

SOFT POWER CONFERENCE
SECOND EDITION
VENICE, AUGUST 30th-31st 2021

We are actively working to organize the Second edition of the Soft Power Conference, which is now confirmed for **August, 30th - 31st, 2021**. The venue of the Second Conference has been confirmed in **Venice**, in the year of its 1600th anniversary from the Foundation. Once a world crossroad for trade and cultures, today a universal and unique city, tomorrow the epicenter of a potential environmental disaster which the global community must prevent and avoid, Venice speaks to the world.

The Soft Power Club is also honored to announce that Mrs. Helen Clark, former Prime Minister of New Zealand (1999 – 2008) and former Administrator of the United Nations Development Programme (2009 – 2017), has accepted to be a member of the Club.

From Venice again, as for the First edition in 2020, members of the Club will launch a clear message to the international community in order to make use of “lessons learned” from the pandemic in rebuilding and shoring up new, cooperative, multilateral and effective approaches, enhanced and supported by soft power, to meet global present and future challenges.

The aim of the second edition of the Conference will be to further exploring role and potential of a widespread soft power, with shared objectives. The current historical phase needs a visionary perspective on the world order and a commitment to values, ideals and projects based on soft power and open to the contribution of citizens, business organizations, academia and renewed supranational organizations.

Members of the Club share the urgency of soft power to channel the strength of ideas into action, with concrete opportunities for initiatives, projects, aggregations and local, national, transnational, international or global campaigns.

The Club will aim to define shared messages, and pragmatic objectives every year, placing itself as a forum for maximum inclusiveness, with an international and intercultural scope; not as a bearer of particular categories of values, nor of any “partisan” political-cultural physiognomy. The personalities involved – both in the Steering Committee, which ensures the proper functioning of the Club, and among the members of the Club itself – ensure a pluralistic profile and adhere to an approach of openness to dialogue and to open debate between different orientations.

It will continue to rely on Culture and creativity as soft power’s most powerful carriers and proactively engage innovative and forward-looking individuals, institutions and industries. It supports the international agenda of upcoming events like the G20 summit in Rome (30-31 October) that has made “People, Planet, Prosperity” its driving theme, but operates on the conviction that soft power cannot be left to governments and diplomacy only. The Club will seek involvement of the private sector, especially of creative industries that can play a leading and unique role in conveying its message to large domestic and international audiences.

The pandemic is dramatically accelerating some strategic and geopolitical megatrends. Three main priorities have been identified by the members of the Club and will be the object of a deeper analysis towards and during the second Venice Conference:

- **The role of science, research and medical qualification in protecting Health:** as shown by the current “vaccine nationalism”, Governments can be liable to bending science to domestic politics and/or to geopolitical designs. The perception of vaccine as a common good needs to be bolstered – and that is a quintessentially soft power task. It is not only an ethical and humanitarian issue, rather a strategic one: raw competition as opposed to cooperation in cure – related research and development paves the way to future global inequalities and, possibly, to emerging crisis in the near future, when scientists foresee possible, or likely, new pandemics. International community and political leaderships need to move to a cooperative approach. For that reason, the Club will recognize the First Soft Power Prize to a personality or an organization committed to fight the pandemic according to a universal and non-partisan vision. Our goals are: promoting science as a universal value, while fostering science literacy to enhance citizens’ full participation in political and civil life; building trust in science and, in the context of the pandemic, in safety and effectiveness of vaccines and cures; enhancing transnational research to prevent future crises, either health – related or of other systemic nature; countering any politicization of science and promoting a citizen-based scientific approach.
- **Debunk the proliferation of parallel universes, based on the falsification of reality.** The values of Humanism and Enlightenment run against any hijacking “fact-based” or “evidence – based” in order to influence and sway public decisions. The mystification of truth, amplified by the pervasive use of social media, is an existential threat to the domestic and international governance and to peaceful development of civilizations. It is going beyond traditional propaganda and is today aimed at capsizing principles of competence – based leaderships. There is huge scope for enhancing role and responsibility of political leaderships, private sector leaders, but also for renewed scrutiny by users themselves as cyberspace is becoming more and more the arena in which different vision of society and political systems compete. Companies will have to reshape their strategies on the basis of shared values and principles; citizens shall be a responsible part of new, rational uses of opportunities offered by digital transformation; Nations shall engage in cooperative efforts to de-militarize cyberspace and promote a cooperative approach to the peaceful and neutral use of the net. Cyberspace is the new frontier of disarmament and arms control diplomacy. The Venice Conference will be an important opportunity to discuss ways to promote responsible communication by leaders and companies, enhance citizens digital information skills literacy and create room within the international system for a dialogue among governments on tools to “neutralize” the cyberspace.

Climate, green economy and green industries. The pandemic has shown the impact on mankind that a single disruptive factor can have on systems, nations, communities, individuals and

economic systems. It can bring them to their knees for lack of resilience and adaptative capacity. The environmental/climate change crisis is the impending systemic threat that would go much wider and deeper – and not be reversible. There is no vaccine against it. Therefore, based on what science is highlighting, the international community must act today not only both to counter it in compliance, and beyond, existing commitments (Paris climate accord) but also to make our whole global system adaptable and resilient to the change. This applies also to the future of private Companies, with large finance organizations raising the stakes in terms of investing in sustainable technologies and moving on the path of effective decarbonization. Environmental, social, governance standards will impact both the capacity of financing the necessary transition and the preference of consumers and citizens, keen to shift preferences towards green models of production, distribution and consumption. This session of the conference will focus on how to leverage both public and private financing for the promotion of sustainable business models (aligned with the UN 2030 Agenda and with the commitments of the 2015 Paris conference on climate change, as focused this year by the upcoming events of COP26 (pre-summit in Milan 30 September-2 October; summit in Glasgow 1-12 November) in order to pursue economic growth, while preserving the environment and fostering sustainable development.