A legacy leading to the future
Leonardo, with the strength of its legacy, is moving towards the future with the energy of those who are aware that they are capable of building new roads and reaching new goals.

Founded in 1948 under the name of Finmeccanica and the same age as the Italian Constitution, the Company was simultaneously witness to and protagonist of the birth of a new chapter in the history of Italy, restoring a new perspective to the impressive skills displayed by many industrial companies in the post-war era and accompanying them towards an international expansion.

It has been a long and complex path, often characterised by difficult choices and changes of course, but one which has been
able to maintain and build upon the fundamental assets on which the Company has built its success: the skills of its people and technological innovation, which have catapulted us amongst the top ten global players in Aerospace, Defence and Security.

Therefore, “mission accomplished”, but also the beginning of another story, in which our Company aims to continue to be the leading figure: in the design and realisation of innovative solutions for the security of people, the environment and infrastructure; in collaborations for the development of the territory and its industrial activities, in the dissemination
of a scientific and technological culture at the base of the industry of the future. In short: we want to continue to create value for all our stakeholders.

Life within Leonardo is inspired by tenaciously pursued values that aim to build a new business culture: innovation as a mental attitude, integrity in business management, teamwork, a central focus on our customers and their needs, and excellence in execution.

It is from this point that we are setting out to build the future. Especially for our Company, for which we must guarantee sustainable growth, for the new generations, to whom we want to ensure the tools to sustain the challenges of a constantly evolving global industrial system, and for Italy, for which we are a strategic asset and a driving force from an economic and industrial point of view.
Finmeccanica - Società per Azioni was officially founded on 18 March 1948. In a country that needed to be wholly rebuilt, Finmeccanica was entrusted with a difficult mission: to support and relaunch a large number of companies whose growth in size and tasks during World War II were no longer sustainable during the Reconstruction years. These were industrial brands with an important tradition that would remain major players over the following 50 years and beyond: Ansaldo, Alfa Romeo, OTO Melara, Salmoiraghi, San Giorgio and so on.

Over 70% of the employees of Finmeccanica were workers from the shipbuilding industry, which at that time was highly depressed. In its first decade of activity, Finmeccanica concentrated, in particular, on the restructuring of shipbuilding, which in 1959 would be hived off and annexed to a new company, Fincantieri.

During the 1960s, the Group concentrated on sectors with a high emphasis on technology, undergoing an in-depth renewal of its scope of activities. In addition to
managing the existing businesses, it began to create new ones, such as Selenia, which was established in 1960 to operate in the radar sector. It is the testimony, from the early years, of Finmeccanica’s attention to innovation and, in particular, the emerging electronics field.

After ceding the mechanical companies to EFIM and the electronics ones to STET, Finmeccanica focused on the automotive, thermoelectric and aerospace sectors and in 1969, in a joint venture with FIAT, undertook an ambitious project: create a large company with a leading role in aeronautics and space.
Thus, Aeritalia was born bringing together the best skills in the sector from the north to the south of the Peninsula and soon becoming a strategic enterprise for Italy, competitive at the global level, in regards also to innovation and research. Alliances with the great international manufacturers allowed the Company to cross national borders and acquire the highest level of technological know-how.
The 1973 energy crisis triggered a recession that would affect the world economy for many years. For Finmeccanica, the crisis did not mark a setback but on the contrary was an opportunity for a more accurate definition of its strategic objectives, with a progressive focus on high-tech sectors.

From this perspective, between 1974 and 1987, Finmeccanica sold several companies, concentrating on the electromechanical and aerospace sector. The divestiture of Alfa Romeo, whose activities passed to FIAT in 1986, fell within this framework. A few months later, the Alfa 164, the latest prestigious car conceived and built by the Finmeccanica Group - and designed by Pininfarina - was launched on the market.

During the same period, the autonomous industrial capabilities of Aeritalia (from which FIAT exited in 1976) allowed it to move from the role of sub-supplier to that of partner in qualifying programmes. Amongst the many initiatives, it is worth mentioning the creation
of the ATR consortium (with the French company Aérospatiale) for the production of turboprop regional aircraft, which would become one of the Finmeccanica Group’s major aeronautical successes.

Ansaldo also underwent profound changes, focusing on leveraging the rail sector with the creation of Ansaldo Trasporti. The energy sector was also reorganised and at the beginning of the 1990s Ansaldo Energia was born.

In 1989, the electronics companies that had been transferred to STET (Selenia, SGS Thomson and Elettronica San Giorgio - Elsag) returned to Finmeccanica. The Group now had a strong common technological base, represented by electronics and system capabilities, which it could place at the service of the other sectors in which it was present.

The period ended with the creation of Alenia (from the merger of Aeritalia and Selenia). A large industrial complex was born, operating in aeronautics, space, electronic systems, telecommunications, radar, missiles, air traffic control, electro-optical and electronic warfare systems, and naval systems.
Opening up to the world to compete

AMX tactical fighter – Aeritalia, 1988

Agusta head up display
Beginning in the 1990s, the liberalisation of the markets made it indispensable for companies to equip themselves to face increasingly tight global competition. Acquisitions and alliances were the main tool used to achieve this objective, marking the start of a process that would redesign entire industrial sectors within a decade. It was time for Finmeccanica to also rethink its strategies.

