

# The voice of Maria Dolens

MONTHLY NEWSLETTER FROM THE PEACE BELL FOUNDATION OF ROVERETO

## The new logo



And here we have it – the new logo of the Foundation chosen by you. The popular poll that was launched in recent months has come to an end. The choice went to what we referred to during the “competition” as “logo A”, but which is now simply the symbol of the Bell. It is a stylized representation of Maria Dolens that recalls the “community” as a set of distinct and recognizable elements made up of lines and strokes. The lines in particular refer to those of the musical staff and gradually become softer to symbolize the transmission of the sound of the strokes of Peace. The colors of the image, presented discretely and delicately, make it possible to communicate with both immediacy and elegance.

## For an “Afghan solution”

More than a month after the “triumphant” entry of the Taliban into Kabul, the fact that a militia of modest size in terms of numbers and without particularly sophisticated weapons managed to annihilate a “government” army of impressive volume but also with “Western” military assistance continues to make a real impression. All this seemingly without effort and in doing so ruining twenty years of civil, social and educational progress painstakingly acquired by the Afghan population, plunging it back into a sort of medieval obscurantism.

Leaving the solution of this enigma to sociologists, political scientists, historians and experts in military issues, each according to their area of expertise, we intend to outline below some points on the situation that has arisen, starting from last August 15 in Afghanistan, together with ideas on the most appropriate way to face it in as much as can be done by the international community.

In recent days, the European Union has formally presented the five non-negotiable preconditions, which are indispensable for “initiating contact” with the new rulers of Kabul.

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## HAPPENING AT THE UN

# Take care of the environment if you want peace

## INTERNATIONAL WORLD HABITAT DAY

«**I**n biology it is the set of environmental conditions in which a specific species of animal or plant lives". Therefore it concerns us. "By extension in ecology it corresponds to the environment and measures the general conditions of an urban settlement, and the combination of structures, natural and artificial, that characterize it". This is how the dictionary defines the word "habitat". Iosif Brodsky had twenty-six dictionaries on the shelves of his library including seven in German and two in Japanese, certainly too many for those who do not have the aspiration to be awarded the Nobel Prize for literature. But just open the only one that has been lying unused for too long on the Ikea shelves bent by the weight to understand that when the United Nations indicates the "International World Habitat Day » they are talking about our everyday daily life, even in areas other than those that would immediately come to mind. Since 1985, on the first Monday of October, from the UN headquarters we have been asked to stop for a moment and look around us, mainly in the cities, in order to evaluate how things are going.

This year that fateful day is October 4th, the same day as Maria Dolens' first toll, which took place in 1925. Perhaps it is a coincidence, provided that coincidence exists, but the confluence of the two celebrations creates an immediate mental short circuit: is it possible to live in Peace without considering the environment around us?

Humanity counts war casualties in terms of dead soldiers and civilians, the wounded, destroyed cities and scarcity in means of subsistence. Often, however, the environment is the ignored victim of conflict yet at the same time the cause of clashes. Battles for wells often end up making the water unusable, poisoned before retreating so that it does not remain in the hands of the enemy.

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The same goes for the crops burned, the forests cut down, the animals killed. Minefields make some areas inaccessible for years.

With military advantages we pay the price in terms of ecology and it is a vicious circle. According to a study published on May 27, 2016 by the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) wars do in fact destroy the environment but then an unhealthy habitat makes conflicts more likely. In short, a healthy ecosystem and well-managed resources reduce the risk of clashes thereby demonstrating another reason to aim for the full implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals.



Inger Andersen, Executive Director of UNEP confirms that "war and the environment are deeply interconnected". The data is clear: "Around the world at least 40 percent of internal conflicts have been linked to the exploitation of natural resources, whether they are of high value such as timber, diamonds, gold and oil or scarce resources such as fertile land and water." Not only that, "it has also been found that conflicts involving natural resources are twice as likely to happen again." Global warming does not help as the increase in temperatures due to climate change threatens to further amplify environmental strain and tension. "And, all too often - continues Andersen - the habitat is among the victims of war, through deliberate acts of destruction or collateral damage, or because, during conflicts, governments are unable to control and manage natural resources". It is therefore clear why the

United Nations attaches "great importance to ensuring that environmental action is part of conflict prevention strategies because there can be no lasting peace if the natural resources that support livelihoods and ecosystems are destroyed."

