



Press Release

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Speech by the President of Malta, Marie-Louise Coleiro Preca, at the inauguration of the newly-refurbished Outdoor Play Area of the Playmobil FunPark

It is my pleasure to join you at today's inauguration of the newly refurbished outdoor area of the Playmobil FunPark. Playmobil's range of toys, featured throughout the Park, are instantly recognisable all over the world. They have universal appeal, and a well deserved reputation for safety.

I am pleased to note that since production in Malta first began, in the 1970s, Playmobil has also provided enriching employment opportunities and socially responsible initiatives. The FunPark's refurbishment is further evidence of the confidence shown by this German-owned company in the Maltese economy, which is also an investment in the people of our islands.

Such an investment is an example of the collaboration that must take place between different groups within society, where even the private sector prioritise the wellbeing of our communities.

In a healthy society, promoting the wellbeing of children, must continue to be a primary objective.

It is reassuring to note that the Playmobil FunPark has been designed and built with these goals in mind. It provides a space for learning and enjoyment, and gives all children and their families the chance to spend time together in a safe and nurturing environment.

It is essential that we continue to prioritise the importance of our children, and do all that we can to safeguard their wellbeing. I therefore commend you, at Playmobil, on having created a space for relaxation and recreation, where children are able to experience and explore the fundamental importance of play.

Play offers an ideal opportunity for parents and caregivers to engage fully with their children. The need for such opportunities is so central to achieving optimal child development that the United Nations High Commission for Human Rights recognises play as a basic right of every child.

Therefore, access to spaces for appropriate playtime must be respected. Spaces for appropriate playtime are an underlying requirement for the physical, social, and emotional health of a child. They provide a context in which youngsters can learn about their world, interact with one another, and discover their surroundings in a secure and active way.

However, despite the benefits derived from play for both children and parents, free time for play is being increasingly reduced for some youngsters. We must not let our hectic schedules and busy lifestyles become a source of anxiety, which impinges on a child's wellbeing.

Attachments: photos

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The effects of today's high-pressure world, present a risk, of endangering the place of play in many children's lives. It is worrying to note that children are describing increased levels of stress, anxiety, and depression as a result of educational or social pressures.

In response to these realities, my Foundation for the Wellbeing of Society acknowledges, as I am sure we all do, the need for more healthy and nurturing spaces for children in society. The President's Secret Garden is an example of the work we are currently doing, to prioritise play and creative learning across communities in our islands.

Through this initiative, we have created a thriving community of learning.

The Secret Garden's methodology, which is being shared with interested collaborators, encourages children not only to be participants but also to be the designers and facilitators of their own activities. It is by listening to the needs of children that we have achieved authentic methods of participation and inclusion.

When we, as adults, are prepared to listen and encourage play activities, a child gains confidence and builds crucial social skills. Children learn how to work in a group, to share with one another, to resolve conflict, and to speak up for themselves. These are all skills of immense benefit in later life and in the workplace.

Indeed, the key to helping every child reach their potential is to find a harmonious balance between this sense of play and a sense of work. Spaces like Playmobil FunPark are a determining element to achieve such a balance. The FunPark offers another much needed space where children can be creative and enjoy active lifestyles.

We must continue to encourage their imagination and creativity, reminding ourselves of the importance of play. There is no better way to set development on the right track than in the first years of a child's life. Therefore, let us continue to be effective contributors in the physical, mental, social, and emotional growth of our children.

Let us remember that play is a cherished part of childhood. By finding the right balance between work and play, a child will grow up to be happier, better adjusted, and more prepared to become an engaged member of society.

By prioritising the wellbeing of every child, we send a strong message that the wellbeing of all children is an essential factor in the sustainable wellbeing of our communities, our society, and our nation.

Thank you.