

Address by Her Excellency the President of Malta on the occasion of the UN General Assembly
September 2015

Mr President, Secretary General, fellow Delegates

THE POOR HAVE WAITED LONG ENOUGH

We come together at a critical moment in our history.

We unite at a moment that calls more loudly than ever for global solidarity and a renewed commitment to safeguard human dignity and human rights.

This is a moment where we must believe that we are capable of challenging the boundaries imposed by dogmatic convention and narrowness of thought.

We must believe and manifest the growing commitment, felt so keenly across our nations, to build and sustain inclusive communities.

We must find ways of ensuring that meaningful dialogue and shared understanding, among peoples of diverse cultures, will enrich and support our commitment.

This is a moment in which to be mindful of the far-reaching and often insidious effects of inequality. The cycle of power, privilege, and oppression constrains opportunities, restricts development, and limits self-determination for millions of people around the globe.

We must interrupt these processes and work for social justice, in the knowledge that these systems of inequality, can never define the human person.

Stories of inequality flood the media every day. We hear of:

Stories of people who are denied their most fundamental rights;

Stories of individuals and groups facing discrimination;

Stories of extreme poverty;

Stories of people who suffer because of the impact of climate change;

Stories of the vulnerable being exploited and abused.

The precariousness of the world calls for a greater effort in addressing these inequalities, which continue to hinder our progress.

But how can we talk about progress without talking about the women, girls, and gender minorities who continue to face a multitude of inequalities on a daily basis?

How can we talk about sustainability without addressing the millions of people facing poverty?

How can we talk of inclusiveness without reaching out, beyond the safety of our privileged centres.

If we are serious in our commitment to secure a sustainable world, we must implement measures that are capable of taking a critical, reflective look at the

underlying systems that underpin and replicate inequalities on a global scale.

As leaders, we cannot look away.

As leaders, we must be steadfast champions of social, economic, and political inclusion.

As leaders we must always give voice to the shared truths of our global community.

As leaders, we must become advocates for peace and the wellbeing of all.

Sometimes, this might not be the most popular position to take. We must be bold, and defend the rights of vulnerable people wherever they are found.

Human dignity, integrity and freedom should be at the heart of our concerns.

It is inspiring to see so many of us united in this global commitment to improve our world. Our endorsement of this agenda will better the lives of many, and set in motion

processes of change that shall encourage deep levels of cultural and structural transformation.

Our commitment shall instil more respect towards fundamental and other rights, and the need for us to take a stand where and when those rights are violated.

The international community must stand firm in its rights-based approach.

To effectively address these realities we must collaborate with each other and with other stakeholders, walking a shared path to achieve common objectives.

Governments are not alone in pursuing their goals; the role of civil society is key, and I encourage non-governmental and other organisations to actively participate in the global transformation we envision today.

Fellow Leaders of the World:

Future generations will judge us by the efforts we make.

But efforts alone are not enough.

We must come together as peers to deliver results and a real change to the benefit of all humankind.

The poor have waited long enough.

Thank you