António Guterres, UN Secretary General is of the same opinion, convinced that natural resources and ecosystems could be managed better and that a change of attitude "could pave the way for Peace in war-torn societies and help countries affected by the crisis to promote sustainable development ". If we want to achieve the goals of sustainable development, he argues, "we must act with courage and urgency, to reduce the risks that conflicts pose to environmental degradation and climate change and to commit ourselves to protecting our planet from the debilitating effects of war".

Here then the relationship between the environment and conflict becomes one of very close interdependence. Working for peace also means taking care of habitats. It's a fact. Perhaps it is no coincidence then that this year the UN International Day falls on October 4, the exact day when the first toll sounded from Rovereto 96 years ago, that first invitation of Maria Dolens to take an interest in the fallen, in peace and therefore also in the environment.

Vegezio wrote, "*Si vis pacem, para bellum*" (if you want peace, prepare for war). He however lived in a world where the ozone hole was far from coming. Maybe then if we really want peace we should take care of the environment in the same way we take care of our body to be sure that the mind also follows.

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Initiatives in favor of our habitat should also be seen as strategies for preventing conflicts

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*Mens sana in corpore sano* works for each of us, but why shouldn't it be valid for the world community that sees us all united? Giovenale coined this phrase considering the body and mind of a single person. Perhaps some Latin scholar of today could coin one that refers to humanity (all) and to the environment (of all). Proposals are accepted with this title only being the first and the email address to which you may send any proposals can be found on the front page.



## HAPPENING AT THE COUNCIL OF EUROPE

# Cruel and useless

## EUROPEAN DAY AGAINST THE DEATH PENALTY

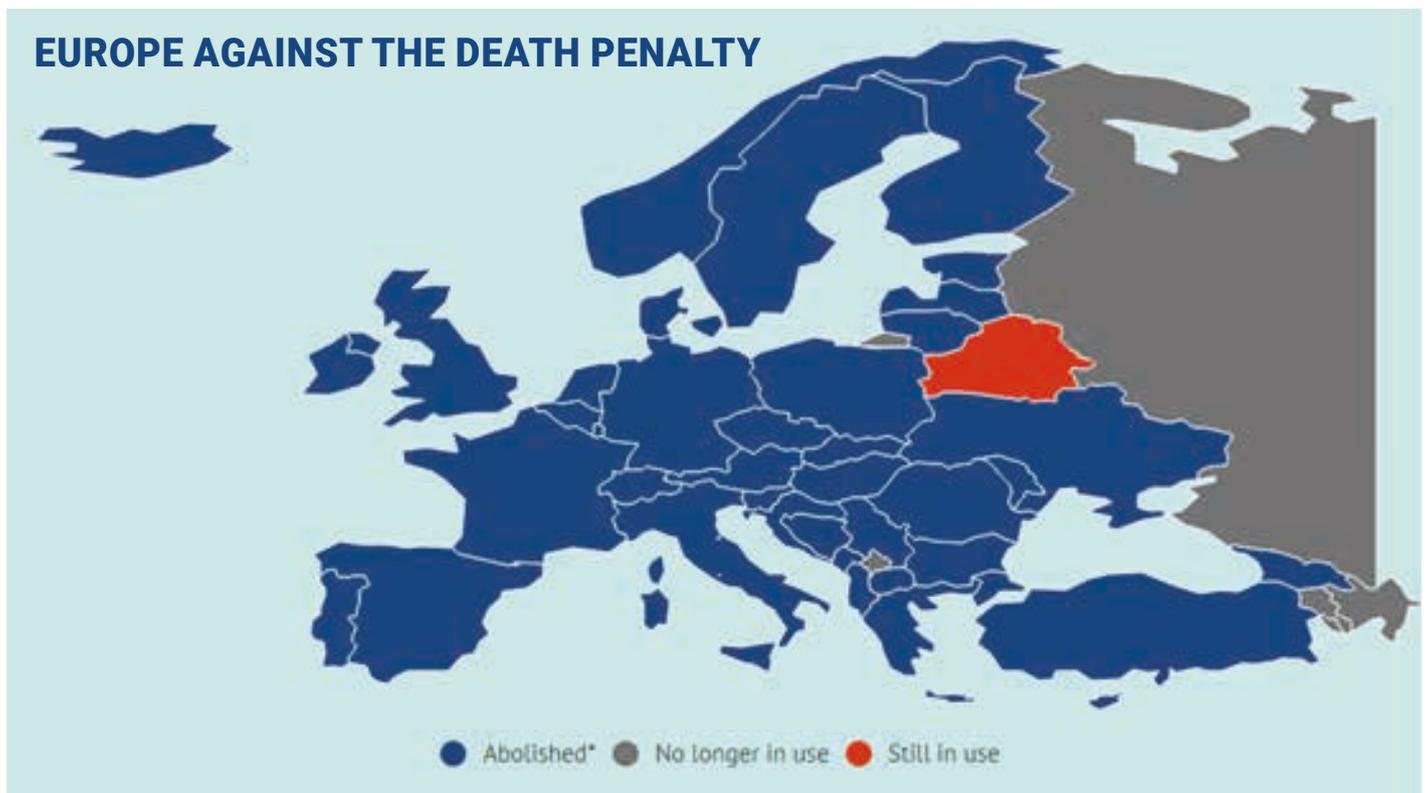
In the aftermath of the destruction of the Second World War, the Council of Europe, the continent's leading human rights Organisation, was created in 1949 to unite Europe around the shared principles of the rule of law, respect for human rights and democracy. At the heart of the Council of Europe machinery stands the European Convention on Human Rights, serving as a safeguard for all who find themselves on the territory of Europe. The Convention was adopted in 1950. Article 2 states that everyone's life shall be protected.

