

Remarks at Dinner, Modern Day Slavery Conference, 13 June 2017

It is an honour to welcome our international guests to Malta.

Although you have a busy schedule ahead, I hope that you shall all find some time to enjoy the unique natural, cultural, and historical heritage of our Maltese Islands.

As a crossroads in the Mediterranean, linking together diverse continents and ancient civilisations, Malta is truly a bridge between cultures, and a necessary hub for dialogue, in today's world.

Let me also welcome you to Verdala Palace, one of the most beautiful spots on the island. This palace was built in the 1550s, as a hunting lodge for Grandmaster de Verdalle, which is why it is located beside the scenic Buskett woodland.

In 1586, it was expanded into the palace we know today, thanks to the great talents of the celebrated Maltese architect Glormu Cassar. I hope you shall have the opportunity to visit Valletta, our capital city, where many of Cassar's baroque buildings can still be seen, in all their beauty.

Although it is a pleasure to be gathered together this evening, we have come to focus on a serious topic, currently facing our world - namely, modern day slavery.

However, let me express the immense pride I feel, for the fact that so many academics, practitioners, and civil society activists have responded to the call, to commit their time and expertise towards addressing this scourge.

This is, to my knowledge, the first Summit of its kind, and therefore, we have a great responsibility to set a powerful precedent. It is our opportunity to make a tangible contribution, which will be of benefit to the vulnerable individuals and communities affected by modern day slavery.

The scourge of modern day slavery is one of the greatest challenges to Human Rights in the twenty-first century. Indeed, it is a direct attack on the intrinsic dignity of the human person.

A person cannot, under any circumstances, be bought or sold.

The value of each and every member of our human family, regardless of their gender, their ethnicity, their culture or their creed, is above all price.

Every human person is infinite worth, and of limitless potential.

This is the central message, of universal human rights and fundamental freedoms, which, I believe, we must continue to transmit, to all the peoples of the world, and which must always be at the heart of our deliberations, and which must guide our actions.

Thank you for your attention, and I wish you all an enjoyable dinner.