

Fund for Voluntary Organisations Speech, 2 June 2017

[Salutations]

Dear friends,

I am glad to welcome you all to Malta, especially at this time, during Malta's ongoing Presidency of the Council of the European Union.

It is a pleasure to have this opportunity to address so many representatives of our European governments, from such a diversity of sectors, which include employment, social policy, healthcare, and consumer affairs.

I hope that today's activities will provide a chance for you to form connections, and explore areas of potential collaboration, with members of Maltese civil society.

I am sure that you shall have much to share with one another, and find opportunities to build new bridges across your respective areas of expertise.

Each of the voluntary organisations joining us today have been supported by the work of the Malta Community Chest Fund Foundation.

I shall focus my remarks on the ways in which the Malta Community Chest Fund Foundation, and the other entities under my Presidency, all reflect the core values and aspirations which inform the work that my team and I are doing.

It is difficult to summarise the full extent of our work, but if there are a few words that comes close to expressing our practical goals, then these are solidarity, inclusion, and structured processes of democratic participation.

To me, solidarity means standing shoulder-to-shoulder with others, especially those who are most in need of empowerment, support, and care.

Inclusion means acknowledging, but moreover, it means honouring, the incredible diversity of our lives, and the experiences which unite us as one human family.

Active processes of democratic participation mean prioritising the participation of all people, to achieve peace, prosperity, and wellbeing for the benefit of all.

Solidarity, inclusion, and processes of democratic participation are the spirit of togetherness, which bridges the great divisions created by inequality, by the abuse of privilege, and by injustice.

These values speak one simple message, to say that we will not be complicit in the oppression of others.

Through our work in the Presidency, we are committed not be silent, in the face of discrimination.

Through our work, and our lives, we celebrate of the intrinsic dignity of each and every human being.

Through this work, we believe that shall transform ourselves, our communities, our societies, and our world, to make more people more aware, of how deeply integrated humanity is.

Moreover, we are fortunate, as Europeans, to be united by the shared democratic values, of universal rights and fundamental freedoms, which we hold in common.

When we each and every one of us accepts that we are interconnected and inter-dependent, on so many levels, then we will overcome the divisions which, unfortunately, are being perpetuated in our world.

Healing these divisions, and revealing the real dynamics at work in our lives, is the underlying mission of the people and the entities that fall under my Presidency.

Together, with my passionate team, we have created a number of pillars which provide opportunities, here in Malta, for us to explore the fundamental building block of our communities; namely, human relationships.

One of the pillars of my Presidency is the Presidents Foundation for the Wellbeing of Society was brought into being three years ago.

During this time, it has engaged with thousands of people across Malta, Europe, and further afield.

It is the ultimate aim of my Foundation to promote and prioritise the role of wellbeing in the lives of diverse individuals, and across communities.

Through these efforts, we are emphasising the importance of active citizenship.

Another entity within my Presidency is the President's Trust. Thanks to the work of the Trust, we are working with young people and responding to their needs, through practical initiatives for youth empowerment.

Another pillar within the Presidency, which we will be dealing with today, is the Malta Community Chest Fund Foundation, which

provides financial, medical, and material assistance to the people of Malta and Gozo.

The MCCFF is a charity that has developed a strong identity in Maltese society, over the span of 60 years.

It is the mission of the MCCFF to improve the quality of life for all the vulnerable individuals, families, and communities who call the Maltese Islands their home.

Since I became President, we have radically reformed the Malta Community Chest Fund, to make it increasingly relevant to today's needs.

For example, we have transformed it into a registered foundation, with full transparency and an organised framework of specific targets.

These targets include the provision of essential medical assistance. Thanks to the generosity of the people of Malta and Gozo, we are able to provide specialised treatment and care, for people living with cancer, and other severe chronic diseases.

Moreover, the MCCFF makes accommodation, transport, and subsistence readily available, for patients, and their families, who are receiving overseas treatment.

We also provide social assistance to individuals and families experiencing financial difficulties. In so doing, we are ensuring that they do not get lost in the system.

We offer a helping hand in times of need, putting our ideals of social solidarity into practical action.

The Malta Community Chest Fund Foundation also offers support for persons with disabilities, through a designated outreach programme.

Moreover, we are offering assistance for children and young people who have left institutional care, thanks to a series of individual empowerment initiatives, tailored to their personal needs.

In this way the MCCFF is providing tangible and dignified empowerment for vulnerable people, who might otherwise feel trapped in cycles of exclusion and precarity.

Professor Borg will speak about another target area within the Malta Community Chest Fund Foundation, namely, the Fund for Voluntary Organisations.

He shall explain, in more depth, the opportunities which this fund provides, to strengthen civil society engagement and to facilitate diverse social projects.

I thank you for your attention, and for your interest in the ways that we are working, through my Presidency, to create positive opportunities for holistic and sustainable wellbeing, in the lives of the people of Malta.

I hope we shall identify ways in which we can all work together, to further these goals, not only for the benefit of these islands, but across our European Union and beyond.