
Opening Speech by H.E. Marie-Louise Coleiro Preca, President of Malta at a Masterclass entitled 'Women as crucial contributors to peace by developing sustainable tourism strategies' during the Mediterranean Tourism Forum 2018

2nd March 2018

[Salutations]

Dear friends,

It is my pleasure to address this workshop, on women, as crucial contributors to peace through sustainable strategies for tourism.

As patron of the Mediterranean Tourism Foundation, it is also my pleasure to announce the launch of the Mediterranean Women in Tourism and Hospitality Assembly, the MedWITH Assembly.

This new chapter, which will unfold within the Mediterranean Tourism Foundation, will be dedicated to the advancement of women in the tourism and hospitality industries.

I am confident that, with the support from industry partners, the MedWITH Assembly will deliver innovative initiatives that promote leadership skills and development opportunities for talented women.

Before going further into my contribution, I must commend the work of Tony Zahra and Andrew Agius Muscat, together with their collaborators and the board of governors, for spearheading this initiative, and their vision in setting up the Mediterranean Tourism Foundation.

Since the Foundation was established in 2013, it has shared a strong message of togetherness, by uniting people from the Mediterranean and beyond, in a common pursuit for peace and prosperity through tourism.

As a woman of the Mediterranean myself, and a UNWTO Ambassador for Sustainable Tourism, I can clearly see the importance of having this Mediterranean Women in Tourism and Hospitality Assembly.

Furthermore, I am deeply committed to bringing a gender-focus to the area of tourism, and I am confident that the Malta Tourism Foundation will continue to promote this essential area.

Evenmoreso, I believe it is vital for us to keep highlighting the important role that women can, and do, play, in order to make our peace-building efforts through the tourism sector more effective.

According to an international study commissioned by UN Women, entitled the “Global Report on Women in Tourism”, tourism is one of the world's largest generators of wealth and employment.

This same report clearly states that tourism further provides a wide range of income-generation opportunities for women, particularly in developing regions.

This report, which was the first one of its kind, to map out the participation of women in the global tourism sector, states that women are almost twice as likely to be employers in tourism, as compared to other sectors.

The report continues, to say that tourism also offers unprecedented leadership possibilities for women, with more women attaining the highest levels of executive representation, in their respective governments, in the area of tourism, than in any other sector.

Another report, released by the United States Institute of Peace, makes it clear that women are making essential contributions, across all levels of society, as agents for peaceful development.

The report, entitled “The Essential Role of Women in Peacebuilding”, states that women in positions of authority, within their various sectors, are more likely to focus

on “reconciliation, economic development, education and transitional justice”, each of which is a fundamental component to create and sustain peace, in the long-term.

According to another report, entitled “Women: Empowerment through Tourism”, which contributed to the United Nations World Tourism Organisation's action plan on women's empowerment in tourism, it states that the participation of women in tourism brings many layers of positive impact.

The examples given in this report show a great potential for tourism in promoting equitable and sustainable development, especially in marginalised communities, which are underpinned by the process of women's empowerment.

However, the support of outside agencies and NGOs is often needed, to assist in capacity building and resource management, as well as training in important skills. Therefore, there is the need for the private sector to work in strong synergy with civil society, as well as national governments.

What is surely important to note is that we cannot create, nurture, and sustain peace through tourism without working together.

We must recognise the fundamental reality, that empowered women are essential, to create empowered and resilient communities, nations, regions, and a stronger world.

The “Women: Empowerment through Tourism” report also reveals that empowering women through tourism does more than merely transform the lives of individual women. Most women look beyond themselves, and translate economic profits into benefits for their entire families, working hard to meet the needs of their communities.

The report therefore reaches an essential conclusion, which is at the centre of the message I want to share with you today:

Empowering women through tourism undoubtedly empowers whole communities and entire societies, promoting prosperity and resilience, both socially and economically.

I am convinced that, through the efforts of the hospitality industry and all stakeholders working within the tourism industry, it is possible for us to take tourism's strategies for peaceful development to the next level, by prioritising the visible participation of women.

The private sector has a critical role to play, contributing to global peace, especially through processes of person-to-person contact, interfaith dialogue, and intercultural relationship-building, which are made possible thanks to tourism.

As we all are aware, women definitely bring their own particular skills and abilities, which can directly influence and nurture holistic processes of peace and prosperity, within their communities and across their society.

I am convinced that all collaborators in the tourism and hospitality industry, both women and men, have the capacity to take our efforts in the tourism sector to the next level by sustaining dialogue, by building peace, and by creating prosperity for all.

On concluding, as tourism grows and the sector flourishes, I am certain that the lives of countless individuals and families, and their communities and businesses, stand to benefit from increased awareness and added sustainable investment in the peace-building potential of tourism.

I believe that, by working together, we can harness the transformative power of tourism, to promote the much-needed empowerment of women and their involvement in intercultural and interfaith dialogue; building new friendships and opportunities of understanding among diverse groups; and creating sustainable strategies for peace and prosperity, in our Mediterranean region, and beyond.

Definitely, women in tourism bring added value to the sector, by bringing about the much-needed sustainable changes, for peace and prosperity, for all humanity.