

## ENGLISH VERSION

### SIMONE – LEATHER CLUB ROMA

Dear friends,

before we begin, I would like to ask five people to join me here on stage.

Five people without whom nothing you are experiencing tonight would have had the same meaning.

Paolo, Stefano, Antonello, Giuseppe and Fabio... please, come up here.

Stand by my side.

Because what we are doing did not begin in one day, nor in one meeting, nor with one signature.

It was born from months of working together: months of messages at two in the morning, of discussions, of laughter, of corrections, of ideas, of doubts...

Months that made us closer, more connected, more real.

These were months in which we weren't just a board:

we were a team, a home, a safe place where each of us brought the best of themselves — and often the worst, too, knowing we would be welcomed anyway.

And you have been my strength, my guidance, my balance, my courage and, yes... also my family.

Today we are in our city.

A city that never stops breathing, even when it seems wounded.

A city that has learned to turn its falls into strength, its cracks into light, its silences into memory.

Rome is made of stones that speak, of scars that no longer hurt, of hands that came from far away and together built something no one has ever managed to destroy.

And it is no coincidence that we are here, in our city, in our home.

Because the Leather Club Roma was born the same way: from different people, with different stories, who one day, 26 years ago, decided to weave those stories together.

We were born from the desire not to feel alone.

From the need for a place where we could be seen, heard, respected.

A place where you don't have to hide, or prove anything: you just have to *be*.

But do you know what the most beautiful thing is?

That we found that very same feeling in you, dear friends from Lisbon, Nice and Seville.

In your clubs, in your way of welcoming, of working, of creating, of embracing.

Every time we meet, it's like looking in a mirror and seeing that, even though we come from different countries... our hearts beat the same way.

Because we come from the South.

And the South is not just a point on a compass: it is a way of feeling.

It is a strength born not from perfection, but from our scars.

It is a light that doesn't blind — it warms.

It is that natural instinct to move closer, to trust, and to say:

"If you're afraid, I'll carry it with you."

In the South, bonds are not signed: they are built.

Built with hands, with mistakes, with laughter, with nights spent figuring out how to move forward.

And so, almost without realising it, in these months something bigger than us happened.

We didn't just create an alliance between clubs.  
We created a family.  
A real family.

And today, by giving life to the Southern European League, we are not making an agreement.  
We are making a promise.  
A promise that says:  
"From today, none of us stands alone.  
From today, whatever happens, we will be there for one another."

And as I look at you, as I look at my colleagues beside me, as I look at you in front of me, the presidents who are about to speak and the friends who have come from all over Italy and Europe, one thought keeps rising inside me — and I can no longer hold it back:  
how beautiful would life be if we could always surround ourselves with people who make us feel like this.  
This true.  
This free.  
This safe.

Because it is not easy to find someone who understands you.  
It is not easy to find someone who listens without judging you.  
Someone who says "you're fine as you are," even when *you* think you are not fine at all.

And yet... here we are.  
Four clubs, four stories, four cities, four worlds.  
And in the middle of all this, one thing holding us together: humanity.  
The humanity of our fears.  
The humanity of our imperfections.  
The humanity of those who love despite everything, who get back up, and who choose not to give up.

And maybe that's why I'm so moved today.  
Because looking at you, one by one, I see something that is rarely seen:  
I see people who *choose* each other.  
Not because they have to.  
Not because it's convenient.  
But because they feel it is right.

So allow me to say it, from the heart:  
Thank you.  
Thank you for your trust.  
Thank you for the dignity with which you have worked.  
Thank you for the friendship you have given us.  
Thank you for turning a simple idea into something that, I am certain, will stay with us for a long time.

Today, the Southern European League is born.  
But above all, today a promise is born — among people who care for each other.

People who do not let go.

People who, even when things get difficult, will reach out their hand.

And so, before giving the floor to the presidents,

I want to ask you something simple:

hold on to each other.

Hold on to each other the way only those who come from the South know how to do.

Because from now on, whatever happens...

we will never walk alone again.

Thank you.

## **ROBERTO – EVIDENCE**

“No alliance is born alone.

I invite the members of the Evidence Nice council to join me on stage for this important moment.”

My friends,

tonight I feel something special as I look at this stage.

Because beyond the flags, beyond the titles,

I see people who chose to build something together: a larger family, founded on commitment and fraternity.

When we founded Evidence nine years ago,

people looked at us with a slightly skeptical smile.

They said: “Leather in the South? That will never work. Impossible. You’re wasting your time.”

Well... we are stubborn in the South.

And above all, we knew exactly why we were doing it.

