

MaltMUN

**Model United Nations Conference opening ceremony**

Date: Friday the 16<sup>th</sup> September at 10.25am

Venue: National Library, Valletta

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Your Excellency Vanessa Frazier

Ms. Gwendolyn Green

Ms. Chloë Cauchi

Ms. Briana Mifsud

Good morning to you all.

The Malta Model United Nations Conference has become an annual event, which I look earnestly forward to, for its amazing experience to have the opportunity to be amongst a group of motivated young people such as the activists within the Society.

Thank you Chloe, and all the team at the Malta Model United Nations Society.

It is great to meet some of the critical thinkers of this country, that are concerned with important issues that are affecting the lives of so many peoples around the world.

Thank you for taking the initiative every year to bring together so many young people to participate in meaningful discussions about important critical issues that are affecting practically all of human kind.

It is always a pleasure to address the participants of this annual event, mainly because I believe that the world belongs to you, more than to us adults. You, as young people, are not only the future but even more so the present of our world. We need you to voice your vision and aspirations for a world that can make all peoples feel they belong, and to be able to sustain themselves adequately and in dignity.

We are living in a world, which has become even more uncertain, than we were experiencing at the time, when we met last year.

We are living in a world, that is discarding human beings as if they were disposable commodities.

We are living in a world, that cannot sustain itself for long.

Human Beings all over our world today are crying out loud for a dignified life.

Peoples across our world are yearning for peace and the ability to live a meaningful live.

Millions of Children are without education, without food, without health services.

Children around the world are being abused, trafficked, and made to fight in wars and conflicts.

Young People like you, are taking to treacherous journeys to flee from extreme poverty, environmental degradation, torture, persecution, conflicts, and wars.

In keeping with the title of the conference, **Concrete Commitments: from Policy to Practice**, I truly believe that the time for rhetoric is long gone, and we need to act now, as it may already be too late to save our planet, and ourselves.

We need young people like you to stand up and speak about, what the world authorities should have been doing long ago, and failed to do, to save the world.

The actions taken by now, are showing clearly that these have not been enough, and that it is now even more urgent to put their words to action. Yes we do

have a climate crisis. Yes we do have an evident crisis of environmental degradation.

Lately, the populations of the whole world are facing more challenges. Challenges that we have not experienced in our lifetime, such as the pandemic, the evident harsh effects of climate change, and wars.

Challenges that should teach us, that we need to strengthen our multilateral system as no one on earth is free from anything.

There are lessons learnt from these challenges ..... the need to act together, and the need to ignore borders.

As young people you need to step up your activism to ensure that the people in authority are heeding and acting to ensure the right policies are in place to overcome these challenges that have been brought about by their complacency and lack of understanding and respect towards all of humankind.

I am pleased that you have rightly identified all of these issues in your conference brief; as these challenges to humankind need to be addressed immediately, if we are to be able to enjoy equity among all individuals, opportunities and wellbeing for all, and peace among nations.

I noticed that one of the committees you will simulate is the United Nations Security Council.

I am so pleased, and indeed, we should all feel honoured that Malta was elected to this Council and will be a member for the coming two years. This is indeed a prestigious role, but more importantly, it is an excellent opportunity for Malta to contribute in real terms to the security among nations, to the actions needed to overcome the threat of climate change and sustainability, to solidarity among peoples, and to overcome conflicts.

Just this week, I was meeting our Foreign Minister, Dr Ian Borg, who is very motivated and also eager to bring to the Security Council some innovative initiatives. I am hopeful that we will, as a Nation, show that even if we are one of the very smallest of Nations in the world, but we sincerely have all of humankind in our hearts and minds, and that we want to utilize all of our time as a member of the Security Council, to make this world a better place for all children and young people.

Here, I encourage all of you, to make our voices heard, to stand to be counted and make a difference, through acting on our real values.

Our country has always stood out as a nation, even on the multilateral level. We made history with the Law of the Sea, we made history when our proposal to encourage more girls take to science and I do hope that we can make history now too.

However, history is not only made by politicians. History can be made by young people like yourselves.

We are living in a world that is forgetting its meaningful values. I reiterate that today, some human beings like us are being regarded as a disposable commodity.

As a country we have always been a welcome safe haven for people who fled from wars. We can go back as far as the Russian Revolution, we have welcomed in the past young people from Zimbabwe, from Palestine, from Albania and I can go on and on.