In September 2007 the Committee of Ministers approved the establishment of a "European Day against the Death Penalty" to be held on 10 October of each year. It constitutes a contribution to the World Day against the Death Penalty - which is held annually on the same day - and aims at continuing to raise awareness of the abolition of capital punishment. Since 2008, the Council of

Europe has been organising this annual event conjointly with the European Union.

The Council of Europe has worked intensively to outlaw the death penalty in Europe and has been a pioneer in the abolition process. Since 1989, the abolition of capital punishment has been set as a condition for accession for all new member states. As a result, no executions have taken place in any of its 47 member countries<sup>1</sup> since 1997, making Europe a de facto death-penalty-free zone covering over 830 million people. Only Belarus is out of step, and it is the only country across Europe which is not a member of the Council of Europe.

The death penalty is a very emotive issue. It touches some of our deepest instincts, including ideas of revenge, honour, hatred, and fear. The Council of Europe is committed to continuing its fight against this cruel and inhumane punishment.



<sup>1</sup> Albania, Andorra, Armenia, Austria, Azerbaijan, Belgium, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Croatia, Cyprus, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Georgia, Germany, Greece, Iceland, Ireland, Italy, Latvia, Liechtenstein, Lithuania, Luxembourg, North Macedonia, Malta, Monaco, Montenegro, Norway, Netherlands, Poland, Portugal, United Kingdom, Romania, Russia, Czech Republic, Moldova, Slovak Republic, San Marino, Serbia, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, Turkey, Ukraine, Hungary.

SPORT AND PEACE

# Tamberi at the Rovereto Peace Bell



**C**ommitment and results, this is what counts, without forgetting though that others exist who are sometimes more persistent and this we must accept. This 'motto' applies to sport but also to Peace. The important thing is to learn how to get back up when you lose since sooner or later a victory or an international agreement will surely come but continuing to try is a result in itself.

Any sport can be a metaphor for almost all human activities, but athletics has always represented something special, mainly because those who practice it measure themselves before their opponent. You have to run fast, throw the weight far away or jump as high as possible. Then if no one does better, you win. There is no undetected offside nor are there non-existent penalties or opponents to exploit the weakness of your backhand. There is only one number to tell you if you have managed to exceed your limit or if you will have to try again. In short, it depends on you, on what you decide to do, on what you can achieve, on how much you are willing to commit yourself and on the talent you have. The same can be said for those who fight to expand the perimeter of the areas of the world that are at peace, who try to get at least a few kilometers ahead, at least a few meters higher, between all the victories and defeats, the exciting moments and all the bitter disappointments and exhaustion.

