



Security Council Debate on The Role of Young Persons in Addressing Security Challenges in the Mediterranean, 17 April 2024

Malta Statement delivered by the Hon Dr Ian Borg, Minister for Foreign and European Affairs and Trade of Malta

I shall now make a statement in my capacity as the Minister of Foreign and European Affairs and Trade of Malta.

I begin by thanking (tbc) for his/her insightful remarks, Mr Kamel for his important briefing, and Ms Messaoudi for sharing her experience as a young peacebuilder.

The Mediterranean region has undergone significant transformation in recent years. Yet, it continues to face complex and interconnected security challenges. These include geopolitical tensions and conflict, terrorism, violent extremism, maritime security problems, human rights violations, socio-economic inequalities, climate change, and cyber security.



The complexity of these challenges underlines the fact that a holistic approach is needed to address them and their root causes in an effective manner. Close cooperation among countries of the region, including through regional and sub-regional organisations, is of paramount importance to foster dialogue and provide the ideal conditions for deeper cooperation and the strengthening of joint initiatives. Civil society also has a key role to play in contributing to positive change and promoting peace.

Furthermore, such responses must touch upon multiple dimensions, and include conflict resolution and prevention, humanitarian aid, development cooperation, and sustainable solutions. They must also aim at combatting dis- and misinformation, which can have serious repercussions in terms of eroding trust, spreading divisive narratives, and undermining institutions and democratic processes.

We must also consider that the Mediterranean is one of the regions that is most sensitive to climate change.



Climate change is, already now, affecting the Mediterranean region so severely that the structures we have in place may no longer be effective when it strikes. Sudden onset extreme weather events have until recently caused death and destruction among our neighbours, overwhelming governments, and annihilating decades of development.

Higher temperatures, prolonged heatwaves, droughts and wildfires are destabilising our societies by threatening our food security, our water resources and our health. On the other hand, slow onset events like sea-level rise have a direct bearing on our coastal economies and critical infrastructures. Climate change is disrupting traditional livelihoods and triggering population displacement at a time of rapid population growth.

The Mediterranean region also has one of the youngest populations in the world, with one in every three people under 25. Regrettably, young persons have often been sidelined and excluded from decision-making processes.



This has rendered them unable to access the needed support to sustain their conflict prevention and peacebuilding initiatives. They also continue to be victims of stereotypes and discrimination, sometimes seen only as troublemakers or conducive to violent extremism / radicalisation.

Many young persons still struggle to access basic rights to quality education, healthcare, and decent work. Many face life-threatening risks on a daily basis, especially in situations of conflict. Across the region, these challenges are most severe for girls and young women.

Decisive steps are needed to reverse these trends. As we have just heard, young persons are leading positive change in peace and security in the Mediterranean. They are at the forefront of efforts to sustaining peace and addressing climate change. They have made innovative contributions to conflict prevention, reconciliation processes, peacebuilding, countering radicalisation and violent extremism, as well as promoting human rights and the rule of law.



Young persons such as Ms Messaoudi must be applauded for their efforts in community building. We must ensure their full, effective, inclusive, diverse, and meaningful participation in decision-making processes. It is our collective responsibility to guarantee a safe and empowering environment for young human rights defenders and peacebuilders. This includes young women and LGBTQI+ persons, who continue to face significant challenges in advocating for human rights and peace. We also need to integrate their voices at the UN, including the Security Council, in a systematic manner.

The third report on Youth, Peace and Security by the Secretary General shows that we have made progress across several pillars supporting the meaningful participation of young persons in peace and security issues. However, despite the adoption of three YPS resolutions, actual implementation remains slow.



The Security Council can do more to offer the space for young persons to come forward as a positive force for building peaceful and resilient societies. The YPS agenda should be discussed more frequently around this table, and young briefers invited more frequently. We must also seek to integrate and strengthen YPS elements as part of mandate renewals of UN Peacekeeping and Special Political Missions, as well as UN Country Teams and Resident Coordinators.

In these efforts, the Security Council should collaborate closely with the newly established Youth Office and the new ASG for Youth Affairs to ensure responsiveness to youth-related issues across the peace and security architecture.

In closing, I emphasise once again my firm belief that cooperation remains the key to navigating these complex contemporary challenges. Mediterranean countries must re-double efforts to tap into their human potential, build inclusive and resilient societies, and pave the way towards a peaceful and prosperous future. Our diverse and rich heritage should serve as our guiding light towards achieving these goals.



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I now resume my functions as President of the Council.