

**MEDAC**  
**XXVII MALTA SEMINAR**  
**INFORMATION AND TRAINING SEMINAR FOR EURO-MED DIPLOMATS**  
**KEYNOTE WELCOME ADDRESS**

**MALTA'S EURO-MEDITERRANEAN FOREIGN POLICY**  
**HON. DR. TONIO BORG, DEPUTY PRIME MINISTER AND MINISTER OF**  
**FOREIGN AFFAIRS**  
**FRIDAY, 23<sup>RD</sup> OCTOBER 2009**

Excellency, President Emeritus,  
Distinguished Guests,  
Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is a pleasure to welcome you here today at this 27<sup>th</sup> Malta Seminar organized by the Mediterranean Academy of Diplomatic Studies. Indeed, this Academy encapsulates all that Malta has worked to achieve on its Euro-Mediterranean policy. The fact that you are here today, is testimony to the progress Malta has made in promoting itself as a serious interlocutor for the Mediterranean region. Whilst thanking the organizers for inviting me to address you, I wish to congratulate the Academy on its sterling work and assure it of my Ministry's constant support in pushing forward its programs and projects.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Last week, Prime Minister Lawrence Gonzi, together with The Secretary General of the League of Arab States, Mr Amre Moussa and the EU's External Relations Commissioner Bennita Ferrero-Waldner, inaugurated the EC-LAS Liaison Office in Malta. For the first time ever, this office brings together the European Commission and the League of Arab States. A direct result of a Malta initiative, the Office will be responsible for working on issues of mutual concern that are affecting the region. Malta believes that this office will usher in a more dynamic era for Euro-Arab relations.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Malta has always defined itself as European with a Mediterranean character. Although our direction has always been towards Europe we have never let go of our Mediterranean heart. Today, as fully fledged members of the EU we are able and indeed do, promote the Mediterranean region and its advancement at every opportunity. Indeed, we have always expounded the theory that Europe's security depends on security in this great Sea that surrounds us. A source of inspiration for many a great poet and writer let us too look for inspiration at the shores of the Mediterranean. Its winds and tides have

produced a truly unique '*melange*' of peoples that have for centuries, worked to live together sharing their love and interdependency of this Sea.

Naturally, this has not come without hurdles and it is these hurdles that, whilst trying so hard to overcome them, lead us to new directions of cooperation in our foreign policy agendas. Make no mistake, Ladies and Gentlemen, the Middle East question will always be regarded as a top priority on the Mediterranean Agenda. However, we must not allow the issue to hang over our heads like a Damocles' sword. For too long now, the aspirations of the peoples of the Mediterranean region have been denied further economic, social and political cooperation due to the impasse that the Middle East question creates. All things being equal, the issue needs to be tackled with a fresh approach in order for progress to be made. President Obama, has shown how resolute his government can be in order to make small steps towards bringing the parties back to the discussion table. On our part, the states of the Mediterranean, it is our duty to facilitate such progress by creating the right climate for them to take place.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Let us not give up on the Middle East. Indeed, hope is the last thing that fades and it is our duty to end the decades of violence and misery that have plagued the region. The establishment of two states living side by side for many years was considered an impossible dream. Today it is looked upon as a point of departure. With this in mind, we have to work to reassure the Israelis that their people can live in security slowly shedding the siege mentality that has plagued generations of Israeli children. Both sides have the right to a fully fledged state, secure and free to move around and trade freely.

Since joining the European Union, Malta has, on a number of occasions spoken out on the Middle East question. Indeed, our actions speak louder than words. The recent opening of our Embassy in Telaviv and representative office in Ramallah are proof enough of our ongoing commitment for a search for peace in the region.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

The road ahead is a long and winding one but a road nonetheless. Let us look to the future and work on common areas of agreement in parallel to the Middle East process. Let us create a holistic vision for this great sea – one that unites peoples in their diversity.

Malta's vision is clear. Let's put the Mediterranean back on the European agenda. For too long, with the EU's expansion to the East, has this great region been left to its own devices. The world has changed immeasurably since then. The opening up of Libya and the promulgation of the technological age have created the right atmosphere and opportunities to work together for a prosperous and more peaceful future. Areas of conflict can be looked at as areas for cooperation and for mutual gain. Here are some areas that Malta is looking to make progress in the coming decade in the region.

