

**General-Assembly – Joint Debate
Global Agenda for Dialogue among Civilizations (Agenda item 14) and
Culture of Peace (Agenda Item 15)**

**18th October 2010
United Nations, New York**

Statement by

**H.E. Mr. Saviour F. Borg
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of Malta to the United Nations**

Mr. President,

The two items which this Plenary is considering, namely, “Global Agenda for Dialogue among Civilizations” and “Culture of Peace”, are mutually inclusive and complimentary to each other. May I take this opportunity to thank and congratulate the High Representative for the Alliance of Civilizations, President Jorge Sampaio, for his outstanding leadership and tenacity in maintaining the Alliance momentum, attracting new members and building consensus among its constituency and in delivering on some of its objectives.

Malta considers that dialogue amongst cultures and civilizations is essential for a better future, irrespective of our origins or beliefs, and is an important tool in strengthening dialogue and a means for cooperation between and among countries of the Group of Friends of the Alliance.

In my intervention I would like to focus on how Malta is contributing towards the enhancement of the dialogue among civilizations in its own region - the Mediterranean.

It is recognized that the Mediterranean represents a unique experience of similarities, common history and overlapping cultures, which contribute towards the objectives of the Alliance of Civilizations, namely, to “help counter divisions, polarization and extremism within and among societies.”

With recurrent tensions threatening peace and security in the Mediterranean region and beyond, it is important that all stakeholders continue to strengthen the global scope of the Alliance, which, as rightly pointed out by the Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon is “the leading United Nations forum dealing with intercultural dialogue and co-operation.” The people-to-people approach must continue to be the guiding primary purpose of our endeavours especially in strengthening on-the-ground efforts and cooperation with a view to sowing the seeds of reconciliation and understanding.

In three weeks time, Malta will be hosting on 8 and 9 November, the first Alliance of Civilizations Regional Conference for the Mediterranean. As an active member of the Group of Friends of the Civilizations, Malta intends to ensure that this Conference’s outcome will be another feather in the cap of the Alliance especially by enhancing good governance, cultural diversity and intercultural dialogue among and between Mediterranean States. Indeed, this First Regional Conference for the Mediterranean will see the adoption of the first Regional Strategy for the Mediterranean and an Action Plan, paving the way for innovative projects and initiatives aimed at strengthening intercultural dialogue and cooperation.

The primary aims of the Strategy are those of contributing to the general ongoing efforts to bring relevant cultural, economic, social and political stakeholders together from both sides of the Mediterranean, promote mutual understanding and improved perceptions of each other, defuse tensions and bridge divides, enhance security and human development, and foster good

neighbourly relations among societies, institutions and individuals in the Mediterranean region. The First Regional Conference for the Mediterranean in Malta will therefore provide a platform for open and frank exchanges between and among representatives of the Mediterranean region with the hope that it will leave an indelible mark in the Alliance's inter-cultural dialogue process.

Malta's commitment to inter-cultural dialogue in the Mediterranean is a continuous process and a long-standing vocation since Malta joined this Family of Nations. Indeed, Malta does not lose one opportunity to contribute further to this dialogue of partners.

In this regard, Malta also plays an active role in the Union for the Mediterranean (UfM). Firm in the belief that dialogue and cooperation strongly contribute to the stability and security of the Euro-Mediterranean region, Malta has held, since the inception of the Euro-Med dialogue, that the centrality of the objectives of the UfM remains crucial in any successful achievement of this novel partnership. Malta is proud and honoured to have nominated a Deputy Secretary General, who has been entrusted with the portfolio covering Social and Civil Affairs, an area undoubtedly of vital interest to all UfM partners, and which will serve to further dialogue in the Mediterranean.

Malta is also pleased to host the Headquarters of the Parliament Assembly of the Mediterranean (PAM), which brings together Parliaments of all countries bordering the Mediterranean. The PAM was established to bring together all the littoral States of the Mediterranean on an equal footing under a unique forum of their own, to examine questions and take decisions on issues of direct interest to the countries of the region. The primary mission of the PAM is to bring the People's representatives of the Mediterranean together to further cooperation, dialogue and mutual understanding. In this regard, it was a privilege for my delegation to have been the sponsor together with the delegation of France of the important resolution which was adopted by the Sixty-fourth Session of the General Assembly last December (2009) and which granted Observer Status to the PAM to participate in the sessions and the work of the General Assembly. The 5th Plenary Session of the PAM to be held in ten days (28 to 30 October 2010) time in Rabat, Morocco, will be yet another occasion where Parliamentarians from the Mediterranean littoral will once again engage themselves in the injection of initiatives, ideas, proposals and solutions in the continuous search for an inter-cultural parliamentary diplomacy in establishing durable peace and sustainable prosperity for all citizens of the Mediterranean.

Malta strongly believes that we, as U.N. Member States, proud of our history and heritage, can and should strengthen our political will to consolidate that which we have so far achieved and in forging our efforts to engage collectively and constructively towards the promotion of a fruitful dialogue between and among partners from different regions.

Malta's vocation is to continue to strive to stem prejudices and overcome obstacles which hinder and jeopardize the harmonious interaction between peoples of diverse socio-cultural backgrounds and religious beliefs. The bridge we are building should be based on solid pillars of mutual understanding and respect. In achieving this goal, a concerted effort is required towards a process which affords a sufficient amount of visibility to win both minds and hearts of our peoples.

Thank you.