Acceptance Speech of Honorary Professorship

Minister Kudrin, Rector Afanasiev, Primo Consigliere Bencini, distinguished colleagues and guests, class of 2011, ladies and gentlemen

It is a great honor to be here today on this day of graduation and celebration of the 2011 class of the State University of the Ministry of Finance of the Russian Federation, and to receive an honorary professorship from this distinguished Institution. An award which I accept humbly, and with deep emotion and gratitude. I want to extend my warmest congratulations to all of you for your successful achievement of this important milestone, and to Rector Afanasiev and the Faculty of the State University, for building such a prestigious world class institution, in such an important sector of Russian national life.

In my studies of political science in three continents I have learnt so well how the creation of a professional, dedicated and motivated civil service, and entrepreneurial elite, is a vital component of a country’s success. It can make the difference between economic growth and decline, between a future of hope for our younger generations, and a life of uncertainty and distrust. So take pride in your achievement and in who and what you represent for your country.

But the vision of our future generations cannot be limited to one country, nations like men are not islands. And we have learnt much too well in our history, what kind of tragedies can be produced when rulers think they can rule as if they were not surrounded by other peoples and other aspirations. The world as we know it today is a world of dialogue, of mutual discovery, of long distance cross-pollination of ideas
and friendships. Today as never before we must understand others to understand who we are, and to enrich and empower our own life.

That is what makes my presence here today so moving and touching to me. The first Italian President of John Cabot University, an American university in Rome, which has had the privilege of signing a close collaborative relation with your prestigious University.

It is in these criss-crossing cultural currents that lies the strength of today’s education. To study the liberal arts in Rome, the Eternal city, in today’s world “lingua franca”, with students coming from all over the world and from every corner of the United States of America is indeed a unique, life changing experience, a gift to the youth who benefit from it, but also to our increasingly global world, because those are qualities our youth will use to face tomorrow’s complexities and opportunities. But that experience would not be complete for any of us, without the vital contribution of young people from Russia, with their wealth of culture and learning. That is why we are so excited with the collaboration between our two institutions, a collaboration which I hope will be deepened and strengthened in the years to come.

But what is particularly touching to me, an Italian citizen, is to be here in Moscow today, to receive this great honor, in the very year which celebrates the friendship between Russia and Italy. A friendship that goes back many centuries and has found expression in many fields of artistic, economic and diplomatic cooperation. From the way Italian architects have changed the face of your major cities in the 17th century to the way in which Russian writers and composers have touched the heart of Italians,
all the way to the deepening friendship of the past decade which sees Russia and Italy working together for world development and peace. Two cultures then which since coming in contact, like in a chemical reaction, have been deeply transformed by each other.

I then salute you class of 2011, and I wish you all the best in your careers, which as graduates of this outstanding University will be full of success and satisfactions.

SPASIBA, UDACHI!