

---

*Speech by H.E. Marie-Louise Coleiro Preca, President of Malta on the occasion  
of the International Day of the Girl Child 2017*

---

**It is truly a pleasure to announce today's commemoration of the International Day of the Girl Child. Let us take this opportunity to acknowledge the contributions being made by all girls and young women, within our communities, in our Mediterranean Region, and across the world.**

**This generation of girls, 1.1 billion in total, is growing up in a time of unprecedented social, political, economic, and environmental change. In response, I believe that we require stronger strategies for leadership and innovation, which incorporate the participation of people of all ages and genders.**

**Achieving meaningful opportunities for people of all genders is at the heart of the United Nations' Agenda 2030, and its Sustainable Development Goals. In particular, SDG Number 5 pledges each of our countries, and the international community, to achieve gender equality and women's empowerment within our lifetimes.**

**However, at the current rate of progress, according to indicators from the World Economic Forum, it will take an estimated 170 years to achieve full gender parity on a global level.**

**We surely cannot afford to wait that long.**

**I am certain that we must do more, to actively include the voices and experiences of our young girls, throughout our journey towards positive change. We must set our girls on a trajectory in which they receive the same opportunities to thrive and to reach their full potential, just like our boys.**

**For this reason, we must continue to promote active processes of child participation, which recognise children as social agents in their own right. We must raise our daughters to think of themselves as potential leaders and innovative thinkers, with a powerful contribution to make to our society.**

**There is an urgent need to widen the opportunities open for children, and lift up our young girls in particular, by empowering them to become women who lead. It is for this reason that I am a proud patron for the #Girl2Leader campaign, being officially launched today, by the Women Political Leaders Global Forum.**

**The #Girl2Leader campaign seeks to overcome negative forms of gender stereotyping, and create an environment which encourages and supports young women to consider the possibility of a career in politics and leadership.**

**Let me take this opportunity to once again thank the people who have helped us with the #Girl2Leader campaign, including MEPs Marlene Mizzi, Francis Zammit Dimech, Miriam Dalli,**

and Alfred Sant. They are supporting a Maltese delegation of young women, who are presently in Brussels, for the launch of the #Girl2Leader campaign.

This important initiative is being coordinated with my Foundation, that is, the President's Foundation for the Wellbeing of Society. I am pleased to be at the University of Malta, collaborating with KSU, to mark this UN day.

Today also marks the official launch of emPOWER, Malta's first Platform of Organisations for Women, being facilitated by my Foundation. This platform aims to encourage more women to participate in positions of influence and leadership, while also creating closer synergies among nationally-active groups for women.

I believe that our society, and our whole world, would benefit from strong female role models, whose example will continue to inspire both our young women and men to become true champions of gender equity, equality, and inclusion.

Let us continue working together, to promote and prioritise the precious participation of all of our women and girls, alongside men and boys, for the benefit of our communities, of our society, and beyond.