



**Malta Model United Nations Conference**  
**18 September 2015 San Anton**

Honourable Dr Francis Zammit Dimech

Distinguished guests

Ladies and gentlemen

Good morning to you all

It is with great pleasure that I welcome you today for the official launch of the Malta Model United Nations Conference.

I extend a warm welcome especially to the foreign delegates, who came to our country specifically to participate in this conference. I wish you all an enjoyable stay in Malta, and hope you may find some time to explore its beauty and rich history.

The theme you have chosen for the conference is indeed one that is very close to my heart, and I am sure, one that has touched most of us in one way or another.

The photo of the drowned Syrian child brought ashore on a Turkish beach, has woken the conscience of many of those who, until that day, seemed indifferent to what was happening around them.

I congratulate you on the choice of topic, “Lives Adrift: Fighting the Exploitation of Irregular Immigrants”.

Migration, and all the trauma, suffering and injustices that go with it, should be of interest to us all. As a democratic country, we all believe that migrants’ rights are human rights, as embedded in the Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms, and the number of European Union regulations and frameworks that uphold human rights.

Grounded in Article 14 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights of 1948, which recognizes the right of persons to seek asylum from persecution in other countries, the



United Nations Convention relating to the Status of Refugees, adopted in 1951, is the centrepiece of international refugee protection today.

The Convention entered into force on 22 April 1954, and it has been subject to only one amendment in the form of a 1967 Protocol, which removed the geographic and temporal limits of the 1951 Convention.

The 1951 Convention, as a post-Second World War instrument, was originally limited in scope to persons fleeing events occurring before 1 January 1951 and within Europe. The 1967 Protocol removed these limitations and thus gave the Convention universal coverage. It has since been supplemented by refugee and subsidiary protection regimes in several regions as well as via the progressive development of international human rights law.

We need to deliberate how people in peril, whether as a result of war, terrorism or climate change, can be protected and their human rights upheld.

We need to think and plan on the longer term, so that future generations are spared similar tragedies and the loss of life is transformed into respect for diversity and inclusion at all levels.

We are seeing politicians opening their countries to migrants, while others are building walls.

We are experiencing people welcoming refugees in their homes, while others continue to instil fear and hate in people, as they want to keep their 'status quo'.

We need to keep in mind that migration is a global phenomenon and hence it requires a global solution. The debate needs to extend beyond our shores, enticing a sustainable solution.

It is my aspiration that, through the Malta Model United Nations Conference, young, upcoming professionals like you, become fully conversant with the realities of the unprecedented influx of human beings looking for a better life for themselves and their families.



Bearing in mind also that migration is a global phenomenon that requires global solutions, may your debate here go beyond our shores, so that you may be true envoys for the rights of all human beings, whatever their circumstances.

I am delighted that the first Model United Nations is being held in Malta. You will have the opportunity to savour discussions similar to those taking place in the United Nations Summit in New York.

Next week, I will address the Summit, where a new set of Sustainable Development Goals will be presented for us to garner and achieve by 2030.

Our immediate and very urgent challenge is to deliver on these goals. Those who are on the receiving end of global injustices will note the promises elicited at the Summit, and if they are lucky to endure and survive their multiple hardships, will hold us accountable to their predicament.

For the sake of these people, we need to make a firm commitment to walk the talk and to transform words into immediate and concrete actions, preferably with, rather than for the communities.

While I acknowledge the difficulties in realising the goals and targets, we have to dream and have the confidence that they are reachable, while making a firm commitment to act.

I heartily congratulate the Junior Chamber of Advocates and the Malta Model United Nations Society, for taking the initiative to organise the first Model United Nations Conference here in Malta and I wish you every success.

My heartfelt wishes to you all.