

Today marks the beginning of a dream coming true, and which I have, and many of us have had, for many years.

This is a dream where we aim that the Mediterranean Children's Movement, which we are launching today, will be the catalyst for the children of our region to come together, in one strong voice.

My passion and belief, for a peaceful Mediterranean, was sown in me by my mentor when I was still very young.

It was Dom Mintoff, former Prime Minister of Malta, who first proposed, during the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe (CSCE) in 1975, that security in Europe is closely linked with security in the Mediterranean.¹

In this context, I truly believe that Malta has a role to play in bringing Mediterranean countries together, not only because of its geostrategic position, but also because of its geopolitical position, in promoting peace in the region.

I firstly shared my dream with Madame Nehiza Labidi, the Former Minister for Family, Children and Women of Tunisia, Prof Stephen Calleya who leads the Mediterranean Academy of Diplomatic Studies, and then with Dr Yana

¹ The Helsinki Accords, 1975

Mintoff Bland, who agreed to mirror the already established Mediterranean Women's Consortium, and, in this case, bringing children together from across the Mediterranean. We then spoke to Ms Ninetta Kazantzis, another pioneer of the Mediterranean Women Association, and also an activist for Children's Rights in Cyprus and on a European level, and all together we brought the idea forward.

I also believe that, if we ever hope, to bring about a shift in establishing long lasting peace in the Mediterranean region, we have to start, by investing in our children.

The underlying philosophy of the Mediterranean Children's Movement will undoubtedly be the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child.

The Mediterranean Children's Movement would therefore fully foster the children's right to their full participation, on whatever impacts their lives.

The Mediterranean Children's Movement will provide a safe space for Children to share freely with others and empower them to voice their opinions about the inequalities that effect children in any way.

The Movement believes that addressing inequalities will pave the way to building sustainable peace. We believe that peace is not just the absence of wars and conflicts.

We need to build a culture of positive peace where the presence of justice, equity and equality are invested in our Mediterranean societies.

We hope that the Mediterranean Children’s Movement will address the social and economic disparities in the countries of the region, and in turn, the conflicts and violence associated with exploitation and inequality.

We believe that by investing and empowering the Children of the Mediterranean to uphold these values, will help to build sustainable peace, holistic wellbeing and inclusive societies in our region.

As countries of the Mediterranean, we need to acknowledge and celebrate, our Mediterranean commonalities and our rich diversity, in order to safeguard our culture, our heritage, our environment, especially our sea, our values and our love of peace.

We can only achieve this by coming together and listening to the dreams and aspirations of our children, and taking the necessary actions to promote peace in the Mediterranean, as a pre-requisite for Mediterranean stability.

I would like to end my brief introduction to this historical launch, by quoting Bettany Hughes, an English historian and broadcaster, who is mesmerized by our Mediterranean history, tradition and cultures, said:

‘A journey through the Mediterranean is not only inspiring and stimulating, it is also humbling. The men and women who created antique treasures for us to marvel at, had to deal with plague, genocide, a world without writing, iron tools, or penicillin – and yet they made something extraordinary of their life and times.’

These are truly inspiring words, and I believe that today, this quote coming from a person beyond the Mediterranean should make us the more resolved to be:

the women and men of the Mediterranean, to now take our civilization to the next level.

that generation that will bring peace, equality and equity to our Mediterranean society.

Let's show that our diversity is a means of celebration and not a means of division.

Dear Children of the Mediterranean, show us how we can help you do this.

You want peace, you want equality, you want equity, you want inclusion This is what you tell us.

Please make our Mediterranean a beautiful region and a showcase that diverse cultures can peacefully live together and provide for one and all.