Good afternoon,
I would like to thank Dr. Boris Otto for convening the Paneuropean Gaia-X Summit and I'm glad to be part of this conservation. I wish to greet Minister Peter Altmaier, Minister Bruno Le Maire, Commissioner Thierry Breton, Undersecretary Thomas Jarzombek and all the distinguished participants who are attending the Summit. The need to define digital autonomy at the European level stems from the relentless digital transformation of our socio-economic system, that is imposing new and coherent governance methodologies and international cooperation frameworks.

As the global public cloud and data services market is currently largely dominated by US and Asian companies, European governments and industry players have become concerned about using non-European cloud and data services. We must build a European cloud and data infrastructure to strengthen Europe's data independence, since the almost exclusive dominance of non-Eu suppliers on the cloud market has potentially detrimèntal implications for the security and Eu citizens' rights.

Against this backdrop, what is Italy's contribution?

We attended the Gaia-X virtual conference to discuss the initiative from providers' and users' perspectives (May). Together with the Federal Ministry for Economic Affairs and Energy**,** we organized the "German-Italian Workshop on Gaia-X" (27 July 2020) in which quite a few Italian companies took part. We participated and contributed to the webinar on the "European Cloud Federation", which was organized by Dg Connect (May 12). Finally, on October 15, Italy signed the Joint Declaration "*Building the next generation cloud for businesses and the public sector in the EU.*"

Today, on this occasion of the "Gaia-X Summit", we restate our interest in supporting and joining the initiative with substantial and concrete actions.In the last months, in order to raise awareness among the Italian companies, we worked together with Confindustria (Italian Federation of Industry) . By now, 28 major private Italian companies have already joined the GAIA X project.
As we did in our country, we are committed to seek support and interest from the other Member States. We reiterate the commitment of the *Joint Declaration* to work on technical solutions for federating European cloud capacities, and we aspire at playing an ever more active role in this regard.

Why is joining so important to us?
 As in many other European countries and the Union as a whole, two features distinguish the cloud in Italy: low uptake (only 15% of our firms use cloud technologies) and high-dependency (60% of cloud services used in Italy come from non-Eu providers). Let me also add how crucial it is to follow up on our strategic ambitions at the operational level. The Italian Government is aiming at devoting substantial investment under the *Next Generation EU Fund* to accelerate cloud uptake in the public sector by promoting a *cloud first* approach.

In this perspective, the European Cloud Federation acts as a meeting point for discussions between a plurality of European cloud platforms (of which GAIA-X represents the core operator), in terms of security, interoperability, protection and portability of data, both for digital government platforms and for business digital services. In this "plùralist" perspective, we have extended the invitation to Italian companies to become members.

The crucial role European companies play in these efforts has been acknowledged at the Eu level with the institution of dedicated Gaia-X Hubs. These hubs are open to all interested companies

with the shared goal to pool skills and resources in order to create data spaces and data ecosystems. Italy has embraced such an approach. Confindustria (the Italian Federation of Industry) is working on establishing a dedicated Hub in partnership with our most important companies and in harmony with other Hubs created in other Eu Member States. The Italian Hub is planned to be fully functioning at the beginning of the next year.

Furthemore, Italy is supporting the deployment of the "Important Projects of Common European Interest" (IPCEI) focused on infrastructure, specifically on promoting a European Cloud Ecosystem to support and complement Gaia-X. Now more than ever, we need political vision and cross-country cooperation at the economic and technical level. I look forward to continuing to work with Germany, France, all the European Member States, the European Commission and the other institutions in furthering the development of a European cloud federation.

We live in a digital world, and the lives of European citizens are becoming more and more digital everyday. Therefore, we need to make sure that our European principles and values are always at the core of digital life and of the experience of all European citizens. The Eu should remain open but self-reliant. We do believe that it should be a driving force in global technological development, playing its role in a partnership of equals.
Thank you for your attention.