

ULYSSE 2009 – A MEDITERRANEAN VOYAGE - 7 – 23 OCTOBER 2009

On the occasion of the launch of Ulysse 2009, an initiative of the Ambassador of France and writer Daniel Rondeau and supported by the French Minister of Foreign Affairs, Bernard Kouchner, the Speaker of the Maltese House of Representatives, the Hon Dr Louis Galea, and the Secretary General of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Mediterranean, Mr Sergio Piazzi, teamed up with Ambassador Rondeau to convene a Malta Encounter to reflect on and discuss the Mediterranean Sea. The conference is to be held in the House of Representatives tomorrow Thursday and Friday, 8th and 9th October.

Ulysse 2009 will bring together, in Malta, Tunisia, Libya, Cyprus and Lebanon, a number of people coming from all over the Mediterranean who are passionate about Peace and Freedom. Writers and intellectuals, French, Tunisians, Algerians, Maltese, Libyans, Greeks, Cypriots, Lebanese, Egyptians and Turks, French Diplomats and Members of Parliament, will travel to every country to participate in debates, meetings and conferences. Israeli and Palestinian singers will perform together in "One Voice".

Ulysse 2009 is not a cruise trip, but rather a symbolic voyage, a literary and political endeavour, to promote the ideas and words that unite both shores of the Mediterranean Sea. It's intention is to completely claim our heritage and our share of the future.

The Mediterranean washes upon the shores of three continents. The sea, as a medium of communication, has taught us to give and take, to convey, to question without manichaeism, to evolve distinct cultural frameworks inside a world which has remained as intricate as it was in the time of Homer and Virgil. The Mediterranean, its knowledge, laws and beliefs, its three monotheistic religions, its respect for nature and beauty, for the sacred and reason, have always radiated out far beyond its shores and embraced the entire human experience. The aim of this voyage is not to strengthen one civilisation to the detriment of another, nor to disregard anyone or anything, but simply to assert, as we look towards our future, that it represents wisdom and freedom, an idea that is indispensable for the future of the world.

Malta – Valletta (8 – 9 October)

This voyage will be held on board the French military ship, La Meuse. It starts in Valletta. For two days, on the 8th and 9th of October, conferences and debates will be organised at the House of Representatives, within the precincts of the Grand Master's Palace. Jacques Barrot, Vice-President of the European Commission, responsible for justice, freedom and security, will also be in Malta for the occasion. A special guest will be Hon. Rudy Salles (French National Assembly), President of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Mediterranean.

Tunisia – Tunis (11 – 13 October)

During this three-day stop, conferences and debates will be organised at the Museum of Bardo and in school institutions.

Libya – Tripoli (15 October) To be confirmed

Conferences will be held on Albert Camus, and there will be a meeting with Libyan writers.

Cyprus – Limassol (19 – 20 October)

A concert by Israeli and Palestinian singers who will perform together in "One Voice" (the same group who sang at the Auberge de Provence in Valletta last February) will be held and various Ambassadors of France will be in attendance. The following day, Nobel Prize winner for Literature Jean Marie le Clézio will be present, and a number of conferences will be organised.

Lebanon – Beirut (21 – 23 October)

Conferences and debates will be held during the book fair. The French Minister of Foreign and European Affairs Bernard Kouchner will be in Beirut on the 23rd in order to meet the participants and close the Ulysse 2009 cultural expedition.

The programme for the Malta Encounter offers a unique and quality opportunity to reflect on and to discuss our common Mediterranean heritage and to search for new avenues of dialogue and action to foster peace, security and prosperity in our region. Distinguished intellectuals, writers and personalities will be exchanging their views and experiences during this seminar.

Ulysse 2009 – A Mediterranean Voyage is a journey around the Mediterranean Sea in order to celebrate some of the key figures of the region who, by their own journeys and intellectual and spiritual influences, have fertilised the vitality of Mediterranean culture and identity.

The intention of this initiative is also to initiate a longer-term institutional journey: one towards a new kind of regional cultural dialogue; to heighten awareness of shared heritage and to build a platform for future cooperation that concretely addresses contemporary challenges. It should also encourage lateral thinking, suggestions for co-operative projects as well as creative solutions to be conceived and adopted by thinkers and actors who belong to the region, universally recognised as the cradle of global civilisation.

To this end, the Malta Encounter (8-9 October) will combine three elements. First, it will bring together a wide spectrum of people with an interest in culture – men and women from both sides of the Mediterranean, artists and politicians, established intellectuals and youth. Second, the discussion will be informal and open. Third, there will be a special focus on how the Parliamentary Assembly of the Mediterranean can serve to facilitate the consideration and actuation of further proposals and initiatives.

The debate taking place in the Parliamentary Chamber shall be streamed live on the official website of the House of Representatives <http://www.parliament.gov.mt>. Following the event, audio recordings of the proceedings shall also be made available for download from the above mentioned site.

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