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Statement by

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Mr President

Mr Secretary General

Distinguished Delegates,

Before COVID-19 nearly two years ago, we were planning to celebrate the 75th anniversary of the United Nations by reinvigorating multilateralism. As the pandemic struck and disrupted all States, large and small, it showed us that only when working together can we tackle common challenges. If anything, COVID only reaffirmed the priority of multilateralism, and that it is the key to a strong and sustainable future.

As the international community present here today, we would all agree that this pandemic was not just a health crisis: but a multi- faceted one, due to its domino effect upon our humanitarian, security, human rights and socio-economic stability. We mourn the tragic loss of life it has caused, despite all our efforts. These are immensely challenging times, and as country leaders we have to also deal with increasing isolation and the fear that COVID 19 caused among our citizens. The height of the pandemic necessitated unprecedented sacrifice and restrictions that affected our freedom of movement, severely disrupted the education of children and young people, left millions jobless, and isolated the most vulnerable around the world. Yet this experience also taught us that we could defeat hopelessness by supporting each other, by pooling our knowledge base, our scientific research and by offering humanitarian support. It is this spirit of multilateralism that supported our determination to tackle the pandemic, and it is this same spirit that will enable us to build a strong and sustainable future together.

As we slowly emerge from the pandemic, we must come together to forge ahead with plans that demonstrate our determination and commitment to a strong recovery that leads to a more equal, inclusive, resilient and sustainable world.

Here, I want to take a moment to acknowledge and refer to the fact that for the first time in 20 years, the World Bank announced a significant rise in poverty numbers, with the 2021 figures showing an estimated increase in COVID-19-induced poor of between 143 and 163 million. This means that the goal of bringing the global absolute poverty rate to less than 3 percent by 2030, is now beyond reach unless we embark on swift, significant, and targeted policy actions.

We cannot afford to respond to the devastating effects of COVID-19 merely by limiting ourselves to rhetoric. The principles of “leaving no one behind” and “building back better,” must be implemented by providing and mobilising sufficient aid and resources; ensuring that, for example, vaccines are fairly distributed to those who urgently require them and ensuring a level playing field by assisting regions of the world that continue to have difficulties in importing vaccines.

This is why Malta is a proud co-sponsor of UN Security Council Resolution that seeks to ensure equitable and affordable access to COVID-19 vaccines in armed conflict and post-conflict situations, and during complex humanitarian emergencies. And as a nation we welcome the work being undertaken to address vaccine inequality. Whilst I am proud to say that as of today, Malta has vaccinated around 91 % of its population, we stand fully committed to vaccine sharing with countries in need. It is in this spirit that this summer, Malta donated 40,000 vaccine doses to Libya and we will donate even further with the aim of helping our neighbouring country get a million doses by the end of this year.

Despite all the ongoing efforts, however, the crisis is far from over.

Echoing the words of the United Nations Secretary-General, a significant push at the highest political level is needed to reverse some of the effects of the pandemic, avoid a global recession, and get back on track to fulfil the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development within this Decade of Action and Delivery.

Malta has formulated a post COVID-19 strategy that places the community at the centre stage. The strategy was formulated using a bottom-up approach that looks at our strengths, vulnerabilities and potential in a bid to make Malta a smarter and more resilient economy.

Mr. President

The pandemic has significantly slowed global economic activity and the effects represent one of the largest international economic shocks the world has experienced in recent decades.

As the global trade environment continues to be in a state of flux, ensuring an economic, environmental and social recovery that is fair and inclusive is of the utmost importance. Debt guarantees, financial aid, and loans from international financial institutions are required in order to provide the impetus for economic recovery and revitalisation. The EU Digital Covid Certificate, for example, was a successful step forward to recovery via tourism.

I also believe that upon assessing the aftermath of the COVID-19 pandemic, we need to re-think our basic economic model and adapt it to similar events which are likely to take place in the future.

With this in mind, I firmly support the idea of an inclusive and resilient post-pandemic recovery that is based on an open and rules-based approach to international trade and foreign direct investment. Action should be focused on ensuring the proper implementation of existing rules, as well as the negotiation and implementation of new rules on issues that have emerged over the years. Fair competition should be at the heart of any approach for a post-pandemic economic recovery.

