



PERMANENT MISSION  
OF THE  
REPUBLIC OF MALTA  
TO THE  
UNITED NATIONS

# REPUBLIC OF MALTA

Statement by

**the Honourable Dr. Joseph Muscat**  
Prime Minister of the Republic of Malta

72<sup>nd</sup> Session of the  
United Nations General Assembly

United Nations  
New York

22<sup>nd</sup> September 2017

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Mr President,

There can be no peace while poverty, especially extreme poverty, still exists.

Peace is not just the absence of war or conflict. It is rather, managing and addressing climate change, migration, and food and water insecurity.

The UN instrument that weaves the sustainment of peace together with the universal challenges is Agenda 2030.

On these lines, the Maltese Presidency of the Council of the European Union worked arduously and successfully with other European Union Member States towards a new European Consensus on Development, that encompasses the Global Development Agenda through a resolute plan of action to eradicate poverty.

Never has it been more urgent to preserve humanity's future. Agenda 2030 is the first marker towards achieving our sustainable development goals. All segments of society need to be on board for us to deliver such an onerous task.

As Chair-in-Office of the Commonwealth I would like to highlight the strong commitment of the organisation and its role towards the realisation of the SDGs. We represent 52 different realities, which has led us to launch, in broad terms, a number of common initiatives to accelerate the implementation of the SDGs.

On a national level, Malta is taking action.

We have registered a voluntary commitment of 30% of all the waters under Maltese jurisdiction as Marine Protected Areas. As is well known, Malta has internationally been at the forefront of maritime and marine related issues. It was exactly 50 years ago that Malta's first Permanent Representative to the UN, the late Arvid Pardo, made his famous speech in this very Chamber – a speech that triggered the negotiations of the 1982 Law of the Sea Convention. It is in a similar spirit, that we support the valuable work being carried out towards achieving an international legally-binding instrument under the UN Convention on the Law of the Sea for the conservation and sustainable use of marine biological diversity in areas beyond national jurisdiction. It is indeed crucial to finally bring legal protection to the high seas' biodiversity.

On our part, we will continue contributing towards the good governance of the oceans by hosting the next 'Our Ocean 2017 Conference' in Malta next month. Furthermore, we fully support the setting up of an Intergovernmental Panel on Ocean Governance reporting to the General Assembly through the Secretary General.

I also wish to underline the recent initiative undertaken by the Commonwealth to develop a 'Blue Charter' that is to assist Commonwealth countries to meet the requirements borne by SDG14.

Likewise, we wholeheartedly welcome the entry into force last November of the Paris Climate Accord. It is only through the greening of our actions that we can ensure sustainable development that is complimentary and respectful to mother earth. Malta, together with all the EU partners, is strongly committed to the Paris Agreement.

As a Government we base our policies on four overarching principles: social mobility, social justice, equality and unity. Just today we have learnt that in Malta less people are at risk of poverty, following a drive by our government to distribute fairly the proceeds coming from sustained growth. This is an achievement which is as dear to us as our record setting economic growth and minimal unemployment levels. This is exactly what we work for, our *raison d'être*, which we describe as prosperity with a purpose.

A prosperous future needs to be accompanied by an inclusive society. People who live in fear or are oppressed or discriminated against cannot realize their potential and are not at peace. Malta seeks to lead by example, seeking to have equality as a hallmark of our legacy.

We have put human rights, equality and the empowerment at the forefront of our political agenda, and in particular on the priority issues of LGBTIQ rights and gender equality. We redefined marriage to grant full equality and a fair gender neutral essence. All this has been complemented by amendments to our Constitution to protect against discrimination on the basis of 'sexual orientation' and 'gender identity'. These individual choices should be as significant as the colour of one's eyes.

The economic and political empowerment of our citizens, regardless of their gender is a priority for us. We have been gradually introducing measures to help reconcile work and familial responsibilities. We are proud to be the only European country to provide universal free childcare to all working people, an initiative which has liberated the potential of so many women in our society. We want to ensure more gender-balanced political representation coupled with recent initiatives to increase youth participation by lowering voting age in general and European elections from 18 to 16, after already lowered voting age in local elections.

Malta, despite its small size, can now serve as a beacon of political courage that inspires others to introduce concrete measures and reforms. Everyone must feel empowered in today's society. The protection of marginalized and vulnerable persons is a must if we are to strive for an inclusive world.

The UN is pivotal in all this. It must continue to spearhead, sustain and mobilize the international community as we journey along this ambitious path to 2030.

But so much more remains to be done.

The exploitation of human misery knows no boundaries. Migrant smuggling and human trafficking by criminal groups are globally prevalent and Malta very much witnesses this close to home along the central Mediterranean route.

As a Member State of the European Union, Malta is part of a wider European response to tackle human trafficking networks in the Mediterranean Sea. However, national and even regional action is insufficient without a global response.

Malta welcomes the progress registered on the development of a global compact on Migration. This should, yes, reaffirm States' sovereign right to decide their immigration policies, but it should also commit States to build migration systems and institutions that operate in a timely manner, so that migrants are treated fairly and with dignity; protect migrants' human rights and create awareness against exploitation and modern slavery; and lead campaigns against xenophobia whilst providing support for the integration of long-term migrants. It is also our belief that whereas the Global Compact for Migrants would encompass these measures to facilitate orderly, safe, and regular migration, it should also commit States, particularly those of origin and transit, to take action to reduce illegal and unmanaged migration.

Challenging times require us to be on time for the challenge. That time is now, sooner rather than later. Purposeful and systematic action by multi-stakeholders, at all levels and across all strata is crucial if the ensuing benefits are to be felt by the people in all the corners of the world. The UN is the prime mobilizer and anchor of international peace, security and stability has a quintessential role to play, if we are to secure a peaceful, sustainable and a better world for all.

We are strong believers in the overarching power of multilateralism. We do not believe the UN is simply a sum of its parts, but rather a force that grows exponentially when we think and act as one, rather than alone.