Pollution - What use is a polluted sea? For years, ladies and gentlemen, we have been paying lip-service to the threat of pollution to our sea. The threat to our way of life and that of future generations is seriously under threat if affirmative action is not taken immediately to curb the trend. We must be determined to build upon programmes already in existence such as the Horizon 2020 programme of activities in order to safeguard marine life and activity for the benefit of all. This, together with the protection and maintenance of the Mediterranean's maritime and land highways is essential if intra-regional trade and economic activity are to be promoted.

Cooperation amongst our states needs to be elevated to a necessity. Today's economic global climate has shown us that we are more interdependent than ever before. Yet, are we making full use of our region's potential and ensuring its protection? We need to look at working together on alternative energies and research and development, at the same time, understanding that our region is region-specific and thus unique in not only character but problems that arise. No blue-print imported from other regional blocs can work as well as the one we develop ourselves. Malta has full confidence that the people of this wonderful region can put their political differences aside and concentrate on the challenges that are facing all of us. Much can be achieved if we stand together on issues that bring us together.

Another such issue is the development of a comprehensive civil protection system which, in case of a natural or man-made emergency, can and will protect the millions of people living along the basin. Times have changed and so have circumstances. The Mediterranean climate – always taken as a given so many decades ago cannot be relied upon today. Climate change is a reality we are having to content with and one we need to be prepared for. Creative solutions need to be pursued and cooperation on such issues paramount.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

We speak from the heart when we speak about this beloved region. As EU member states we are committed to promoting the Mediterranean and therefore support any venture that does so. This can be seen not only in the EC-LAS Liaison Office but also through the initiative of the French President Sarkozy that has translated the Barcelona process to the Union for the Mediterranean.

The EC-LAS Liaison Office will offer a better structured EU-Arab political dialogue focused on promoting and building confidence measures between the two shores of the Mediterranean. Informality of regular interaction as already happens within Europe is a prerequisite to enhancing trust at all levels between Europe and the Arab world.

In such an exercise one needs to guard against abstract grand designs. The focus needs to be on delivering practical modalities of cooperation. On a political level, a pre-emptive security dialogue will assist in reducing the risk of tensions escalating whenever a crisis emerges. On an economic dimension, fostering closer commercial relationships will strengthen existing efforts creating a flourishing Euro-Mediterranean free trade area. On a socio-cultural level, people to people interaction must be facilitated by reviewing factors that are hindering

more dynamic interaction in areas such as education and civil society cooperation. This must include re-assessing prohibitive visa regimes that are preventing Euro-Arab relations from progressing. In this regard, during the last months, Malta has secured various agreements with both EU and Arab countries, amongst which 12 double taxation agreements in the last 18 months. We have also set up new and easier arrangements for visa issuances from various countries including Ukraine, Turkey, Serbia, Libya, Israel, Palestine and Syria. There are more to come in the coming months. We have organised business delegations to and from various countries in the last year and a half, amongst which Qatar, Portugal, Poland, Ukraine, Scandinavia, Tunisia, Algiers and Libya. These are concrete results of our efforts to develop further our relations with both the EU and Arab countries.

The Union for the Mediterranean must be seen as a litmus test of the European Union's objective of assisting in the improvement of livelihoods in states that border its own member states. Moreover, the UfM track record will also have a major bearing on the extent to which the European Union is able to influence positively development in Africa and the Middle East.

The Union for the Mediterranean therefore provides a very important strategic re-assessment of the EU's policy towards its southern neighbourhood.

Our medium to long-term common goal must be to integrate further the Arab world into the more multi-polar international system that is emerging. The past decade has been witness to too many episodes that sought to undermine trans-Atlantic relations with the Arab world. A more cooperative trans-Atlantic strategy towards the Arab world, that includes a more ambitious positive Euro-Arab component, is essential if the Mediterranean is to remain a zone of peace, security and prosperity in the twenty-first century.

As it has done since its independence in 1964, Malta will continue to champion closer Euro-Arab relations now also through the EU-Arab League diplomacy mechanism that Malta is honoured to host. All those who are in favour of a harmonious Mediterranean must welcome such relentless commitments to creating a more stable and prosperous Mediterranean region.

As always, Malta will continue to try and persuade everyone concerned to assume the responsibility necessary to improve the political, economic and socio-cultural outlook of everyone in the Mediterranean. Implementing such a dynamic Euro-Mediterranean foreign policy agenda is the only way to ensure that all of us live in a more peaceful and prosperous Mediterranean region in future.

Thank you.