While we refocus our efforts on recovering together, we have to work and collaborate with the UN and other organisations to usher in a more networked and inclusive multilateral approach, to echo what the Secretary General stressed in his International Day of Diplomacy Message earlier this year. It is also the best form of preparedness against the global challenges that are impacting us all, particularly Climate Change.

Only through collective efforts that transform our present economic model into one that truly fosters social and environmental cohesion, can we truly and effectively respond to the needs of our planet responsibly, by building networks at all levels to foster a change in mind set across all strata of society. As political leaders the major responsibility falls upon us but we must engage with the private sector, academia, and entities from all walks of life to stop human induced climate change and seek solutions to adapt to its negative repercussions after we have done all we can to mitigate it.

In this regard, a successful COP-26 is critical to meet our long-term climate neutrality objective. I am proud to state that achieving carbon neutrality is one of the five major pillars of my country's economic vision for 2030. My government has adopted a Low Carbon Development Strategy that integrates mitigation with adaptation, which includes significant investments in the sectors of waste management, road transport, renewable energy and the energy efficiency of buildings. Despite the severe economic impact COVID-19 has had upon national finances, our programme for an ambitious decarbonisation programme has not waived.

As one of the most vulnerable countries to climate change within the EU, Malta is a keen advocate in favour of a focus on adaptation. Small Island States are amongst the lowest emitters but the most vulnerable to climate change. We also have limited options to reduce emissions, leading us to incur higher marginal and disproportionate abatement costs. As leaders, we have a significant role to play and the responsibility to act without delay. In this regard, I welcome the adoption, earlier this year, of an EU strategy on adaptation and the renewed focus on this topic by the UN.

Climate Change by itself, and as a threat multiplier, poses significant challenges that may exacerbate long-existing vulnerabilities and emerging conflicts as well as threaten the very existence of some countries and regions. In view of this, the relationship between climate and security will be high on Malta's agenda if elected to the UN Security Council for the term 2023-2024. As part of this agenda, we will place particular emphasis on bridging the gap between science and global security concerns, especially the ocean, as the single largest habitat on our planet.

Malta is committed to ensuring that the voices of those States mostly affected by the impacts of Climate Change are heard. As we are continuously witnessing, climate change is triggering severe and frequent weather phenomena that bring entire regions and States to their knees. We need to act before it is too late.

To this effect, as a country we have been actively and continuously working within the relevant UN Structures and with other Member States to raise awareness on the needs and capabilities of such countries. Our belief is that genuine and durable partnerships can assist in the fulfilment of the Sustainable Development Goals, the fight against climate change and the opportunities for decarbonisation, as well as in addressing the threats to our ocean and the potential we share to develop the Blue Economy.

As a founding member of the Alliance of Small Island Developing States, Malta's goal is to become a leader in Small Island State Governance, standing ready to share our plans on decarbonisation and also digitalisation. Small Island States face challenges regarding their critical infrastructure, but in parallel, can also demonstrate how effective the community-based approach is.

As our society will go through a digital transition in parallel with the climate one, as a country we also advocate the need to close the digital gap across nations to ensure a level playing field. Although Malta enjoys a positive and professional relationship as a 'Digital Island', we aim to further enhance our potential in the field and fast track our digital transformation. Our aim is to implement modernised and secure digital services that are accessible to all. These efforts will circumvent any of the disruptions caused by COVID-19 notably in the economy, education, health and public administration. Digitalisation will benefit and empower humanity if it is accessible to all our peoples, even those in the most remote parts of the world.

Mr President,

Another common goal and shared priority is that of ensuring human rights remain at the core of what we do. The full realisation of all human rights and fundamental freedoms is a priority for Malta, and we are especially concerned with reports of increased violence against women around the world. Our systems must be strengthened to prevent the proliferation of this scourge. We must ensure that perpetrators are brought to justice, victims are supported, and an enabling environment is created for women to be able to fully, equally, and effectively participate in public life.

Malta on the Security Council will continue to stress the need to include women and youths in peacekeeping and peacebuilding efforts. Their voices must be heard if we are to build fair and inclusive societies. Just as peace agreements have been seen to last longer when women and youths are present at the peace table, so can women and youth contribute to various spheres of society, and ensure that all voices are heard and the needs of the most vulnerable are met.

