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**PATTERNS OF SOLIDARITY
IN PUBLIC INTERNATIONAL LAW**

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Good Afternoon, dear friends and colleagues,

I'm Rosario Sapienza, chair of International and European Law in this department¹.

Thank you to each and every one of you for being here with us today.

Before we get started, I would like to express my sincere appreciation to all those who generously helped us organize this event.

The distinguished members of the ESIL Board, the Rector of the University of Catania, the Head of Department, all the ESIL Members, and here in Catania, my friend and colleague Prof. Adriana Di Stefano and all the boys and girls of the Local Organizing Committee.

We simply couldn't have done it without you!

In today's gathering, we shall focus on the idea and principle of solidarity as a founding utopia of international law, particularly relevant to those who share our commitment to an international law based on values.

As a matter of fact, the concept of solidarity meets International Law in several different contexts, each of them with striking peculiarities.

Let us start with the United Nations, now 75 years old.

The idea of solidarity has defined the work of the United Nations since the birth of the Organization, gathering all the peoples of the world to realise the common goal of a lasting peace in the world.

The General Assembly, on 22 December 2005, by resolution 60/209 identified solidarity as one of the fundamental and universal values that should underlie relations between peoples in the twenty-first century, and in that regard decided to proclaim 20 December of each year International Human Solidarity Day.

And it is, maybe, useless to remember how the spirit of solidarity is deeply interconnected with the Goals of the Sustainable Development.

¹ Text of the Welcome Address delivered on April 15, 2021 by professor Rosario Sapienza, Chair of International Law in the Laws Department of the University of Catania at the Opening Session of the European Society of International Law 2021 Research Forum on "Solidarity: The Quest for Founding Utopias of International Law"

But the concept of solidarity is particularly relevant in UN human rights law. Article 1 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) states that:

“[A]ll human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights. They are endowed with reason and conscience and should act towards one another in a spirit of brotherhood.”

This remains a fundamental statement, because brotherhood is the main foundation and reason for solidarity.

And it was for this reason that the mandate of the Independent Expert on Human Rights and International Solidarity was created in 2005 by the United Nations Commission on Human Rights.

Dear Friends and Colleagues,

different contexts call for different meanings of solidarity and this is why solidarity has often been the subject of contention and sometimes confusion in international issues.

But this does not imply a downgrading of the principle of solidarity.

On the contrary, all this makes solidarity richer and more and more necessary, as we have seen in the European dimension, where the call for solidarity is deeply related to emergency situations.

To put it in the words of His Holiness Pope Francis in the Encyclical Letter *Fratelli Tutti* on Fraternity and Social Friendship

“117. When we speak of the need to care for our common home, our planet, we appeal to that spark of universal consciousness and mutual concern that may still be present in people’s hearts. Those who enjoy a surplus of water yet choose to conserve it for the sake of the greater human family have attained a moral stature that allows them to look beyond themselves and the group to which they belong. How marvellously human! The same attitude is demanded if we are to recognize the rights of all people, even those born beyond our own borders”.

So, my friends and colleagues, we have a wonderful task before us.

Thank you very much for listening and welcome again in Catania.