

The Florence Charter

The Bishops of the Mediterranean met for the second time, after Bari, in Florence, finding inspiration from the courage of La Pira in working for peace and the unity of peoples. Mayors of the Mediterranean, invited by the Mayor of Florence Dario Nardella, assembled at the same time in Florence, taking themselves inspiration from Mayor La Pira, to study and work for peace, justice and fraternal coexistence in their cities.

Meeting together at the end of their respective works, the bishops and mayors noted the benefits that come from intensifying collaboration in their cities in order to preserve justice, strengthen brotherhood and respect for all citizens and cultural and religious communities present there, also through the valorization of sister cities and dioceses. In this fruitful and cordial meeting, which has never before happened, they have agreed on some ideals and values to inspire them in their future journey, decrease discrimination and violence and open horizons of hope for young generations.

In these days, warfare is taking place against Ukraine. A sense of pain has seized bishops and mayors, who jointly hope that violence and the use of weapons could come to a halt, great suffering to the Ukrainian people be avoided and that negotiations to rebuild peace could start immediately.

Hoping that further meetings can take place, Catholic Bishops and Mayors of the Mediterranean Cities, gathered in Florence, **Catholic Bishops and Mayors of Mediterranean Cities, gathered in Florence,**

-inspired by the legacy of Giorgio La Pira, the former Mayor of Florence, who already in the 1950s promoted intercultural and interreligious dialogue among Cities, and in particular among Mediterranean Cities;

-aware that the Mediterranean has historically been the crossroad of European and West Asian cultures, of Northern and Southern hemispheres and that it can play again a crucial role in the peace and development of nations through the cooperation between its cities and its religious communities;

-united in the belief that the Mediterranean cannot and does not wish to be the site of conflict among external forces;

-guided by a shared aspiration to put the human person at the center of the international agenda by pursuing peace, protecting the planet, guaranteeing prosperity, promoting the respect and dignity of the fundamental rights of each individual, also through the promotion of sustainable development goals and the

Paris climate agreement;

-aware of the many challenges facing the Mediterranean area, such as climate change, migration flows, conflicts, and poverty;

-convinced therefore that enhancing and promoting the role of cities and the dialogue between its civic and religious communities offers an essential contribution to these challenges;

acknowledge and recognize

-the diversity of the heritage and traditions of the Mediterranean area as shared assets for all humanity. All of the Mediterranean's natural, environmental, cultural, linguistic, religious values, both tangible and intangible, are seen as sources of dialogue and unity between our peoples, and should be protected and transmitted to present and future generations;

-the importance of an educational commitment which starts from the basic needs, common to all humans, and which could drive youth in the path that leads to the desire for goodness, love, justice and freedom;

-the need to develop more opportunities for constructive dialogue and encounters between the different cultural and religious traditions present in our communities, in order to strengthen the bonds of fraternity that exist across our region;

-the importance of creating common University programs, in order to introduce young people from all over the region to a better understanding respectful of the traditions and cultural particularities of each country;

-the key role of diplomacy on the urban level in the promotion of an integral and sustainable human development based on the respect of the dignity and the fundamental rights of each human being;

-the fundamental importance of recognizing a universal right to health and social protection in the area of the Mediterranean, in particular in the wake of the COVID 19 pandemic, and the central role that cooperation at city level could play in fighting the disease;

-the need to implement, as soon as possible, integrated solutions to avoid catastrophic climate change. The time to act is now, in order to preserve quality of life for generations to come and achieve an integral ecological approach;

-the opportunity to promote a true societal transformation aimed at the establishment of a culture of social sustainability, also through new forms of cooperation between policy makers, scientists, spiritual and cultural leaders, and leaders of commerce;

-the importance of promoting quality job opportunities for disadvantaged categories, youth and women, and of favouring the economic and social development of the countries of origin of migrants, also through cooperation programs, aimed in particular to safeguard children;

-migratory policies in the Mediterranean and at borders must always respect the fundamental human rights.

-the strong connection existing between migration flows and climate change, which affects in a heightened way the Mediterranean sea: phenomena such as desertification, deforestation, land degradation are potentially exposing billions of people to mass displacement and migration;

-the relevance of strengthening intercultural and interreligious relations, in order to achieve a higher level of mutual understanding among individuals of different origin, language, culture, and religious belief;

and while committing to promote concrete projects of cultural, religious, social and economical inclusion

call for

-Governments of all Mediterranean countries to establish a regular consultation with Mayors, with all relevant representatives of the religious communities, of the local authorities, of the cultural institutions, of universities, and of civil society on the issues discussed in this Conference. Cities claim their right to participate in the decisions which impact their future;

-Governments, Mayors, and Representatives of religious communities to promote educational programs at all levels – a journey which integrates the anthropological, communicative, cultural, economic, political, generational, interreligious, pedagogical and social approaches to bring about a new universal solidarity and a more welcoming society;

- **Governments, Mayors and Representatives of religious communities** to promote shared initiatives for the enhancement of fraternity and religious freedom in cities, for the defense of the human dignity of migrants, and for the advancement of peace across all Mediterranean countries;
- **Mayors and Representatives of religious communities**, to engage in dialogue and to mobilize resources for a sustainable social and economic development in favour of international cooperation, of intercultural and interreligious dialogue, of respect for every individual through a more equitable sharing of economic and natural resources;
- **Mayors** to discuss and explore what ideally holds together today a civil society and how contemporary contexts integrate religious traditions and cultural expressions;
- **Representatives of religious communities**, to explore how they can interact with each other and with representatives of municipal governments and civic leaders in an effort to understand the causes and instances of violence and, therefore, work together to eliminate it;
- **Governments** to adopt certain and shared rules to protect the Mediterranean ecosystem also in order to advance circular culture in the Mediterranean in harmony with nature and with our history.