Between 1994 and 1996 it acquired from EFIM in liquidation a group of companies operating in the defence sector, with a rich history and industrial tradition, including Agusta (helicopters), Breda Meccanica Bresciana (naval and terrestrial artillery), Officine Galilei (electro-optical systems), OTO Melara (land and naval armaments): from then on, 70% of Italy’s national industrial capacity for aerospace and defence would be concentrated in the Finmeccanica Group.

With a plan for reorganisation and development formed in those years, Finmeccanica also started a policy of agreements and acquisitions at the international level, seizing the best opportunities offered by the restructuring of the European aerospace industry and earning a respectable role on the international scene. The first fruits came from the joint venture AgustaWestland (helicopters), with the British group GKN, followed by further agreements and acquisitions in space (Telespazio), in aeronautics (Aermacchi), in electronics (Marconi Mobile), in underwater (WASS) and in missiles (MBDA).
With the subsequent Eurosystems agreement, Finmeccanica acquired significant British assets in the avionics, military and secure communications and air traffic control sectors, creating the new SELEX family: SELEX Communications (military and secure communications), SELEX Galileo (avionics and electro-optics) and SELEX Sistemi Integrati (command and control and air traffic management).
Finally, with the Space Alliance (with the French company Thales), Finmeccanica conquered the position as European leader in the space sector, thanks to the joint ventures Telespazio (satellite services) and Thales Alenia Space (space manufacturing).

Also part of this period were the acquisitions of the Italian company Datamat (electronics) and the U.S. company DRS Technologies, a major Pentagon supplier, which opened the doors of the lucrative overseas market to Finmeccanica. The period closed with the acquisition of the Polish company PZL-Świdnik (helicopters).
By the beginning of the new decade, Finmeccanica had acquired a solid international profile, with four domestic markets (Italy, United Kingdom, United States and Poland) and consolidated partnerships worldwide, progressively concentrating on its core business of Aerospace, Defence and Security.

In helicopters, it was a global player, after the full acquisition of the joint venture AgustaWestland from GKN. Defence electronics underwent a further rationalisation programme, by merging the SELEX family under the new Selex ES, with which Finmeccanica joined the restricted range of major international players.

In aeronautics, all the Group industrial capabilities were concentrated under the new Alenia Aermacchi brand, from aerostructures to complete aircraft, from trainers to the promising sector of unmanned aircraft. In space, with the complementary expertise of Telespazio and Thales Alenia Space, Finmeccanica was present along
the entire value chain, with a qualified presence in the most important international space programmes. In defence systems, thanks to OTO Melara and WASS, it boasted excellent products sold to Armed Forces worldwide.

The 2009 global financial crisis, however, triggered a recession that affected all the traditional aerospace and defence markets, and accentuated the sector’s global competitive pressure. Finmeccanica started new partnerships in emerging markets and implemented actions to recover profitability and rationalise its industrial presence. This perspective included the divestment of Ansaldo Energia and Ansaldo Trasporti, whose activities could now be leveraged only thanks to agreements with industrial partners that guarantee the adequate critical mass to compete in the markets.

The change process culminated, at the beginning of 2016, with the transformation into One Company, an evolution dictated by the need of a more agile,
integrated structure able to speak to global markets with one voice, exploiting the synergies between various business sectors. The activities of its wholly owned companies converged into seven divisions, coordinated by a Corporate Centre that also presided over the subsidiaries left outside the divisional perimeter.

The final step occurred on April 26, 2016: Finmeccanica became Leonardo. A name chosen in honour of Leonardo da Vinci, a universal symbol of creativity and innovation and an ideal bridge between the historical, cultural and scientific tradition from which our Company originates and the industrial future towards which it is projected.
Kingdom, at the historic Yeovil plant, Westland began the first production of military aircraft in 1915.

There are two bases in the sector of fixed-wing aircraft that developed an important aeronautical tradition in Italy, in the north and south of the Peninsula. In 1913, in Varese, the Nieuport-Macchi was founded, while in 1904, in Naples, the Officine Ferroviarie Meridionali were born, which in 1925 were flying their first aeroplane built under licence.

The defence and security electronics sector also boasts famous local industries in Italy and the United Kingdom. In 1864, Officine Galileo was established in Florence for the production of optical instruments. Moreover, in 1897, in Chelmsford (London), the great Italian scientist Guglielmo Marconi established the headquarters of the Wireless Telegraph & Signal Company, for the development of radar, avionic systems and communications.

The defence systems sector originates from Torpedo Fabrik von Robert Whitehead, founded in 1875 in Rijeka...
(Austria-Hungary, now Croatia) and Vickers-Terni, an Italian-British joint venture founded in 1905.

Even in space, the most “modern” sector of all, the first seed was sown within FIAT - Società Italiana Aviazione, which was founded in 1916 and which, in the early 1940s, began the first experiments on space flight and rockets.

Finally, Ansaldo, the progenitor of a “family” of railway and thermo-electro-mechanical companies, a sector no longer presided by Leonardo, but which played a very important role in Italy’s industrial history, was founded in Genoa in 1853.