It is our responsibility to ensure that women are given the space to become enablers for change.

It is similarly our responsibility to provide a safe and secure environment where our society can flourish, a commitment that cannot easily be achieved when peace and security continues to be threatened across the continents. As prospective elected members of the Security Council, Malta believes that refocusing and revitalising our efforts at addressing and mitigating tensions is paramount. More must be done to assist the main actors on the ground and to address the root causes of conflict.

Such goals can be achieved by providing basic needs, which instability and conflict has taken away, whether it is basic education, literacy or food security.

On this occasion I have to say a few words on Libya.

The future of Libya must remain at the forefront of our common agenda for international peace and stability. The international community needs to provide support to the Libyan authorities, under the auspices of the United Nations, to make sure that the political transition is a successful one – for the Libyan people, the region, the African Continent and the world.

The will of the Libyan people must be respected, and the October 2020 ceasefire agreement fully implemented, while the work of the Independent Fact-Finding Mission on Libya set up last year should continue to be supported and reinforced. Mercenaries, foreign fighters and forces must withdraw from Libya, and the arms embargo must be respected.

In the run-up to Libya's upcoming national elections, this process should continue to be strengthened with the adoption of the necessary social and economic reforms combined with an underlying national reconciliation process. All of this should translate to, amongst others, the unification of state institutions, the commencing of security sector reform, as well as disarmament, demobilisation, and reintegration. We hope that the strengthening of these elements would bring Libyans together as they determine their collective effort towards a common future and a peaceful, prosperous Libya. Malta is actively supporting Libya in its economic development and just days ago, we marked our first commercial flight between our two countries. This is an important step forward for Libyan stability and prosperity.

At the same time, however, we cannot ignore the impact that political developments in the wider region have on the situation in Libya.

The situation in the Sahel remains tenuous, necessitating an integrated approach driven by a strong political commitment. This instability in the region will have implications and spill-over effects in other areas, including migration and terrorism.

More specifically on the latter, terrorism is a trans-regional phenomenon, which knows no border, and continues to pose a major threat to peace and security in various regions across Africa, particularly in Western and Central Africa, as well as the Sahel. It remains imperative for the international community to continue to work together and address the root causes of violent extremism and radicalisation, with the aim of countering terrorism, as well as its financing. Terrorists are adept at exploiting countries with weak counter-terrorism capabilities, hence, the need to address such challenges is even more important.

Action against terrorism must be firm and decisive at all times and the UN is central to the fight.

Literacy has, in my view, a critical role to play in empowering individuals to counter radicalisation efforts. This also links with the importance of strengthening the capacities of national criminal justice systems to administer fair and effective justice for perpetrators of terrorist crimes, while undertaking effective preventive measures in accordance with rule of law.

From a local perspective, the International Institute on Justice and the Rule of Law in Malta founded in June 2014, has been very active in convening practitioners from across the world, to provide rule of law-based training to lawmakers, police,

prosecutors, judges, corrections officials and other justice sector stakeholders on how to address terrorism and related transnational criminal activities within a rule of law framework.

Furthermore, in the past 20 months, Malta implemented further reforms to bolster the anti-money laundering and counter terrorism financing framework. We have enacted wide ranging legislation, including constitutional changes, substantially increased capacity and resources in several key institutions, and further implementation is already underway.

Mr President,

I also want to touch upon the situation in the Middle East, Afghanistan and Syria. Malta reaffirms its commitment to a just and comprehensive resolution of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict centred on a two-state solution based on United Nations Security Council Resolutions and the international parameters with Jerusalem serving as the future capital of both States. Malta welcomes the normalisation of diplomatic relations between the State of Israel and Morocco, United Arab Emirates, Sudan and Bahrain. Actions that promote peace and stability in the region should continue to be supported, including preparations to hold elections in Palestine.

The conclusion of a ceasefire earlier this year was a step in the right direction. We urge both sides to take concrete steps to consolidate the fragile peace, and to refrain from taking any action which may jeopardise any positive trends.

