



ADDRESS BY HER EXCELLENCY MARIE-LOUISE COLEIRO PRECA, PRESIDENT OF MALTA AT THE COMMONWEALTH YOUTH FORUM

ADDING GLOBAL VALUE...#WHATNEXT?

25TH NOVEMBER 2015

Good afternoon! I hope you had an enjoyable and productive meeting, and that the Forum proved to be a unique, enriching experience for you all.

As the Forum is now coming to a close, I would like to share with you a few personal reflections on the theme of your Forum, “Adding Global Value...#What Next?”

Hence, it is natural that one asks, what is next for the young people of the Commonwealth as an aftermath of your deliberations? With 60% of the Commonwealth population under the age of 30, that is 1.4 billion young people, you are truly a strong force.

I am certain that during your meetings, you discussed ideas on the change that is needed in approaching sustainable development which embrace young people at its core through effective action by all stakeholders.

I am sure that you had the opportunity to consider what the next steps are, for overcoming the most pressing challenges facing young people today, and highlight potential on solutions for your collective future.

I believe that you should have an active role in promoting development, peace, and democracy, and in protecting and promoting the values, of tolerance and understanding, to create an environment of respect for each other’s cultures.

I believe that a community of countries such as the Commonwealth should be based on its shared values of equity, equality, social justice, human rights and freedoms, should serve as the global model of the positivity that embracing diversity brings to global societies.

As young people, you have the responsibility to bring to the fore this lived experience to other young people that, as yet, have not benefitted from the enrichment that diversity brings about.

I believe that you have much to contribute on national, regional and global levels to achieve this vision.

As young people within the Commonwealth, you can contribute and add value to upholding and enhancing its values as laid out in our Charter.

As young people in the Commonwealth, you can be a model to strive to achieve the goals set by the international community within the United Nations.

As young people, you can be the drivers of the much needed Peace processes, to effectively prevent conflict and risks of conflict.

I am pleased to note that the Commonwealth Secretariat is strengthening and developing its ‘Sport for Development and Peace Initiatives’ that can serve as a platform for peace, throughout the Commonwealth and beyond.

I believe that we need to understand that the prevention of conflict and violence can be best achieved, through intercultural learning and dialogue, civic education and engagement, tolerance and equality, human rights and peace education, democracy, mutual respect for cultural, ethnic and religious diversity, responsibility, solidarity and international cooperation.

I truly believe in your capacity to promote a culture of peace and tolerance amongst yourselves, and consequently, among the peoples of the world.

I believe in you and in your desire to transform the world to a more secure, peaceful and just place.

To do this, we need to challenge acts of violence, terrorism, xenophobia, racial and gender-based discrimination, occupation and trafficking in arms and drugs.

As young people, you are an invaluable agents of change, and your contributions should be actively supported, solicited and regarded as essential to building peaceful and inclusive communities, while supporting democratic governance and transition.

I believe that your leadership roles and capabilities are essential in preventing and resolving conflict, violence and extremism. You are endowed with rich resources which are essential to achieving sustainable peace.

We know that it is just a minority of young people in the world, that engage in violence and acts of terror, while the majority of young people across the globe, strive for peace and stability, and that some actually engage in peace building efforts.

I see the need for you to participate in peace building within the context of your everyday life,

be it social, economic, cultural and political, and at all levels, including within the family, school, community, local, regional and national arena.

Hence, I encourage you to promote sustainable, long-term and collaborative initiatives for, and with, other young people that build on existing efforts.

I would like to take this opportunity to encourage our policy actors to prioritize on regular, systematic and meaningful participation of young people as an essential condition for the sustainability, inclusiveness and success of peace building efforts, that global societies need so much.

Now that this important Youth Forum is over, it is pertinent to ask about the outcome of your deliberation during your discussion, and about what resolves, you have committed yourself to, to bring about the necessary transformation, that is much needed to add effective global value.

I urge you to take these commitments with you, and continue to work within your communities, to ensure peace and wellbeing for all.