

**SPEECH BY H.E. MARIE LOUISE COLEIRO PRECA, PRESIDENT
OF MALTA AT THE FREDERIC OFOSU MEMORIAL LECTURE
“MIGRATION, MENTAL HEALTH AND EDUCATION” GIVEN BY
DR YONAH MATEMBE**

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Dr François Mifsud

Dr Colin Calleja

Dr Yonah Matembe

Dear friends

**It is an honour to inaugurate the Frederic Ofosu Memorial
Lecture, facilitated by the “Department of Inclusion and
Access to Learning” within the University of Malta’s Faculty
of Education.**

It is also a pleasure to welcome Dr Yonah Matemba to Malta.

**Let me share some of my views on the importance of social
inclusion in Malta, in Europe, and across our world.**

**I believe that social inclusion should be a way of life, that
ensures equitable and equal opportunities for all.**

Social inclusion is an intersectional and multi-dimensional social order, which creates an environment for the full, free, and active participation of every member of society, in every aspect of life.

These aspects of life include the social, economic, political, and cultural dimensions, and also, above all, they must include access to processes of democratic participation.

The phenomenon of migration in Malta, Europe, and across the world, must make us more aware of the urgent need for effective strategies of social inclusion.

We need coherent and effective strategies which address growing risks of exclusion, discrimination, prejudice, and potential radicalisation.

These growing risks not only affect newcomers to our society, but also the citizens of these islands.

The United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals gives us the framework to apply a global social solidarity approach.

The United Nation's Agenda 2030 is a roadmap for the sustainable, equitable, and peaceful transformation of our status quo.

At its core, Agenda 2030 and its Sustainable Development Goals proposes a way forward, towards an inclusive society for the benefit and the prosperity of all humankind.

At this point, I would like to pose some questions, for deeper thought and deliberation:

How can we make the concept of social inclusion a tangible way of life for all?

How, and in what practical ways, can we make our communities, our societies, and our nations more inclusive?

How can we ensure that the SDGs will be effectively implemented to become an intrinsic part of our social order?

How can the SDGs be a catalyst for change in our professional and social lives?

The basic foundation, in all our efforts to work for more inclusive societies, must be the full respect for Human Rights, Human Freedoms, and the Rule of Law.

Definitely, without this rights-based foundation, both at national and international levels, there can be no sustainable development, and a subsequently inclusive society.

Each and every member of our society, regardless of their economic resources, political status, or social standing, must be treated equitably and equally under the law.

In this way, the full dignity of the individual will be respected.

It is this sense of dignity towards every human person that should guide us to make deep-rooted and necessary improvements in our societies.

This is especially important where migrants are concerned.

To effectively create and sustain inclusive societies, all members of society must feel empowered to be active participants in all social, political, and economic activities.

Excluding certain people from full democratic participation is a recipe for social tension and conflict.

Not only does such exclusion mean that our policies will become one-sided, failing to take into account a more rounded understanding of any given situation, but it also means that our policies will fail in their long-term implementation, to secure the holistic wellbeing of all humankind.

The democratic participation of civil society is essential, in order to ensure processes of active citizenship when formulating and making public policies.

Furthermore, it is civil society which can most effectively hold our authorities and institutions accountable, across the board.

I believe that it is necessary for us to have in place an ongoing, structured, democratic participation for all members of society.

In this way all members of society will be empowered, and have the confidence to engage and interact with each other, even in situations where there are diverse opinions.

With such an ongoing process, we can build mutual trust, and we can create safe spaces for sharing and learning.

It is when we acknowledge and celebrate our diversity that we can manage to work together, to build an inclusive, united and peaceful society, for the benefit of all.

Access to information plays a major role in creating an inclusive society. Therefore, education is essential.

Education provides opportunities to learn about our differences, while also cultivating the appreciation of the democratic values of solidarity, of justice, and of peace, which we should all hold in common.

Particularly for young people, education provides the opportunity to instil values of respect and the appreciation of diversity, while also empowering those who are marginalised or excluded from decision-making roles.

A democratic society must be an inclusive society. There is no difference between safeguarding our democracy, and celebrating the opportunities of cultural diversity.

Each one of us contains multiple and diverse expressions of identity, and by celebrating diversity, we recognise that these differences are an important and enriching part of ourselves, and of society as a whole.

We must celebrate the limitless potential that diversity brings, as a source of opportunity and an inclusive, democratic way of life.

Most of all, we need effective leadership to promote and prioritise the creation of an inclusive society, subsequently, an effective and democratic one.

Widespread participation in decision-making processes, and policy formulation, is one effective way of reminding people that they must have a direct say in the future of our society.

In this way, we can effectively promote a culture of positive peace, which instils a cultural transformation in our communities, and across society.

A culture of positive peace moves beyond the mere absence of warfare, to another level of democratic participation, transparency, and inclusive collaboration.

It is only by coming together, united in the pursuit of one common objective, that we can ensure authentic respect for our dignity and the dignity of one another.

We cannot allow despair to overwhelm hope.

We cannot allow our present and future generations to forget the incredible power of solidarity.

We can achieve so much by working together, towards an inclusive, diverse, and truly democratic society, which will bring about long-term and sustainable positive peace.

We must be vociferous activists of solidarity and peace, and tireless champions for social inclusion, democracy, and holistic wellbeing within our countries, in our regions, and across our world.

Thank you.