Nine years later, we are still here:

stronger, more united, more visible.

We built ourselves step by step, with passion, with respect,

and with the conviction that communities grow stronger

when they choose connection over division.

And that is exactly what I feel tonight.

The friendship that unites us is not new:

it has grown through meetings, evenings, parties, long conversations,

and countless moments in which our clubs supported one another,

knowing we could rely on each other.

This alliance is much more than a strategic project.

It is a way of saying yes:

Yes to cooperation,

Yes to trust,

Yes to visibility,

Yes to the richness of our cultures and our stories.

We are four clubs, four cities, four identities,

but we share one direction: moving forward together,

and offering our communities a stronger and safer space.

And because our fraternity speaks several languages,

let me address a few words to my fellow presidents.

### **In Spanish:**

“Nuestra fuerza nace de la amistad sincera que compartimos.”

Our strength is born from the sincere friendship we share.

**In Italian:**

“La nostra unione cresce perché abbiamo fiducia gli uni negli altri.”  
Our union grows because we trust one another.

**In Portuguese:**

“A nossa casa é feita das pessoas que escolhemos para caminhar connosco.”  
Our home is built from the people we choose to walk with us.

Before concluding, I want to pay tribute to someone without whom I might not be here tonight:  
**Daniel Dumont, forever Secretary General of the European Confederation.**

My mentor, and above all, my friend.  
Daniel left us far too soon, but his spirit is here,  
in every project we carry forward.  
He always repeated two phrases:

**#Strongertogether**  
and  
**#Playhardbutplaysafe.**

These words still guide us today,  
and they perfectly express what we are building together this evening.

So, my friends, let us raise our glasses to this beginning;  
and we will meet again later to continue our shared journey.

## **PEDRO – GEAR CLUB PORTUGAL**

Gear Club Portugal also believes that this alliance is the result of true teamwork. I would therefore like to invite Carlos, the President of the Gear Club Portugal General Assembly, to join me.

Dear friends,

In Portugal we say, *“When in Rome, do as the Romans do”* So, inspired by today’s extraordinary occasion, I will deliver my speech in Latin. Good luck!

[Latin] On this day, in this place, at this hour, by signing this document we do more than formalize an alliance: we reaffirm a shared origin. A belonging rooted in the land, in the light, in desire, and in a geography that is both physical and symbolic: the South.

[English] The South is not just a point on a map. It is a way of feeling and a way of being in the world. Southern Europe is an ancient frontier of light and shadow, of tradition and longing. It is in the South that we learned to survive not through force, but through imagination, solidarity, and art. Here were born the myths of the body and of sensuality; but also hardship, distance, and, too often, silence.

Today we show that dialogue can turn distance into closeness, and silence into voice. We write a new page of our shared history, a culture of resistance and a determination to build, together, a future that is freer, fairer, more cooperative and more humane.

[French] We are peoples of the border, suspended between the sacred and the profane, between celebration and silence, between body and soul. Yet it is from this tension that the beauty of our culture arises, the same beauty that inspired Paul Éluard to write, *“Il n’y a pas de hasard, il n’y a que des rendez-vous”* Today we meet again, not by chance, but because history brought us here. Today our clubs unite to affirm a shared vision: a Southern Europe proud of its difference, strong in its diversity, and free in its expression. A Europe that knows friendship is a form of resistance, and sincere dialogue can change the map of the world.

[Spanish] And if the winds that strike us bring doubt and fear, let us remember the words of Federico García Lorca (cowardly executed and thrown into a mass grave for being a left-wing man and gay), *“The most terrible of all feelings is the feeling of dead hope”* We cannot allow hope to die. It is alive in our communities, in our streets, on our very skin. It lives in every gesture of resistance, every act of visibility, every body that refuses to be silenced.

[Portuguese] Our strength lies in dialogue and cooperation. This league of clubs begins with a recognition: freedom is always shared, and only by caring for one another can we truly care for ourselves. Fernando Pessoa once wrote, *“To be plural like the universe”* That is what we are, plural, varied, contradictory, and therefore deeply human. The strength of the South lies precisely in this diversity that rejects borders and labels. Within this plurality of voices, we must seek harmony through dialogue and cooperation.

[Italian] As Pasolini said, *“The true revolution is the revolution of love”* That is the revolution we celebrate today. Not a revolution of flags, but of gestures; not of conquest, but of communion. Because love, in its broadest, most physical, most political sense, is what calls us and keeps us together. By creating this alliance between Lisbon, Nice, Rome and Seville, and all the places where freedom still needs to be spoken aloud, we become heirs to that revolution.

