Federazione del Mare – Ottobre 2026

Festival della Diplomazia XVIIth Edition – "What's Next: Running on the edge"
Event Summary

On Monday, October 26, the Federazione del Mare hosted the international panel "Sensitive Strategic Infrastructure: EU Industrial Strategy, Ports, and Competitiveness" co-organized with the Festival della Diplomazia and the Commonwealth Club of Rome to foster high-level, interactive dialogue at the intersection of maritime policy and global affairs. This event was part of the 2026 Edition of the Festival della Diplomazia: an annual international conference in Rome spanning geopolitics, international relations, the global economy, and security. Welcomed and introduced by **Mario Mattioli**, President of the Federazione del Mare the event was moderated by Secretary General **Laurence Martin**.

Setting the stage for the discussion, **Mario Mattioli** emphasized that the modern challenges confronting the maritime domain can no longer be resolved through standard economic models or isolated technical interventions. Instead, addressing these systemic issues requires ongoing diplomatic dialogue, international cooperation, and complete strategic alignment among industry leaders, diplomatic bodies, and government institutions. To advance this commitment, the Federazione del Mare continues to drive strategic initiatives and international partnerships, ranging from bilateral blue economy missions to collaborative cybersecurity and digital perimeter defence frameworks aimed at fortifying maritime assets.

Throughout the interactive session, the discussions were deeply anchored in the current geopolitical context and the challenges of our uncertain and interconnected era. Moderated by **Laurence Martin**, the panel advocated for understanding maritime ports as highly sensitive, strategic infrastructure vital to European strategic autonomy rather than simple commercial transit hubs. **Dario Bazargan**, Policy officer for the Maritime and Rail supply DG Grow mobility unit in the European Commission, underscored that ports are facing increasing strategic pressure, making it essential to protect critical infrastructure so that incoming investments do not create geopolitical dependencies or expose nations to heightened security risks.

Further examining global supply chain vulnerabilities, **Alessandro Panaro**, Head of the Maritime & Energy Research Department at SRM, illustrated how disruptions at critical maritime chokepoints destabilize world trade in different ways. He noted that conflicts in the Strait of Hormuz trigger severe energy disruptions, while bottlenecks in the Suez Canal cripple manufacturing sectors. However, he emphasized that despite these systemic vulnerabilities, ports are proving to be exceptionally resilient. According to him, for Italy, the future lies heavily in short sea shipping, which already accounts for 75% of the country's maritime traffic, while expanding investments in the underwater and digital domains add a vital new dimension to port strategy.

Ambassador Francesco Talò, Special of Italy for the Corridor IMEC at the Italian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, offered a sweeping analysis of the modern geopolitical shift, asserting that we are navigating an era of profound transition with no possible return to the old global order. Identifying major operational hurdles such as bureaucracy, which he termed "the great enemy", balancing power and surging energy costs, Talò argued that achieving strategic autonomy requires learning to "be independent in an interdependent world". Rather than expecting globalization to disappear, nations must adapt to its evolving reality by diversifying trade routes, energy sources, and critical materials. Strategic initiatives like the India-Middle East-Europe Economic Corridor

(IMEC) serve as vital pathways toward this diversification. Moreover, Talò urged diplomats to embrace calculated risk and innovation, noting that modern diplomacy must extend beyond reception palaces into operational environments where ships, merchandise, and industry leaders actively operate.

The interactive debate also brought together key institutional and industry perspectives to address technological, environmental, and financial solutions. Industry insights from **Gabriele Maria Cafaro**, Executive VP Underwater at Fincantieri highlighted advanced technology as the ultimate competitive advantage for orchestrating tailored maritime services and solutions, complemented by financial perspectives from **Alessia Masitto**, Head of Infrastructure at CDP Cassa Depositi e Prestiti. On environmental adaptation, **Alessandra Fidanza**, Senior Expert at MASE, detailed Italy's initiatives in nature-based solutions and climate innovation, stressing that infrastructures built decades ago did not account for current climate change and extreme weather, necessitating a swift transition from baseline resilience to active innovation. Securing digital networks was further examined by **Pascal Le Claire**, Project Manager at France Cyber Maritime (SAFEDIGIMAR), who emphasized the urgent need to diffuse cybersecurity knowledge across European maritime frameworks. Contributions from **Oliviero Giannotti**, Secretary General of Assoporti, and **Edward Mura** of the Commonwealth Club of Rome reinforced the call to overcome harbours fragmentation and regional competition, framing collective European port alignment as essential to protecting shared economic stability.

Ultimately, the panel made a compelling case that securing critical maritime infrastructure requires merging industrial operational strength with forward-leaning, responsive diplomatic engagement.

Structure of the Pannel:
Welcome and Introduction: Mario Mattioli, President of Federazione del Mare
Moderator: **Laurence Martin** – Secretary General of the Federazione del Mare

Panelists:

- **Bazargan Dario** – Policy officer Maritime and Rail supply DG Grow mobility unit European Comission
- **Cafaro Gabriele Maria** – Executive VP Underwater Fincantieri
- **Fidanza Alessandra** – Senior Expert in Climate Change and International Affairs, MASE
- **Giannotti Oliviero** – Secretary General Assoporti, Italian Port Association
- **Le Claire Pascal** – Director General France Cyber Maritime *(online)*
- **Mura Edward** – President Commonwealth Club of Rome
- **Panaro Alessandro** – Head of the Maritime & Energy Research Department at SRM
- **Talò Francesco** – Special envoy Italy for the Corridor IMEC, MAECI

Additional information is available on the Federazione del Mare website: https://federazionedelmare.it/sensitive-strategic-infrastructures-eu-industrial-strategy-on-ports-and-competitiveness-26-october-2026/
You can access the event recording at the following link: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qxbsPkcJVTY