

BUSINESSEUROPE Dinner Speech

[Salutations]

Dear friends,

Let me begin by welcoming the representatives of BUSINESSEUROPE's member federations, and extending my thanks to Mr Anton Borg, Vice-President of BUSINESSEUROPE, and Mr Frank Farrugia, President of Malta Chamber, for facilitating this event.

It is reassuring to see so many individuals, from leading organisations in diverse business sectors, taking such an active interest, to ensure mutual prosperity and benefits across Europe.

It is clear to me, as I am sure it is to all of us, that must do more to work together, to continue strengthening and safeguarding our European Union.

It is only within a united Union, built on social, economic, and political values of solidarity and shared prosperity, that we can weather the storms of uncertainty, which are currently being experienced across our world.

The future of our European Union cannot afford to forget the powerful legacy of its past. It is this heritage of solidarity, and a firm commitment to peace, which must guide our steps forward.

Let me also say that, when we talk about peace, we must think of proactive and positive approaches. We must be bold and innovative, to find ways of making a real difference in the lives of our communities and societies.

Long-term and positive peace is not simply the absence of violence or armed conflict.

Positive peace takes root when we nurture and build relationships, institutions, and businesses which place human dignity at the heart of all our endeavours.

Positive peace becomes a reality when we create a culture which highlights the aims of social justice, alongside its efforts to produce economic growth.

Positive peace recognises the fact that long-term prosperity cannot exist, when countries are struggling with precarity and the effects of poverty or social exclusion.

For this reason, I believe that all members of the business community must become active contributors, to ensure the full implementation of the United Nations' Agenda 2030 and its Sustainable Development Goals.

These Goals offer us a clear and practical roadmap for the future. They are an opportunity for us to work together, fostering synergies between the private and public sector, and across civil society, for the benefit of all.

Many businesses, in Malta, the European Union, and around the world, have already recognised the importance of including the SDGs in their corporate social responsibility initiatives.

Not only do members of the general public expect businesses to be ethical in all their work, but, due to processes of globalisation, we now expect our businesses to have an international vision.

The SDGs supply this global dimension, by reminding us of how interconnected our communities, societies, and nations are. For example, SDG 1 aims at eradicating poverty.

Through its specific target areas, it highlights the need for societies to end precarity. It offers guidelines for developing opportunities to nurture a participative and inclusive workforce, which respects the rights, and lives up to the aspirations, of everyone.

In this way, not only shall the potential of businesses be maximised, but we shall be showing the rest of the world that Europe remains steadfast in its commitment to safeguard the dignity, the rights, and the freedoms of all the people who call our Union their home.

Let me conclude by once more reaffirming the need for us to achieve a balance, between the growth of Europe's economic prosperity, and the need for the values of social justice, of solidarity, and of positive peace to guide our European Union.

The stronger our commitment is to the ideals of universal human rights and fundamental freedoms, then the stronger you shall be to achieve the full potential of your respective sectors.

I augur you every success in your endeavours, and wish you all a pleasant stay in Malta.