OPENING CEREMONY – 6 OCTOBER 2025

Moderator: Marcella Gaspardone

Speakers: Maurizio Montagnese, Simon April, Alessandra Locatelli, Daniela Santanchè, Zoritsa Urosevic, Paolo Bongioanni, Alberto Cirio and Michela Favaro

The Opening Ceremony of the 3rd World Summit on Accessible Tourism marked the beginning of two days of reflection, exchange, and commitment to a more inclusive and sustainable tourism industry. Introduced at first by **Sara Piana, coordinator, CPD Turismabile**, and moderated by **Marcella Gaspardone (Manager of Turismo Torino e Provincia, Italy)**, the session brought together leading institutional figures, ministers, and international experts who emphasised accessibility as both a universal right and an economic opportunity.

Maurizio Montagnese, Co-President of the Summit, highlighted Italy's growing leadership in accessible tourism and the strategic role of the Piemonte Region and the city of Turin as living laboratories for inclusion. He underlined that accessibility benefits the majority, not a minority, and represents a winning investment for companies and territories alike.

Minister of Tourism, Daniela Santanchè reaffirmed the Italian government's financial commitment, announcing dedicated funds for improving accessibility in heritage sites, museums, and accommodation, while **Minister for Persons with Disabilities, Alessandra Locatelli** stressed the social and economic potential of inclusive tourism, calling for a change of perspective that focuses on people's abilities rather than their limitations.

Piemonte Regional President Alberto Cirio and **Councillor Paolo Bongioanni** recalled the pioneering work carried out in Piemonte over the past fifteen years, with initiatives such as Turismabile and Piemonte for All, which made accessibility a structural element of regional tourism policies.

Deputy Mayor Michela Favaro positioned Turin as a European capital of "smart and accessible tourism," combining innovation, creativity, and social responsibility.

Simon April, Co-President of the Summit and representative of Kéroul (Canada), retraced the international journey of the Destinations for All movement, from Montreal 2014 to Brussels 2018 and now Turin 2025, emphasising collaboration and continuity.

Finally, **Zoritsa Urosevic, Executive Director of UN Tourism**, connected the event's objectives with the global policy framework, recalling the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and announcing forthcoming UN Tourism initiatives, including a Global Observatory on Tourism Accessibility.

The ceremony set a clear direction: accessibility must become a standard dimension of tourism governance, innovation, and investment, ensuring that travel is a right and a possibility for all.

Watch Opening Session on YouTube. (run time 1:22:34)