and capacities. Not only did I acquire the self-confidence necessary for a successful career, but also the skills and knowledge necessary to build that self-confidence on a solid basis.

Thanks to the E.MA programme I was able to work at the UN in Geneva and New York, to become a lecturer at the University of London on another master's in human rights, and last but not least, to work for an important international NGO such as ActionAid International.

I am not saying all this for shameless self-promotion, but to underline how many opportunities the E.MA course offers after graduation. Certainly, this does not come easily: the course is very intense and requires a lot of commitment, passion and hard work. But the rewards are many and not only in terms of getting a diploma.

So being back with the E.MA for me also means to feel privileged that I can now give back part of what the E.MA gave to me and create new rewarding opportunities for others. I am fully aware that this is a challenging task, but I want to reassure all my colleagues and students that I feel prepared for it and that I intend to make this a rewarding experience for us all.

To the masteroni graduating today I want to offer my warmest congratulations and welcome to our E.MAAlumni network. I can assure you that whatever job you will take up, wherever you will go, you will always find one or more masteroni ready to help you, work with you and think creatively with you about how to keep the E.MA spirit alive.

To my masterini I want to offer all my best wishes for the year ahead and the reassurance that you can count on me, on the E.MA Team, on all my colleagues from the 41 participating universities and on EIUC for a solid and relevant learning experience.

To all of us in this magnificent room I would like to offer some food for thought by quoting my mentor and friend Katarina Tomasevski, the first UN Special Rapporteur on the right to education. She used to say (and I quote): *“the essential prerequisites for human rights work are incurable optimism, patience and persistence, and a long attention span”* (end of quote).

I find this to be very true. No matter what I do, or my colleagues do, or you all do; no matter where we are: in a classroom, in the field, in a glamorous office in New York. What matters is that human rights and democratisation need all our persistence and attention. It will take time, no doubt; Katarina used to say it was a case of chipping away. All human rights work is, but if I am here it is because I want to add my contribution to this chipping away and hopefully inspire you to do the same.

Thank you very much.