

Thank you, Mr President,

Secretary General,

Your Excellencies

Distinguished delegates,

The theme for this General Assembly is indeed an appropriate one.

For it truly is a watershed moment.

As I was preparing for my address of today, I thought to myself "what is it that the people we represent want most?"

What do they expect of their leaders?

1. Peace
2. Equality
3. Prosperity

Every person wants to live in peace, be free and equal, and have a decent quality of life.

These are the three themes that I would like to focus my address on today.

All three are equally important, are interlinked, and go hand in hand.

This institution shall be focusing on delivering on them, through concrete actions, rather than words.

For far too long, world leaders have allowed disparities to grow in this world. Between the rich and the poor. Between those who have access to fundamental rights and needs such as healthcare, water, food, and technology – and those who are deprived of even the most basic of needs. Between those with different sexual orientations.

Peace, equality and prosperity are what we, as world leaders, should aspire to deliver to our people, to the world and to future generations. That is, if we truly want to make a positive difference in their lives.

Mr President

I want to start with discussing peace.

Peace builds. It restores. It strengthens.

Without peace, without security and without stability, we will never be able to focus on the more important challenges we face: to bring about growth, equality and prosperity.

This is what Malta, and its people stand for.

It is what our predecessors had in mind when they enshrined the following words in our constitution:

“Malta is a neutral state actively pursuing peace, security and social progress among all nations”

A declaration of principles that is echoed in the core values and principles of the UN Charter, which we should all be committed to uphold.

Today, peace is threatened by what Secretary General Guterres rightly referred to as the *"cauldron of crises"* we find ourselves in.

And unless we come together to work for global order and world peace, we stand no chance. For no single state can do it alone!

In 1989, Malta played an important role in bringing an end to the cold war by hosting the Bush - Gorbachev summit and remains more committed than ever to contribute to the re-establishment and maintenance of world peace, order and security.

As an island state in the Mediterranean, we have seen first-hand the effects of conflicts in our southern area. Over a decade of conflicts that led to instability! Wars and violence causing irreparable harm in Libya, Syria and Yemen, which also led to mass migration.

Equally tenuous are the situations in the Sahel, Afghanistan and the Middle East.

Naturally, at this moment the most prominent is the war in Ukraine. Following decades of peace in mainland Europe, this is a stark reminder that peace can never be taken for granted.

Dear friends

Thousands of civilians have been killed and millions are suffering devastating losses. Close to 12.8 million people are estimated to have been displaced in Ukraine, which is a third of the nation's population. The largest human displacement crisis in the world today.

The international community cannot afford to lose sight of any of these situations.

Sustained support from the international community is urgently required to address these humanitarian needs and put an end to the devastation. To end the suffering of innocent civilians.

Let us not underestimate the effects of this war.

Failure to act will also mean that instability will spill-over to neighbouring regions, with all its negative consequences – mass migration - human trafficking - and terrorism.

Yet, as the war rages on in Ukraine, we must not forget the other issues which require our attention and action.

Allow me to speak briefly about our brothers and sisters in Northern Africa, particularly those in Libya – a country that neighbours Malta. Under the auspices of the United Nations and without interference from foreign actors, I augur that this country and its people transition to more peaceful, secure, stable and prosperous times.

For that to happen, decisions must be taken to immediately put aside vested interests in Libya, once and for all.

This is what the Libyan people deserve and what's best not just for the region, but for the Mediterranean continent and the African continent in general.

Mr President

We are indeed living trying times as a result of these wars.

Times when despite our efforts, equality remains a remote concept.

Today's global food supplies and energy markets have been shaken like never before, mostly because of the war in Ukraine.

The knock-on effects will be felt by our people in different ways.

Right now, these effects are taking the shape of constraints in the purchase of grains, fertilizers, agricultural equipment and livestock feed, the shortages of which have inflated the prices of key basic imports.

This has in turn impacted negatively the purchasing power of consumers around the world.