As regards Afghanistan, the unfolding developments there have shocked us all and I want to join others in urging all parties to exercise utmost restraint. The situation on the ground remains highly volatile and bleak. I also want to echo calls for all

involved to put an end to the violence, to respect international law and uphold human rights, especially the rights of women and girls whilst ensuring safe and orderly departure of foreign nationals and Afghans who wish to leave the country. In this regard, roads, airports and border crossings must remain open, and calm maintained. Afghan nationals must not be abandoned to their fate. Humanitarian access is crucial, and all humanitarian actors must have unimpeded access to deliver timely and life-saving services and assistance.

Similarly, I want to show my support for the words of the UN Secretary-General, that the international community must unite and ensure that Afghanistan is never again used as a platform or haven for terrorist organisations.

Regarding Syria, the situation on the ground remains unstable. Not only have ten years passed since the conflict began, but the struggles that families and children are facing have become even more precarious. The persisting violence in Syria, particularly in view of ongoing reports of sexual and gender-based violence, attacks on children, hospitals, schools, and other vital civilian infrastructure including potable water production plants is of grave concern. We welcome the unanimous adoption of UNSCR 2585 extending the use of the humanitarian aid corridor at Bab al-Hawa. We urge all parties to refrain from further violence and take any and all appropriate actions leading to a resolution of this humanitarian and political crisis. The International Community must redouble its efforts to bring peace to Syria. We cannot remain idle.

Peace and security are fundamental if we have any ambition to protect international humanitarian principles and minimise the impact of conflict on innocent civilians, including those who are the most vulnerable. Too many people live in countries where their access to water, food, education, and other essential

needs is not met or is denied. As potential members of the Security Council, we will commit to addressing the root causes of conflict and to promote recognition of the crucial role of humanitarian space.

Conflicts affect the lives of many people, and on a yearly basis we fail tens of thousands of children. We fail to protect them from violence, from cruelty, from harm, and from realising their full potential. We fail to protect their right of being children. Every year, children are forced into armed movements, abducted, abused, and forced to take part into conflicts that they have not created. The new worrying trends together with the multifaceted impacts on children exacerbated by the pandemic, are calling us to redouble our efforts to tackle this “plague” together.

The protection of children must be central in our policy and decision-making processes. This goal is attainable, but we must act with urgency. UN peacekeeping operations have a key role to play in protecting children in armed conflict, as well as others within the UN system, including UNICEF.

We strongly encourage the Council and Member States to support the full implementation of strong child protection mandates, including through the speedy deployment of senior child protection advisors and teams, and by prioritising the protection of children in peacekeeping transitions. Should Malta be entrusted to serve on the Security Council in 2023-2024, Children and Armed Conflict will be a priority during our tenure. We firmly believe that this issue, which greatly impacts our societies, should be mainstreamed across the work of the Security Council.

Mr President,

We live in an interconnected world in which actions and policies taken by any State can leave a severe impact on third countries.

Consequently, I firmly believe that a response which is multilateral in its approach, for a strong multilateral framework with a revitalised United Nations at its core, is the need of the hour. We need to strengthen our work on the affirmation of universal rules and principles, and we need to join forces and make rapid progress on the common goal of rehabilitating multilateralism. Only by working together and in solidarity can we end the pandemic and effectively tackle its consequences. Only together can we build resilience against future pandemics and other global challenges. Multilateralism is not an option but a necessity as we build back better for a world which is more equal, resilient, and sustainable. Only through collective action can we truly recover together.

Without an adequate global response, the cumulative effects of the pandemic and its economic fallout, armed conflict, and climate change will exact high human and economic costs well into the future. This is a risk that we cannot take especially in these unprecedented times where cooperation and solidarity among states is needed more than ever before.

Malta is ready to support the global effort and be an effective international change agent by assisting the alignment of economic strategies, promoting a collaborative international conversation, and drive technological innovation whilst remaining sensitive to societal and cultural implications.

If elected to the UN Security Council for the term 2023-2024, Malta will commit to support the UN as a neutral member state actively pursuing peace, security and social progress among all nations across the world.

Malta stands united with the international community to build a better world, where understanding and cooperation are at the heart of our policies and the work we do on the ground. Where we work together in a unified and multilateral manner.

Our citizens, and our children who will inherit the world after us, truly deserve it.

Thank You.