

Honourable Prime Minister, Commissioner Bonino, Excellencies, Representatives of the Mediterranean Countries, Ladies and Gentlemen, dear Friends. First of all we wish to express our thanks to Malta for its hospitality and to its Prime Minister for his significant presence at the opening ceremony of this conference. We appreciate this occasion and look forward to the discussion on a topic which is, after all, the *raison d'être* of our association: that there can be no peace without justice.

It is from this point of view that my thanks, as President of the Committee of Parliamentarians, Mayors and Citizens "No Peace without Justice", go first of all to the University of Malta and the Foundation for International Studies for their proposal to make Malta one of the hubs of our international campaign having the scope of ensuring that an International Criminal Court may finally be set up in 1998.

Three months ago we met in Paris and launched a world-wide appeal to move towards this objective. A month ago the Preparatory Committee of the United Nations met and some progress was made but again contradictions and ambiguities arose, or rather it became even more clear that although the target is within reach as it has never been before, success is still fragile and it is exposed to serious dangers. In the meantime, from another point of view, these last months have actually brought to the attention of the international political arena the question of the functioning and the effectiveness of the ad hoc courts, especially of the one for the former Yugoslavia. I can even say that it is precisely the question of the effectiveness of the court's work that will determine the outcome of the peace process in Bosnia, as if to give concrete proof and make everyone aware that our assumption that there can be no peace without justice is fundamentally true and not rhetorical.

All this shows how crucial it is that everyone be convinced that there must be no delay in holding the conference which will set up the Court, in the few months which are left before June 1998. Increased awareness is indispensable to overcome the remaining hesitations, fears and resistance, so that a large majority of the

member-states of the UN may come to an agreement at this historic turning-point.

This is the specific meaning of our meeting today, which is in some ways different to the one held in Paris which I have just mentioned. Here the dialogue is between participants with various opinions, although they all have the same will to search for common ground. Here we all meet, men and women of science and law, from neighbouring but very different countries, from all the shores of the Mediterranean, bringing different juridical and political experiences and cultures, to discuss these topics, to understand together what we can say and do together, what roads to choose and suggestions to make in our own countries and circles.

In this context it is quite significant that we are meeting here in this island, whose geography, history, traditions and culture make it the ideal and emblematic place for such a meeting.

Together we must make public opinion in our countries sensitive to the question of the International Criminal Court, that the ICC is not a distant and abstract issue, technically juridical and only within the competence of diplomats, but that it is an issue which is directly relevant to individuals and to peoples. The spread of legal culture and the mobilization of public opinion can and must transform a kind of support which is still too half-hearted and lacks concentration in concrete and convinced action, so that certain objectives and reservations which are still holding back many governments may be enthusiastically overcome.

Here, from Malta, a process can start which, thanks to the contribution of each participant, will strengthen the work of each one of us in his own country and with respect to his government, be a message to the many and diverse public opinions and lay solid foundations for the future steps which our world-wide campaign intends taking.

Actually, as you may know, further meetings are planned, in Montevideo, in Atlanta, New York, New Delhi and Dakar, culminating in a large-scale conference which we hope to organize parallel to the UN conference which will define the Treaty establishing the Court in June 1998 in Rome.

It is to this conference that we dedicate our efforts during these two days' work, in order to obtain the result, desired with and through the transnational radical party, No Peace without Justice, and all those who believe in this battle and who are aware that this result is either reached during 1998 or else could be lost forever. From now I wish to say that I hope to see you all in Rome, to review the progress

achieved and to see whether we will have moved forward, maybe at least one millimetre, but in the right direction.

It is only yesterday that our illustrious friend Cherif Bassiouni, whom many regard as the person who has led the international Community to embark on this new instrument of international law, achieved an important success in Cairo, getting the InterParliamentary Union to adopt unanimously a universal declaration on democracy which binds the institution of the court to the fundamental principles endorsed by this Charter. It is auspicious also for our own work, that I hope will be concluded with the success that it deserves.