



INPUT TO THE CONSULTATION ON MALTA'S FOREIGN POLICY STRATEGY

December 2021

The Justice and Peace Commission welcomes the publication of Malta's first Foreign Policy Strategy document and the commitment expressed in the document to use "diplomacy to make the world a better place to live. Guided by principles of Catholic Social Teaching, the Commission wishes to participate in the consultation process by highlighting the following points:

1) Overseas Development Aid (ODA)

The actions, commitment and priorities in the area of development assistance serve as a mirror of Malta and its people. To this end, we support the proposals made by Kopin in AidWatch 2021¹ and urge the Maltese Government to:

- Fulfil pledge of allocating 0.7 per cent of gross national income (GNI) to ODA.
- An increase in the transparency of ODA reporting. Costs linked to the reception and integration of asylum seekers should not be included in ODA spending reporting.
- Engage with Maltese civil society and development experts in an assessment of the Maltese ODA programme and policy, evaluating among others, their effectiveness.

2) Climate justice

Whilst acknowledging that on a worldwide level, the difference Malta can make in terms of emissions is negligible, if there is enough political will, we can dare to lead by example and introduce measures and policies which can then be scaled up and implemented in other major cities and countries. At stake are not only the lives of future generations but also our credibility as a nation which, vying to punch above its weight on the world stage, is advocating for the strengthening of "global climate ambitions and for international support and finance for climate action, particularly in the Euro-Med region and Africa." (Consultation Document, 27).

Given that Malta is a nation at high risk of significant impacts due to climate change, it also needs to appreciate the urgency and scale of the task ahead and to consider climate inaction as an existential threat to itself and the international order. The dangers of the present moment cannot be understated – Malta cannot simply afford to maintain a "status quo" when the status quo is the very cause of what can be a devastating reality for Malta and its region. Inaction, here, is not an option.

3) Human Rights

If Malta is truly guided by the principle of human rights (Consultation Document 10), we cannot pick and choose when and where to respect and promote these human rights which,

¹ <https://timesofmalta.com/articles/view/malta-is-urged-to-stop-inflating-its-aid-figures.908440> (accessed 06/12/2021)

by definition, can never be superseded by the so-called national interest. In this sense, Malta should stop collaborating with Libya to stop people from reaching Europe. We cannot feign ignorance about what is really happening in Libya to migrants, given that countless reports by several reputable organizations have highlighted the terrible human rights violations which take place in our neighbouring country.

A few months ago, the UN Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights published a report entitled: *“Lethal Disregard” Search and rescue and the protection of migrants in the central Mediterranean Sea*. Amongst other observations, it states unequivocally that: “The overarching messages of this body of research and reporting make clear that: Libya is not a safe place for the return or disembarkation of migrants rescued at sea”². In the coming decades, the already complex reality of migration will become even more challenging when we will be faced with an inevitable increase in the number of climate refugees. The adoption of a new regional human-rights-based approach and framework in the field of migration is therefore urgently needed.

4) *Tax justice*

As a “very active international finance centre specialised in corporate and transaction banking and fund management” (Consultation Document, 20), Malta’s responsibility is not only that of addressing money laundering and financing of terrorism risks, but also that of being at the forefront in promulgating a global tax system that is fair and just. In the ongoing discussions at OECD level, Malta has accepted as inevitable the changes which are being proposed by wealthy nations. The reality is that global tax abuse is one of the most serious global social justice issues which is costing countries around \$500 billion dollars a year and which, as always, is hitting poorer countries hardest.³

In the years ahead, and especially if Malta becomes a non-permanent member of the Security Council, Malta should take the lead and call for the shifting of responsibility of setting tax rules away from the OECD – a club of mostly rich countries – to the United Nations, as well as the establishment of a UN tax convention. Tax can be an extremely powerful tool for tackling inequality and Malta can do its part to reprogramme the global tax system to protect people’s wellbeing and livelihoods over the desires of the wealthiest nations and individuals. In 1988, despite its small size, Malta put the issue of climate change on the international agenda. Once again, Malta should not shirk away from its moral and political duty to raise other uncomfortable issues at the highest possible levels.

² <https://www.ohchr.org/Documents/Issues/Migration/OHCHR-thematic-report-SAR-protection-at-sea.pdf> (36, accessed 06/12/2021)

³ <https://taxjustice.net/2021/11/16/losses-to-oecd-tax-havens-could-vaccinate-global-population-three-times-over-study-reveals/> (accessed 06/12/21)