

Monday 22 JUNE 2015

Fifty years of membership in the Council of Europe made Malta resolve, not only to champion the tenets of this ennobling institution, but also to contribute with its experience and effective democracy, to the inherent values of human rights, the rule of law and freedom.

These three fundamental pillars, come out most eloquently in narration, message and striking visuals, in this photographic exhibition by Darrin Zammit Lupi, a renowned Maltese national.

Malta, with its 300 square kilometres of land and 450,000 inhabitants, is a reality that unfolds in parallel, with what takes place in the Mediterranean sea. The Mediterranean has always been the crossroads of civilisations, as well as, a region, which unfortunately is

full of turmoil, and which many a time has experienced instability and lack of peaceful conviviality.

The recent tragic events happening in the Mediterranean are a clear consequence of this unfortunate turmoil. I am sure that these events, haunt all those, who uphold responsibly universal human rights and freedoms.

The thousands of migrants who perished at sea while crossing to mainland Europe, is a tragedy, that makes the inauguration of this exhibition a timely occasion, to commemorate our presence within this institution, as well as, to honour our brothers and sisters, who for want of freedom and a better life, risked and lost their lives, and too often, lost their families too.

As President of Malta, I feel obliged to speak on behalf of my nation, to encourage all Europeans, to stand

against complacency, and in favour of solidarity and justice.

Today I have good reason to claim that, notwithstanding the progress that we made throughout the years, there is still much to be done to ensure that no one, regardless of race, colour, creed, national origin, ethnicity, sexual orientation, marital status, disability, religious or political affiliation; suffers any injustice or is subjected to different treatment because of his or her condition.

These sentiments and values stem from: The Universal Declaration of Human Rights whereby it states that:

“All human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights.”

The Universal Declaration of Human Rights, goes on to guarantee, to all peoples, equal protection of the law,

equal rights to work, access to education and health, equal right to vote and other protections which sum up the very notion of respect and dignity, which we unfortunately, many a time, lack so much in our time.

Trying to meet the needs of the many migrants arriving on our shores, and supporting them to reset their lives, and start anew, is not an easy task that can be managed single-handedly; however, it is not impossible, if only all European partners, and the international community, understand, that migration, has been the past, is the present and will be the future of our societies, as globalisation is not only an economic reality, but mostly and before anything else, a social enterprise which has still to take ground and bear its fruit.

For this to take place, we need to bolster our efforts as Europeans and citizens, of a common planet, to never allow that children fall prey of discrimination or be

deprived of their childhood, because of our short sightedness and our misguided decisions.

It is indeed our duty to ensure that all human beings, enjoy a peaceful environment where they can express themselves freely, and without prejudice.

This exhibition, which I am honoured to inaugurate on this historic occasion, testifies to all this, in the most eloquent of ways.

This exhibition not only marks the 50th anniversary of Malta's accession to the Council of Europe, but also points to, one of humanity's overbearing problems, that is: lack of compassion; which should rally all of us, to rethink our ways by going back to the roots, that founded an institution like the Council of Europe.

Finally, while I would like to thank again, Darrin Zammit Lupi, for his skilful and artistic display, to bring together all this, on this very special historic occasion, of Malta's membership to the Council of Europe, I truly believe, that today, we need to commit to justice and human rights, with an even greater intensity, and wide-ranging resolve, in the best interest of all human kind.

Thank you