

**OPENING SPEECH BY H.E. MARIE LOUISE COLEIRO PRECA, PRESIDENT OF MALTA AT THE WORKSHOP DURING THE 4th UN GLOBAL ROAD SAFETY WEEK TITLED "Slow Down, Save Lives"**

**Wednesday 11 May 2017**

**Let me begin by thanking the Tara Malou Licari Fund, who, in collaboration with the Ministry of Health, and other collaborators, have facilitated this workshop to mark the 4<sup>th</sup> United Nations' Global Road Safety Week.**

**It is my pleasure to join you at such a significant event, highlighting the crucial issue of road safety.**

**I am pleased to note that this year's United Nations theme for the Road Safety Week is "Slow Down, Save Lives".**

**It is indeed an appropriate time for such a workshop to be convened in Malta, when, as a country, we must challenge the drastic increase in road fatalities.**

**According to the National Statistics Office, there has been a drastic increase in road fatalities of 32%, in 2016 alone.**

**Another sad statistic regarding road fatalities in Malta is a 43% increase in the first quarter of this year.**

**This is definitely an issue of national concern.**

Even more so, when one considers that, while the majority of countries in the European Region are reporting falling rates in road fatalities, Malta is one of the eight countries, which is reporting an increase.

However, it is reassuring to note that this workshop has brought together a number of stakeholders to work in synergy.

**By joining forces, and your combined efforts to promote road safety in the Maltese Islands, you are sending a powerful message about the urgent need, which is felt by all of us, to address these vital issues.**

**I would like to take this opportunity to also commend you for taking up this initiative, as part of your contribution towards the United Nations' Agenda 2030 and its Sustainable Development Goals.**

**In particular, Sustainable Development Goal Number 3 and Target Number 6, focuses on the urgent need to reduce road traffic injuries and deaths by 50%, by 2030.**

**Urgent action is therefore needed, in Malta and other countries in Europe, if we are to meet Sustainable Development Goal Number 3 and Target Number 6, to reduce traffic injuries and fatalities.**

**In response to our shocking indicators, I believe that more effective measures are to be taken, to raise awareness, to educate, and to enforce road safety laws.**

**Definitely, we must continue to prioritise safety measures, while also managing speed on our roads.**

**Here, I would like to commend the Malta Road Safety Council, a recent initiative taken up by multiple**

**stakeholders together with the Ministry for Transport and Infrastructure.**

**Definitely, issues of road safety are profoundly intersectional, and not only an issue for the Health Authorities.**

**I am therefore pleased to note, and agree completely with your approach.**



**I am pleased with your acknowledgement that road safety issues touch upon the remit of road planning, of urban planning, of our educational institutions, of traffic management, and alternative transport initiatives.**

**However, we must ensure greater collaboration between regional, national, and community-based authorities, to develop and implement effective measures that control,**

**and promote more effective road safety, for the benefit of all citizens.**

**Many a time, we tend to focus our efforts on issues of drink driving and excessive speed, however there are other causes which also need our urgent attention, such as drug driving.**

**In fact today, I would like to draw your attention to the timely research the National Centre for Freedom from Addictions, within the President's Foundation for the**

**Wellbeing of Society, has conducted with regards to drug driving.**

**This report focuses on practical measures, which authorities in Malta can apply, in line with good practice in the rest of Europe and beyond, to address the growing problem of drug driving.**

**This report is an example of collaborative practices, as it was not only experts from various sectors who were**

involved in formulating this report, but also its outcomes were discussed and disseminated with the Malta Road Safety Council and other relevant authorities and stakeholders.

We need to encourage more of this sharing, at all levels of research, information, legislation, policy, and implementation.

Another important issue, which I believe should be taken on board, is the need for relevant stakeholders to engage

**regularly with children and young people, to raise awareness regarding road safety as an intrinsic part of their curriculum.**

**Although I must commend some initiatives which are being taken with school children, including the work of the Local Enforcement System Authority (LESA), more must be done.**

**I believe that we need to intensify these efforts with our children and young people, and this necessarily means including road safety issues within their curriculum.**

**It is encouraging to note that today's workshop is prioritising engagement with young people.**

**Through discussions, debates, and awareness-raising campaigns, we can bring a powerful message of road safety into our schools, our colleges, and our institutions of higher learning.**

**On concluding, I look forward to exploring the outcomes of this workshop, including the statement of practical proposals, which, I am informed, shall be put together.**

**We cannot allow road injuries and fatalities to become part of our national status quo.**

**We cannot allow ourselves to fall behind the target proposed by SDG Number 3 and Target Number 6, to reduce road traffic injuries and deaths by 50%, by 2030.**

**We must continue doing everything we can, to ensure, that the precious lives of our people, particularly our young ones, are safeguarded, and that their wellbeing is, at the top of all our policy agendas.**

**Thank you, and I wish you constructive deliberations.**