

Speech

The World Forum for the Culture of Peace – June 2019

[Salutations]

I would like to thank the Abdulaziz Saud Albabtain Cultural Foundation, for inviting me to address this World Forum for the Culture of Peace.

I will begin my contribution, by referring to two inspirational quotes, regarding peace.

“Peace does not mean an absence of conflicts; differences will always be there. Peace means solving these differences through peaceful means; through dialogue, education, knowledge; and through humane ways.”

The second quote is: “If you want to end the war, then instead of sending guns, send books. Instead of sending tanks, send pens. Instead of sending soldiers, send teachers.”

The first quote is from the Dalai Lama and the second is from Malala Yousafzai. I chose to share these quotes with you as they are most appropriate for today's discussions. Both quotes feature education as being fundamental to building peace.

In my opinion, the underlying message that has been at the heart of our discussions, was the need for peace education.

Last month I was invited to give a speech at the National University of Ireland, regarding the need to Embrace Diversity for a Peaceful World.

I started that speech by making reference to the UN Declaration of Human Rights. Specifically, I made a reference to the very first sentence of its preamble, which sentence underlines that peace in the world, is key for everyone to enjoy their fundamental rights and human dignity.

This 70 year old sentence is all the more important today, as it provides us with guidance, which is so needed in our world, which has become so uncertain.

This important sentence also makes reference to the ‘human family’ - a concept which is so essential to be kept at the heart of our discussions and our endeavours to build a culture of sustainable peace.

Unfortunately, as a human family we are still struggling to fully understand and embrace our diversity.

Understanding, acknowledging and respecting our diversity is a most-essential component to build a culture of sustainable peace.

Peace must be the cornerstone on which all of our strategies should rest. All of our strategies should aim to build a culture of positive peace even in the face of adversity.

Building a culture of positive peace will not happen overnight. It will need investment, ownership and a conducive environment that supports it.

Education plays a key role in this context.

I strongly believe that education curricula at all levels, including children in kindergarten up to the highest levels of learning must be empowered to embrace fundamental core values.

More specifically, we must devise the necessary holistic methodology, which celebrates diversity and inclusion, nurtures education and promotes positive peace.

This is very much in line with the commendable initiative in focus today. The education manuals to Teach the Culture of Peace for the Security of Future Generations being launched today, by the Albabtain Cultural Foundation, will surely help to promote a culture of peace that we so desperately need in today's world.

The appreciation of diverse cultures is also key.

Appreciating our respective cultural heritage, not only gives us our identity, but also reminds us that we all belong to one human family.

Appreciating our respective cultural heritage makes us aware of the common elements underlying our traditions and values, which we know, transcend different cultures.

These common elements also reflect common aspirations, common fears, and common vulnerabilities – that are experienced by all of humanity.

Global peace has always been difficult to achieve.

Conflicts remain a reality in many parts of the world today.

Although the United Nations was established following the atrocities of the second world war, seventy years later, war is still a reality.

Millions of people are forced to leave their homes and seek refuge elsewhere.

As a woman from the Mediterranean Region, my country has seen, and is still seeing whole boatloads of people, fleeing from conflict, undertaking most dangerous journeys, to reach Europe.

I personally have witnessed:

- **Children, separated from their parents.**
- **Husbands, wives and children, torn with despair, desperately looking for their family members.**
- **Shock-stricken and emotionally-broken mothers and fathers looking for their children, and**
- **Traumatized children looking for their siblings.**

These tragedies continue to this day in the Mediterranean and across so many other regions in the world. Unfortunately, only the lucky few who manage to survive such traumatic situations, are then welcomed by people of good faith and communities that embrace diversity.

Yet believing in diversity is not enough. Diversity needs to be part of a wider and more comprehensive rights-based approach.

Education is a key component of that approach.

We must make sure that migrants, asylum seekers, and refugees are welcomed into established, mainstreamed, and inclusive education systems. Specific needs, like those relating to language or belief, need to be addressed and catered for.

It is important that education systems adapt and change, so as our schools will become environments that welcome and celebrate different cultures.

Schools should, in essence provide a safe and respectful environment where children from different cultures can come together in a spirit of mutual acceptance.

This will foster an environment where children thrive together and respect each other irrespective of their origin, faith or colour.

Schools must therefore become safe spaces - where respect for diversity can flourish and be celebrated.

Creating safe spaces in schools is a priority for my Foundation, the Malta Foundation for the Wellbeing of Society.

Through our flagship outreach activity, which we called 'The Secret Garden,' we reach hundreds of schoolchildren annually, with activities that promote and encourage, inclusivity, equality, diversity, tolerance, respect, and above all, peace.

Through this invaluable work, we are creating a community of learning, to help build the necessary resilience within our communities. This is a way of sowing seeds, to reap the benefits of an inclusive, equal, and equitable society.

On concluding, I believe that our efforts at embracing diversity need to be accompanied by an overarching strategy for inclusion.

This must prioritise the building of a culture of positive peace, that champions respect and solidarity, with diverse groups, that today make up the social fabric of our diverse communities.

In this context, I would like to once again commend the Abdulaziz Saud Albabtain Cultural Foundation, for creating The education manuals to Teach the Culture of Peace for the Security of Future Generations.

Definitely, working with children, and for children, through the necessary educational curricula, based on peace education, can be a means towards building a sustainable culture of peace.

Therefore, let me encourage all of us, to work harder to reach this objective, as States, as communities, as international organisations, but most importantly, as being members of one human family.

**I truly believe that each and every one of us are called to be
champions for peace.**

Thank you.