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Mr Chair, allow me to express my gratitude to the Government of Greece for hosting this Conference, under the auspices of the UNESCO, on the impacts of climate change on cultural heritage, ahead of the United Nations Summit next September.

When considering the impacts of climate change, we are in fact addressing both environmental and socio-economic development issues. With the increasing incidence of climate change, already felt through various sporadic extreme climatic events around the world, we need to seriously implement measures to adapt to climate change and protect our infrastructures, natural and cultural assets.

Therefore we need to take strategic decisions that will address and target the concerns brought in by Climate Change. The future of our forthcoming generations is at risk, and we have to make sure that everyone is aware about the seriousness of Climate Change and start addressing this situation as a crisis, hence the importance to change our daily routines and attitudes, but more importantly as a whole focus together... work together to take the necessary actions.

Today's conference offers us the opportunity to conceptualise these plans and learn more how we can fight this threat. We recognise that, there are different infrastructures in different locations – some are located along our coasts and others in our urban or even our rural areas. We are experiencing more frequently extreme weather phenomena, including floods and heat waves, violent storms, temperature rise and high humidity levels, which are causing damages to different sites.

Adapting to Climate Change is not just a priority, but should be our commitment as Europeans. In view of the latest new commitment related to Climate Neutral policy, I would like to echo the commitment to scaling up the mobilisation of international climate efforts, to work towards timely, well managed and relative actions to address the necessary issues brought up by these environmental changes

As a country at the heart of the Mediterranean, we have also noticed an increased exposure of our natural and cultural heritage to different polluting factors, such as acid rain and sea aerosol, affecting our ancient temples and our historical fortifications.

Cognisant of this and the importance of preserving not only symbolic sites, but also our cultural heritage and identity, Malta has established a comprehensive legislative framework, the Cultural Heritage Act. It creates a Superintendent of Cultural Heritage entrusted to fulfil the duties of the State in ensuring the protection and accessibility of cultural heritage.

We have also set up a specific Agency, Heritage Malta, which further ensures the conservation, restoration and management of cultural sites, including museums, historical sites and buildings. The Agency is indeed effectively monitoring and reporting the impacts of natural effects on our heritage sites, but it also cooperates with other Government Agencies on the management of areas, including the Environment and Resources Authority, thus showcasing the importance of both cultural and environmental value.

We now need to enshrine climate change adaptation principles into our organisational structures that care for our natural and cultural heritage to mitigate the potential repercussions on our infrastructures. We need to plan ahead.

With today's knowledge, how can our policies and plans be geared towards more effective protection of our cultural heritage? We need to promote research and innovation in establishing methods applicable to protect our cultural heritage.

For instance, recognising the impact of acid rains on cannons, of great historical value, and exposed to climate impacts, these have been restored and replaced, in areas where conservation is ensured.

In Malta, through the effective use of EU funds, we are ensuring the protection of our archaeological sites, through the construction of walkways and protective tents, sheltering ancient temples from direct rainfall, solar radiation and ground humidity in a way to prevent

the damages they can cause and reduce the risks of degradation, while stabilizing the environmental conditions to which are exposed to.

The shelters have been identified as the best current solution also to mitigate the deterioration process, which affect the monuments, until alternative protection measures are identified.

EU funds has also been instrumental in carrying out studies on the conservation and safeguard of historical Roman baths, understanding the environmental conservation requirements of the site, so ensuring long-term accessibility and conservation.

As a State surrounded by the sea, we also are very concerned with the increase of sea and ocean acidification levels, as a result of climate change, exposing to risks both our natural heritage and the numerous sites, hindered in our territorial waters.

Therefore, we consider that actions are also required for the preservation of our marine sites, identifying and implementing climate adaptation measures.

Hence, the Government of Malta has recently set up an Underwater Cultural Heritage Unit, for the identification of number of underwater areas, making them accessible to the public while preserving the routes origin of Maltese culture and the resources that belongs to all humankind.

Climate Change is now a condition that we are now experiencing, hence we have to address this, since this issue is now not just urgent, but we need to constantly think and plan for adverse effects. Whilst taking sustainable decisions to protect our environment, our flora, our fauna and more over our notions of human heritage.

In conclusion, we believe that the preservation and protection of both our cultural and environmental heritage in relation to the threat of climate change should be high on our agenda. It is our duty as policy makers, to protect such a public good and to design effective policies to address the issue.

Change depends on each and every one of us ...

We have to make our world not just a better place, but we have the duty to leave our planet in a better state for the generations to come. We owe it to our ancestors, who left behind the heritage treasures and historical sites, which have distinguished European Culture, Arts and History.

We also owe our best actions to our children, our children's children and the generations to follow. We have to work together to achieve the targets set globally, that will eventually bring a sustainable level of improvement to our planet and its inhabitants.

Thank You