

**Speech by HRH The Duke of Castro  
On the occasion of the receiving the Order of  
Skanderbeg**

Monday 2nd December 2013

Mr President, Thank you for your kind and generous words.

As the 59<sup>th</sup> Grand Master of the Sacred Military Constantinian Order of Saint George, I am delighted to be back in Albania.

This is felt most especially this evening here at the Presidential Palace, accepting from you this high national award and being conscious of the spirit with which it has been granted.

A spirit which illustrates the coming together of our mutual aspirations for peace, charity, and to assist those most in need, and to foster greater understanding between our respective faith communities.

I feel truly honoured to receive from you the Skanderbeg Order which is named after one of Europe's leading heroes whose self less fight in the defence of European civilisation in the 15<sup>th</sup> century is an example to us all.

In many ways it is the spirit of your national hero that brings us together this evening. For his support of Pope Pius the Second and of King Ferdinand the First of Naples, the land of my ancestors, proved crucial to those that wished to promote and protect Europe's identity.

Mr President, it is remarkable to see the level of change in your country. This is felt all the more when I reflect on

the great hardships your people suffered over many years in its quest for freedom and democracy.

Albania is now a valued partner of NATO and soon a member of the European Union. How far you have come in such a short period of time and this is much to the credit and determination of your people.

Mr President, the Constantinian Order is one of the oldest internationally recognised Catholic, charitable and humanitarian Orders of Knighthood in existence today.

2013 is an auspicious year for us as we mark the 1700th anniversary of Emperor Constantine's *Edict of Milan*. An edit, which granted religious freedom to Christians and those of other faiths and which for many, is considered the beginning of European civilization.

The Constantinian Order also celebrates this year its Golden Jubilee of its formal recognition by successive decrees of the President and Government of the Italian Republic.

The Constantinian Order's religious, charitable and humanitarian activities are central to our existence today. Our work in inter-religious understanding between Christian, Muslim and Jewish and even secular communities is also valued.

Since my first visit to Albania some thirteen years ago as part of a joint Constantinian Order - UNICEF humanitarian mission, I am pleased to report that relations between Albania and the Order continue to grow.

In more recent years some projects have also been

launched by the Order's delegations across Italy, Great Britain, Ireland and at the United Nations where the Order today holds Consultative Status of the Economic and Social Council.

I very much look forward to our continued discussions and to identify and agree appropriate projects we can support and mutually co-operate together.

Mr President, thank you once again for receiving and honouring my delegation and me in this special way.

The Duchess of Castro and I very much hope that we can welcome Your Excellency and the First Lady as part of a wider visit to Rome.

We further hope that time will allow for you to visit some of the cities of southern Italy, which maintain strong and historic ties with Albania and its noble people and for which the Order and my family are forever historically tied too.

Thank you.