



L-iSpeaker

The Speaker

*"The participating States also consider that security in Europe is closely linked with security in the Mediterranean area as a whole."* (Conference on Security and Co-operation in Europe, Helsinki Final Act, 1 August 1975)

Honourable Members of this House,  
Excellencies,  
distinguished representatives of international institutions,  
scholars, religious leaders and members of civil society,  
ladies and gentlemen,

I welcome you to the Parliament of Malta, fully conscious of the significance of this setting. We are gathered in the seats of parliamentarians, in a House designed for representation, accountability, and decision-making, even if today not all those seats are occupied by elected members. That choice is deliberate, because dialogue on the future of Mediterranean security belongs here, at the heart of democratic legitimacy, not on the margins and not as an afterthought. For if security is debated without democratic legitimacy, it will remain politically fragile.

I also wish to welcome the distinguished scholars, parliamentarians, religious leaders and representatives of civil society who have travelled from across the Mediterranean region and beyond to participate in this conference. Your presence reflects the diversity of voices that must be part of any meaningful dialogue on peace and cooperation in our shared region. The sentence with which I began is not a ceremonial quotation. It is a strategic assertion made fifty years ago and still awaiting full political consequence. Malta insisted on its inclusion at Helsinki because its Prime Minister at the time, Dom Mintoff, understood that Europe's security architecture would remain structurally incomplete so long as the Mediterranean was treated as peripheral. He stated plainly that there could be no security in Europe if insecurity persisted in the Mediterranean — not as an appeal to idealism, but as a recognition of interdependence, geography and responsibility.

The Mediterranean has always been more than a geographical space. It is a meeting place of civilizations, cultures and faith traditions that have shaped the intellectual and spiritual history of the world. Yet the same sea that has connected societies for millennia has also become a region where geopolitical tensions, economic disparities and humanitarian challenges converge.

After decades of treaties, declarations, summits and frameworks, it is legitimate to ask where we have arrived. Sustainable regional security in the Mediterranean remains elusive, and what remains elusive cannot be secured by rhetoric alone.

This is not because dialogue has been absent from our vocabulary, but because it has too often been kept at a safe distance from power. Dialogue that is episodic, symbolic, or disconnected from decision-making cannot shape lasting security outcomes. Sustainable regional security

requires dialogue that is structured, continuous, and allowed to influence choices before crises erupt, not merely to comment on them afterwards. That distance between dialogue and power has been one of the Mediterranean's most enduring strategic weaknesses.

From this Parliament, and in my capacity as Speaker of the House of Representatives of Malta, I can say this with conviction: the door has been knocked on repeatedly and publicly.

In Cairo, in 2023, at the Summit of Speakers of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Union for the Mediterranean, I argued that parliamentary diplomacy is not a ceremonial exercise but a security asset capable of building trust where executive channels alone fall short.

In Rabat, in 2024, at an Inter-Parliamentary Mediterranean Forum, I warned that regional security frameworks which sideline parliaments risk losing democratic legitimacy and long-term credibility.

In Málaga, in 2025, at the PA-UfM Speakers' Summit, I reiterated that neutrality and parliamentary engagement are not passive postures but operational tools for facilitating dialogue across political, cultural and geopolitical divides.

These were not isolated speeches. They were deliberate attempts to move parliamentary voices from the back benches of regional security architecture into its central corridors, for parliaments do not merely echo the anxieties of peoples; they often detect them before institutions are forced to respond.

Yet we must also be honest about the outcome. Access to those corridors has too often remained limited. Not because dialogue lacks value, but because genuine dialogue redistributes influence, challenges rigid alignments, and requires institutions to share ownership of security outcomes. Yet without that shared ownership, no architecture of security can command lasting trust.

It is easier to manage instability than to invest politically in prevention; easier to host conferences than to integrate their conclusions into policy; and easier to speak about dialogue than to allow it to shape strategy.

Successive Secretaries-General of the United Nations have repeatedly reminded the international community that prevention through dialogue is always less costly than responding to conflict after violence has already erupted. Their message has remained consistent: when dialogue is postponed or marginalised, instability becomes far more difficult to contain.

In the present international context, these reflections acquire even greater urgency. The world today is witnessing a period of profound uncertainty. Armed conflicts, geopolitical rivalries, humanitarian crises and growing mistrust between nations are reshaping the global landscape.

The Mediterranean inevitably reflects these global tensions. Our region continues to face unresolved conflicts, migration pressures, economic disparities and political instability. Yet the Mediterranean must not be seen only through the lens of its challenges. It remains a region of immense human potential, cultural richness and shared history.

It is precisely in this context that Malta's role carries particular significance. Our authority lies not in the scale of our territory, but in the consistency of our voice.

For centuries this island has stood at the meeting point of cultures, faiths and civilizations. Malta has learned through its own history that dialogue is not a luxury reserved for times of stability; it is a necessity precisely when tensions rise.

That conviction was given enduring expression on the 31<sup>st</sup> March 1979, when Malta, under the leadership of Prime Minister Dom Mintoff, closed the military bases and brought to an end the presence of foreign forces on our soil. In that act, our country affirmed before the world that its future would not be shaped by the strategic designs of others, but by the sovereign will of its own people. That choice retains profound relevance today, at a time when war, instability and geopolitical rivalry once again cast their shadow across our region and beyond. It reminds us that the true strength of a nation lies not in its service to conflict, but in its courage to stand for peace, dialogue and cooperation.

Our constitutional neutrality reflects this conviction. Neutrality does not signify indifference, nor does it mean silence in the face of global challenges. Rather, it represents a commitment to building bridges, encouraging dialogue and promoting cooperation where confrontation might otherwise prevail.

Malta's experience reminds us that even the smallest states can contribute meaningfully to peace when they choose dialogue over division and cooperation over confrontation.

Dialogue, in this sense, is not the opposite of security. It is its infrastructure. It is the bridge between principle and policy, between warning and prevention, between tension and trust.

Without trusted, structured and politically connected dialogue, security becomes reactive, brittle and short-lived. With it, prevention becomes possible, misunderstandings are reduced and shared interests can be articulated before they are overtaken by confrontation.

From this Parliament, therefore, the message is firm and measured.

Sustainable regional security in the Mediterranean will not be achieved through further declarations alone. It will be achieved when dialogue is granted institutional access and when parliamentary venues are recognised as operational spaces where meaningful engagement can truly shape decisions. Until this happens, the region will continue to produce declarations faster than it produces peace.

Allow me therefore to conclude with a simple reflection.

The Mediterranean has witnessed the rise of great civilizations. It has been a sea of exchange, of creativity, of knowledge and of encounter between peoples. Yet it has also known periods of conflict and division.

The responsibility of our generation is to ensure that the Mediterranean once again becomes a sea that unites rather than divides, and history will judge us not by the number of our meetings, but by whether we had the courage to turn dialogue into direction.

Dialogue is not weakness. Dialogue is strength. It is through dialogue that trust is rebuilt. It is through dialogue that peace becomes possible.

If we succeed in strengthening dialogue across the Mediterranean, we will not only serve our region — we will serve the cause of peace in the world.

From this Parliament, in the heart of the Mediterranean, let us reaffirm a simple but powerful conviction:

Peace is not built by distance.

Peace is built by encounter.

And dialogue is where that encounter begins.

Thank you.