

# 41<sup>st</sup> Session of the UNESCO General Conference

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## MALTA

President of the General Conference,  
Chairperson of the Executive Board,  
Director General,  
Excellencies,  
Ladies and Gentlemen,

As we gather for the 41st Session of the UNESCO General Conference it is crucial to renew our commitment towards UNESCO's Mission and emphasise that peace should not be perceived as an abstract term which simply denotes the absence of war. In order to build peace, it is necessary to enhance trust and cooperation between all partners, and this can only be achieved by engaging in respectful dialogue and exchanges between all members of the international community – resorting to both tradition and soft diplomatic tools.

The role of culture in fostering dialogue and peace and bringing people together cannot be underestimated. Peace is best expressed through the harmonious co-existence of people with different socio-cultural backgrounds and beliefs. Peace can only prosper in societies where there is a mutual understanding and respect for different cultures. Prejudice and discrimination only hinder the harmonious interaction between us all.

Malta showcases its rich and millennial culture through its cultural diplomacy fund. We are convinced that through such projects different countries can promote their rich cultures while also inviting people from outside their community to understand and value cultural diversity in a global celebration of multiculturalism. These common cultural elements enable people from different backgrounds to relate, appreciate and respect each other towards the attainment of peace.

Social exclusion is the cause of a number of societal ailments including marginalization, extremism and radicalisation. On the other hand, dialogue and cooperation are positive elements diffusing tensions and acting as a potential channel for conflict prevention and peacebuilding.

Besides seeking to continue to promote and foster a multicultural and inclusive society providing equal opportunities to members belonging to different cultural groups, Malta is also focused on ensuring the equal and full participation of women and men in society. Malta's efforts in favour of inclusion have also been recognised by the International Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Trans and Intersex Association. In fact in the last 6 years Malta has successfully managed to retain the top spot in the ILGA rankings.

Malta is committed to continue to seek to bridge gaps both on a national level and also regionally and internationally. Despite the current challenges within the Mediterranean region, Malta will

continue to serve as a strong and reliable communication channel, to bridge the differences and to foster joint cooperation between Southern Europe and Northern Africa.

Malta is also determined to continue fostering and promoting interfaith dialogues to enhance understanding of others and to enhance cooperation and trust between different societies and faiths

The COVID-19 pandemic has clearly demonstrated that despite the ability of technology to connect people on virtual platforms, we have an inherent need to express ourselves through social and human interaction. Historically nations and civilisations tend to prosper when they join forces and create communities which strive to live in a secure and prosperous environment – this stands more than ever today in view of COVID 19 challenges. The COVID-19 pandemic has surely reinforced the notion that scientific cooperation is a core value which has the potential to enable us to recover from the devastating impacts of the pandemic and to boost UNESCO’s efforts to contribute towards the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals.

In conclusion, Malta recognises that cooperation in Education, Science and Culture could serve as a strong and indispensable catalyst to develop long lasting peaceful and cooperative relationships. In a globalised world, it is imperative to implement an integration process, which promotes cultural diversity and equality for all. Therefore, Malta will continue to promote inclusivity by celebrating cultural diversity and promoting social cohesion and social justice for all.