This continuous rise in the rate of inflation on food products, and food scarcity, is a major cause for concern and should be at the top of our agenda.

These pressures impact small islands, like my country, harder due to their insularity and other specificities. In Malta's case, we took calculated strategic decisions to support and stand behind our people all the way in the best possible manner.

If we do not support our people until the situation betters, we will have failed them.

We cannot leave our people alone to carry the burdens.

At the same time, we need to keep aware that this prolonged situation will lead to increased pressures on the economic, social and environmental sustainability of us all.

It is also our duty, as citizens of a global, interconnected world to work towards more sustainable food systems. Fulfilling our commitment towards zero hunger. But in order to end hunger, we must also end conflict and war.

The right to food is a recognised human right, and the consequences of not acting to safeguard this, compounded with the devastation caused by climate change, could be severe and may lead to famine and further displacement of people.

Global poverty is estimated to have risen so far by over 70 million people. And with the probability of further marked increases in the coming months, this is something we cannot afford.

Our appeal is for the United Nations to address the global needs for resilience as a counterpart and counterbalance to the dynamics of globalization, as a matter of top and urgent priority.

In this regard, my country is a firm believer that international fair trade is a key element for the development of nations and is particularly important for smaller economies. Economies that are largely depend on external demand and supply for economic growth and increased social wellbeing.

The pandemic has made a severe dent in the historically declining poverty rate. Food insecurity, and price hikes, will exacerbate the plight of millions of people around the world, as the effects of war in Ukraine could continue pushing the number of people falling below the at-risk-of-poverty line even more.

Mr President

Solutions in the 21st century are not found through the use of force and weapons. We can only prevent further deterioration of this situation if we manage to resolve war through dialogue, and meaningful negotiating efforts.

The 21st century should not be an era of war.

The search for peace requires that all the players in this war put the best interests and priorities of all peoples first.

We all know what the best interests of the people are.

Our absolute priority should be to re-establish peace and order. To end war.

That is what our people are telling us. This is what they deserve. This is what we have to deliver to them, without further delays.

Three years, three full years of continued crises, including a pandemic. The most vulnerable in our societies are the ones that have been the hardest hit.

Social unrest will increase if our people's quality of life deteriorates.

That is why we must intensify our pursuit for peace, equality and justice for all.

Malta continues to stand with the people of Ukraine, as they keep facing unprovoked aggression. We will continue to provide humanitarian assistance to innocent civilians and condemn tactics and recent statements that do not augur well, and will most probably mean further deterioration of the situation.

Mr President

Prosperity is the third theme I want to delve into.

Economic resilience is now more important than ever.

Only through economic ties and interdependence, through the freedom of movement of people and capital across countries, can we hope for long-lasting world peace.

For decades, globalization has been hailed as the next frontier of economic growth. By enabling human, financial and capital resources to find their best possible deployment.

By fostering jobs through international trade, creating wealth through technological advancement and dissemination, and allowing for better diversification against risk through the creation of multiple investment opportunities.

Our time is now! If not now, when? Let us turn the challenges we face into opportunities.

To transform our economies and make them future ready.

To focus on our green objectives. It is imperative that during these trying times, we avoid any temptation to put climate on the backburner.

Make no mistake, the future is green. The future is digital.

I'll focus on the latter first.

The digital sphere is one which Malta has recognised and embraced. We have invested heavily in our digital economy both in the public administration, as well as in the business and social sphere.

Today, we rank first in the EU in terms of e-Government, and 5th on the EU Digital Economy and Society Index.

This is no coincidence. It is the result of our strategic vision on digitalisation.

Our priority is to keep our citizens always at the very heart of our policies, and strive to improve their quality of life, at multiple levels, from providing excellent quality services, increasing the number of high-quality jobs, and reducing the digital divide to avoid anyone falling behind on the use of technology.

Digital is the future, and we are committed to it.