We must ensure that the values of solidarity and respect that are underlying our universal human rights are upheld and embraced by the young people of the world .... These are values that can guarantee peace and a fully functioning multilateral system, that can provide for an equitable and prosperous world society.

Malta from its ancestry upheld the values of solidarity and respect to everyone without prejudice.

Malta welcomed strangers and never abdicated from its responsibility towards people arriving on our shores.

How can we then accept that a four year old girl dies of thirst in our waters?

How can we accept that a six year old girl is dying of acute sodium poisoning and severe dehydration, because our country ignored the calls for help?

How can we accept this lack of solidarity and respect just because we were lucky enough not to be born in a conflict zone, or in extreme poverty?

Are these the values that are innate in our nation, or have we forgotten how to be caring and compassionate?

Have we forgotten that we are a migrant nation ourselves?

I encourage you to make your voices heard with local, regional, and multilateral authorities.

We cannot as Maltese, and Europeans pose as the Champions of Human Rights and then we leave children to die, because we leave on open seas.

We cannot as Maltese, and Europeans, pose of being one of the most Generous regions in world, as we send millions in Humanitarian Aid, and leave people to drown in our seas.

This nothing less than genocide!

We need to stand up through our representatives within the United Nations Security Council, so that the International Humanitarian Law is truly safeguarded in Syria and in all conflict and war zones around the world.

The International Humanitarian Law, based on the 1949 Fourth Geneva Convention on protecting civilians in conflict, as well as the 1977 and 2005 Protocols, guide and safeguard humanitarian action in armed conflicts. Its principles should ensure the rapid and unimpeded passage of humanitarian aid in armed conflict and the freedom of movement of humanitarian workers, the protection of civilians and the protection of refugees, prisoners, the wounded and sick.

Yet, in the conflict in Syria, we have seen the bombing of hospitals with the killing of patients and medical personnel, as we are witnessing now in Ukraine.

We have seen grave child rights violations in Syria, as reported by UNICEF, together with countless abuses and violations of human rights, and grave violations of international humanitarian law by all parties, causing enormous human suffering.

We also need to step up our endeavours through our multilateral engagement, for the development of an global harmonized child protection system. Although we have the UNCRC, which highlights Children's Human Rights, however we need to ensure that in the most effective of ways, we uphold a common child protection system to guarantee safety for all children without prejudice.

I am pleased that our Foreign Affairs Ministry has taken the initiative to collaborate with the UN High Representative for Children in Armed Conflict to set up training for professionals working with Children in armed conflict.

May more initiatives are taken up to safeguard all Children in the world.

Another important topic that you will be discussing is tightly knit to a bioethical issue.

During the pandemic, we have learned that vaccines are one of the most effective tools for protecting people against infectious disease, including COVID-19. Other simple yet effective measures included wearing of masks and social distancing. In such circumstances, Governments and institutions mandated actions that take into consideration the common good, as they were crucial to

protect the health and well-being of the public, and are therefore ethically justified.

I am sure we recall the scenes of military trucks carrying the dead from COVID-19, and the astronomical numbers of people dying in all of our countries.

Certainly, in such circumstances, individual liberty and autonomy may raise a number of ethical considerations.

However, according to the World Health Organisation, these considerations are justified by advancing another valuable social goal, in this case, protecting public health and caring for each other.

Likewise, we need to address the harmful effects of climate change, with a holistic and united approach. For this reason, it is essential that the international community work together, in synergy, while each and every one of us shoulders our responsibilities.

Our holistic endeavours and collaborations are important, to implement the United Nations' Agenda 2030, and its seventeen Sustainable Development Goals.

Meeting these challenges requires that we all work together, to transcend our borders as one human family.

We all know what must be done, as the Sustainable Development Goals offer us a global strategy, which promotes shared prosperity for the building of peace, and a global social solidarity approach.

I encourage you to focus on solutions that unite us as one human family.

Finally, I augur that you keep highlighting the universal values of the United Nations, which are rooted in our shared ideals of peace, respect, solidarity, and wellbeing.

I am confident that, as one human family, we can build a global culture of meaningful dialogue and active cooperation, for the benefit of all.

I wish you all a better tomorrow, success in your studies and achievements, and above all a healthy, active, and meaningful future.

I augur you a successful conference.