

**Speech given by Her Excellency Marie-Louise Coleiro Preca, on the occasion of the launch UNESCO's Global Hope Coalition in New York, 18th September 2017**

**[Salutations]**

**Dear friends,**

**It is my pleasure to be here, among such a distinguished gathering of individuals, to honour the recipients of these awards for their work of peace, for their leadership, and their heroism.**

**I also feel privileged to be present for the launch of the Global Hope Coalition.**

**This initiative will send a powerful message, to all people of goodwill.**

**A message that should encourage all people to understand that each and every one of us has a role to play to nurture and to work for sustainable peace.**

**It is a message of our united commitment, to stand up for universal human rights and fundamental freedoms, for the benefit of all humanity.**

**This is an important moment to highlight the essential work that is being carried out by diverse individuals and civil society, to promote**

**a culture of peace, as a counter response to violent extremism and intolerance.**

**At this point, I would like to commend Irena and Deborah, and all their collaborators, for such an astounding initiative.**

**On behalf of the people of Malta, I am proud to support the Global Hope Coalition.**

**I am so pleased that my Foundation, that is, the President's Foundation for the Wellbeing of Society in Malta, embraces much the same aims and objectives, in its work of peace.**

**This work is particularly targeted to nurture and empower children and young people.**

**I believe that we must work, together, to celebrate the strength and the enrichment of our diversity, in all its forms.**

**In order to achieve our goals, I believe it is essential that we intensify processes of intercultural encounters and interfaith dialogue, to overcome suspicion, and to ensure that we can live together, in dignity.**

**We must keep reaching out, across the borders and beyond the artificial barriers that are, unfortunately, constraining us.**

**All of us, including our authorities and organisations, must keep empowering our children and young people, by providing safe and welcoming spaces, where their voices can be heard.**

**We must, moreover, create opportunities for them to connect with each other and with others, especially those who have been marginalised and oppressed.**

**We must ensure that we create an appropriate environment, for individuals and groups who have been subjected to increased vulnerability to be empowered, and to move out of the periphery of our societies.**

**We must facilitate their journey into the centre of our discourse, to share their precious insights, and enable them to become key contributors in all the actions which we take.**

**We must also ensure that our societies are dedicated to overcoming structural inequalities, and all forms of discrimination.**

**In this context, we must empower our children and young people to know their choices, and to make them wisely.**

**We must make the choice for hope.**

**We must make the choice for dignity and respect.**

**We must make the choice to nurture the best within ourselves, and to openly and freely share it with all of humanity.**

**I am confident that the synergies this coalition is creating, and the partnerships it has already fostered, will continue to promote our shared aspirations for a global culture of peace and wellbeing.**

**Finally, I would like to urge us all to continue to make the choice to walk along paths that lead us to peace, to make this world a better place for our children, and for all of humanity.**