[English] Today we sign not only with ink, but with memory, the memory of those who came before, who opened paths, who never stopped believing that love, even when marginalized, has its rightful place in human history.

What we do here today is a gesture of care and of sharing. We care for our communities; we share our strength and our difference. What unites us is not possession, but connection. Not uniformity, but respect for the plurality of our desires. If the South is our home, then fraternal dialogue and cooperation are our language. By joining together, we affirm that diversity is our strength and that cooperation is the most solid path against marginalization and invisibility. This alliance is not only institutional, it is fraternal.

More than formalizing an agreement, today we celebrate a promise. A promise of dialogue, cooperation and solidarity among the clubs of Southern Europe. By standing together, we show that the South is not a periphery, but a centre of creativity, sensitivity, and courage. And if Europe has many voices, today the South speaks with one: the voice of fraternity, dignity, and the celebration of difference.

The cooperation we affirm today is more than an agreement: it is both a political and a poetic gesture. In a time when shame is imposed, we respond with pride. In a time when the noise of intolerance grows, we choose dialogue. In a time when borders rise, we choose cooperation bridges.

Thank you.

And now, in that same spirit of fraternity, I invite to the stage the Vice-President of ILBS, Jesús, to continue this story of unity.

## JESUS – ILBS

“Behind every symbol there are people who make it real. I invite the members of the board of International Leather & Boots Spain to join me on stage, as they represent our community together with me.”

Today we are not simply inaugurating an organization. Today we are giving visible form to something that has existed beneath the surface for a long time: a community united by shared culture, by history, and, of course, by the strength of Southern Europe.

The creation of the Southern Europe League, SEL, represents much more than an alliance between clubs.

It represents the recognition of a common identity within the European fetish landscape: the identity of the South.

Because Southern Europe is not just a geographical space. It is a way of living, of feeling, of seeing. It is the place where the light is brighter, emotions more visible, and contact more intimate. It is also—said with a small smile—the place where leather covers less... but shines more.

Italy, Spain, France, and Portugal.

Four countries with different languages, but with the same underlying melody.

We are united by the Mediterranean, by the Atlantic, and by a shared history of exchanges, conquests, contradictions, and beauty.

We are united by the shared table, unhurried conversation, and the importance of the body as a cultural expression.

Or, as they say in Italy:

“Siamo diversi, ma il desiderio parla la stessa lingua.”

We are different, but desire speaks one language.

We come from societies deeply shaped by tradition, by religion, by very clear rules about what one should or should not be.

Many of us grew up learning to hide parts of ourselves.

And yet, we also inherited a profound sense of beauty, of art, of the aesthetics of the body, and of passion.

And today we are here to reconcile these two inheritances: that of repression and that of freedom.

Today, through its founding clubs in Italy, Spain, France, and Portugal, the Southern Europe League is officially born.

And it is born with a clear intention: to build strong bonds, promote visibility, share values, and offer safe spaces where diversity within fetish is not only respected but celebrated.

As they say in France:

“La liberté du corps est aussi une forme de culture.”

The freedom of the body is also a form of culture.

For many years, the narrative of European fetish culture was built mostly from the North of the continent.

And we recognize and deeply respect that legacy.

But today we are not here to look north.

Today we are here to look at one another and say: here we are, this is our moment, this is our voice, this is our skin.

SEL is not born to compete, but to unite.

To connect communities, organize gatherings, support the youngest, protect the most vulnerable, and preserve our codes: consent, respect, trust, responsibility, and pride.

Or, in Portuguese—sounding especially beautiful when speaking of bonds:

“A nossa força está na união.”

Our strength lies in unity.

And no, this is not only about sex.

It is about identity, solidarity, and social presence.

It is about telling the world that fetish, when lived with respect and awareness, is not something to hide, but a legitimate expression of the human being.

An expression that also deserves organization, a name, structure, and a future.

Today, these four founding clubs are not only signing an agreement: they are signing a commitment.

A commitment to cooperation, to positive visibility, and to creating a space where no one has to apologize for what they desire, as long as that desire is free, consensual, and adult.

From today onwards, the Southern Europe League will be a symbol of that alliance.

A bridge between cities, languages, and bodies.

A reminder that no matter which part of the South we come from, deep down we share the same need to belong, to express ourselves, and to love without fear.

And if you allow me a final touch of humor, very typical of the South:

it took us centuries to agree on almost anything... but when we do, we do it with style.

With style, with character, with history... and with great pride.

Because we are children of the sun.

And the sun does not ask for permission to shine.

“Let us enjoy dessert together while we await the official sealing of our alliance.”