

**SPEECH BY H.E. MARIE-LOUISE COLEIRO PRECA, PRESIDENT OF MALTA AT THE  
OPENING OF THE EUROPEAN SOCIETY FOR STEREOTACTIC AND FUNCTIONAL  
NEUROSURGERY TRAINING COURSE**

**4th April 2017**

**Profs Ludwig Zrinzo**

**Distinguished participants**

**It is my great pleasure that I welcome you all, this morning, to the newly  
renovated Sala Antoine De Paule.**

**It is an honour to host this meeting of the European Society for Stereotactic and Functional Neurosurgery and a privilege to welcome such distinguished participants, practically coming from all over Europe and from as far as Brazil, Japan and India.**

**This historical venue has already accommodated a variety of exhibitions, book launches, public lecture and roundtable meetings.**

**I am pleased it shall now also host this training programme organised by your society.**

**Malta's heritage is, as many of you will know, deeply intertwined with the development of medical research in our region and beyond.**

**The Knights of the Order of St John, who designed and resided within this palace, were pioneers in the medical field, throughout the Baroque period.**

**One has only to remember that the building we now know as the Mediterranean Conference Centre, in Valletta, was built as the "Sacra Infermeria" of the Order of St John of Jerusalem.**

**The Sacra Infermeria, which I hope you will have the opportunity to visit, was, throughout the Sixteenth and Seventeenth centuries, one of the largest medical wards in Europe, accommodating almost one thousand patients at times of emergency.**

**Malta's heritage of medical research is also attested to by the founding of a School of Anatomy and Surgery in 1676.**

**In our more recent history, Malta came to be known as the "Nurse of the Mediterranean" during the First World War.**

**This very Palace, Sant' Anton Palace was converted into a place of refuge, for wounded military personnel and civilians.**

**Even during the atrocities of the Second World War, Malta played a very important role to stand by the wounded.**

**Today, serving the needs of the people who call our islands their home, our acute general hospital, Mater Dei Hospital provides state-of-the-art training to the faculties of Health Sciences, Medicine and Surgery, and Dental Surgery of the University of Malta.**

**Furthermore, the University of Malta provides training for quite a large number of foreign students.**

**In fact, I recently met, probably the largest group of foreign medical students from Kuwait, who are currently pursuing their studies at the University of Malta.**

**During our meeting, it was encouraging to hear their aspirations for the future and their experiences of studying here in Malta.**

**Not only do such exchanges offer opportunities for the sharing of academic research, but they perform an equally essential function by bringing us together, from diverse backgrounds and cultures, in one common pursuit of knowledge and human wellbeing.**

**I am informed that this training course organised by the European Society for Stereotactic and Functional Neurosurgery, includes an international gathering of experts, academics, practitioners, and students.**

**It is heartening to note that, you all share one essential goal for knowledge and wellbeing.**

**Coming together to deepen your specialisation in the area of functional neurosurgery, for the benefit of others, by combining your expertise to improve the lives of individuals afflicted by various neurological conditions, you are making a powerful statement of solidarity, both within your field and in the medical sector.**



**I am pleased to note that, by working together, you are an example of the strength that we can harness when we collaborate, in synergy, to tackle the challenges which are faced by our entire human family.**

**It is this kind of shared purpose, crossing borders and creating connections across different cultures, countries, and disciplines, which, I believe, is the path we must follow for the future, of humankind.**

**I would like to encourage you to keep on creating opportunities to work for the enhancement of the medical sectors in our nations, in our regions, and in our world, by keeping channels of communication open.**

**Whatever the political climate may be in certain countries, we must continue to champion the free flow of information and the shared advancement of medical learning.**

**The more we learn and the more we share, the closer we shall be to ensuring a higher quality of life for each and every member of our human family.**

**I believe, and I am confident you would all agree, that the dignity and the wellbeing of each and every person must always be our most essential priority.**

**Let me conclude by wishing you every success with the outcomes of your training course, however I do hope that you will have sometime to enjoy the great historical heritage that Malta has, which showcases a very unique melting pot of cultures in the centre of the Mediterranean Sea and a historical crossroad of civilisations.**

**I wish you a very pleasant and memorable stay in Malta.**

**Thank you.**