In parallel to the digital transition, we have to work on the green one. And in both areas, we must continue advocating the need to close the digital gap across nations to ensure a level playing field.

The displacement of people due to climate change, particularly due to droughts and sea level rise leading to loss of territory, is taking place on our watch.

Though no one is safe from climate change, it is those who are the most vulnerable that are impacted the most. In Pakistan, floods have already claimed thousands of lives. And, what about the heatwaves and droughts in China, California, the Middle East, Africa and Asia? The cyclones and typhoons in Japan.

All these are climate disasters that happened in 2022, but may become the order of the day if we do not intensify our efforts.

There is no quick fix. Far from it !

Here I must reiterate: global challenges require global solutions.

Together, we must keep the 1.5-degree target alive; ensure that no one is left behind, and continue working towards building decarbonised nations and societies.

As my country is about to embark on its two-year term on the UN Security Council, we intend to do our utmost to continue to keep climate change on the international peace and security agenda.

Climate change poses a serious threat to us all, but particularly to Small Islands Developing States, and many coastal communities. It threatens state sovereignty, brings loss of territory, and causes damage to states' critical infrastructure as well as their existing rights under maritime zone boundaries.

As the Prime Minister of Malta, I am fully aware of the threat that climate change is posing to small island states all over the world. No matter how near or far, we truly share similar climate challenges.

Malta was one of the founding members of the Alliance of Small Island Developing States and aims to become a leader in Small Island State Governance.

A lot has already been done in recent years. Malta has been channeling overseas development aid for decades and we are committed to continue offering support through scholarships, dedicated learning and training programmes in various areas.

One such area is water management.

Water scarcity will be one of the biggest impacts of climate change. Our practices in water management, particularly through the sourcing of water through desalination and recycling of wastewater, can serve as a model for addressing our world's future needs - especially in view of the increasing recurrence of droughts brought about by climate change.

Moreover, small states may serve as platforms where innovative ideas and technologies can be tested and eventually identified as international best practices and adopted on a wider scale.

Malta launched the Island for Islands initiative at COP26 in Glasgow last year, and we intend to continue to build on this further.

Our aim is to bring to the fore the realities of small island economies as we strive to decarbonize and digitalize and fulfill the UN's Sustainable Development Goals.

Safeguarding our oceans remains one of our key priorities.

The interplay between climate change and the health of our ocean is important for Malta as we draw from our maritime legacy and our historical contribution at the United Nations.

The ocean plays a vital role in combating climate change, but it is also vulnerable to the impact of climate change, such as the changes in sea temperature, the rise in sea levels, and the effects on sea currents.

That is why as members of the UN Security Council, we will place particular emphasis on bridging the gap between science, policy and law making to address global security concerns, especially for the ocean, as the single largest habitat on our planet.

Mr President

Allow me to take this opportunity to thank you for placing your trust and confidence in my country to serve on the Security Council for a two-year term starting in January 2023.

As a member state of the European Union, located between two continents, we are committed to promote dialogue and understanding with a view to strengthened cooperation and social progress.

Whilst the challenges we face are many - together and if we concentrate our efforts, I am sure there are no obstacles which we cannot overcome.

It is through cooperation and exchange that we can see our societies grow and thrive. Now is the time for nations to reach out and deepen ties with existing partners and develop new relations with others.

As a UN member, and as a member of the UN Security Council from next year, Malta stands ready to work with other Member States to maintain and foster international peace and dialogue.

To finding transformative solutions to today's challenges by fostering peace, strengthening equality, and delivering prosperity.

Keeping security, sustainability, and social justice at the very heart of our efforts and priorities.

I would like to conclude by conveying a message my 10-year-old daughter Giorgia Mae, who is here in the audience, wished me to pass on when I explained to her that I would be addressing this meeting of world leaders.

She said: “I would like the world leaders to be an example to us children and leave behind a beautiful Earth”.

May this simple message enable us to deliver what is expected of us.

Thank you