Perhaps then it is no coincidence that the "Palio Città della Quercia" has been held in Rovereto since 1965, which is not only one of the oldest athletics meetings in Italy, but also a way to remind everyone where the city of peace is located with its museums and its Bell.

This year Gianmarco Tamberi, gold medalist in the high jump at the Tokyo Olympics was also a guest and also on this occasion went high, up the hill to Colle di Miravalle in order to meet Maria Dolens. Also present were several athletes representing the American delegation and Margherita Magnani for the Italian Athletics Federation. They were received by the Foundation President Reggente Marco Marsilli and accompanied also by Councilor Arianna Miorandi of the Municipality of Rovereto.

A special visit for us, of course, but also a reminder for the champions: if sport does promote peace then jumping an inch higher is worth so much more than just a medal.



To be continued on page 1...

They have specifically been requested to: respect human rights, primarily as regards the female population and minors; establish an “inclusive and representative” government; prevent the organization of operational bases for terrorism in the country; grant free access to humanitarian aid; allow anyone who wishes to leave the country, including Afghan citizens, to do so undisturbed.

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The progressive release of the essential financial allocations, currently frozen, must be secured through legitimate commitments to be monitored

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A little more than a month following the conquest of the capital, some of these requests appear to be problematic, if not impossible, to achieve. In relation to human rights, the Geneva office of the High Commissioner in charge of the sector, Michelle Bachelet, is inundated with complaints, based on undeniable evidence of summary executions, very strict restrictive measures to the detriment of women and minors and even the forced enlistment of young people for military purposes, implemented by the new regime from day one following its seizure of power. The recently established government - far from being able to call itself “plura-

list” - is distinguished above all by the fact that it is composed of a large number of those wanted by the authorities for terrorist acts and furthermore the fact that there is a total absence of both the female element and leading figures “external” to the Movement. On closer inspection, everything (or almost everything) at this stage revolves around the aspect of financial aid generously granted to Afghanistan for many years by the West, first under Karzai and then Ghani. This assistance, according to reliable estimates, actually represented over half the gross domestic product. Despite the foreseeable increase in the production of opiates (the main source of Afghan income) and the obvious reduction in military spending, given the small number of Taliban in arms, even the new regime will only be able to survive depending on cross-border aid. This evidence leads to the recognition of the fact that the United States and European Union have considerable leverage and that they may consequently request and obtain significant improvements by the mullahs with regard to unconditional access to humanitarian aid for example together with the undisturbed departure of foreign operators still in Afghanistan at the service of multilateral organizations or humanitarian non-governmental organizations.

One would hope that this leverage be used, in Washington as in Brussels, with intelligence, determination and balance, binding the progressive release of the essential financial allocations, currently frozen, to formal and controlled commitments of the Taliban leadership, including the fundamental issue of combating terrorism.

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It is necessary to involve global powers, such as China and the Russian Federation, in the negotiations without excluding the Arab countries of the area

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Another aspect of fundamental importance is the involvement in the search for an “Afghan solution” from global powers, such as China and the Russian Federation without obviously excluding the Arab countries of the area, for reasons that seem too obvious to mention. From this point of view, the two very important multilateral events foreseen in the upcoming calendar, the General Assembly of the United Nations and the G20 Summit under the Italian presidency much sought after by our Prime Minister, will be able to provide evidence and hopefully of a positive nature.

There can be no doubt, given the circumstances, that also Maria Dolens is more than willing to do her part.

Reggente Marco Marsilli, Foundation President

IT HAPPENED TODAY

# The first toll

On 4 October, 1925 the people of Rovereto assembled for the first toll of the Bell of the Fallen. The mayor and various associations of the city were present to welcome King Vittorio Emanuele III. Don Rossaro (on the right) was present to direct the operations and the crowd poured onto the Malipiero Bastion to listen to the voice of Peace.



