
*Opening Speech delivered on the occasion of the
Inauguration of the Newly Renovated State Rooms
by H.E. Marie-Louise Coleiro Preca, President of Malta, 4 April 2018*

Onorevoli Ministri, Segretarji Parlamentari u Membri Parlamentari,
Eċċellenzi,
Membri tal-Ġudikatura,
Mistednin Distinti,
Għeżież Hbieb,

Nixtieq nilqagħkom għall-inawgurazzjoni ta' dawn il-kmamar Statali Ġodda fil-Palazz ta' Sant' Anton, li jirriflettu erbgħa snin ta' xogħol minn tim kbir ta' nies professjonisti, esperti u haddiema tas-sengħa, li għamlu biċċa xogħol kbira biex għabu dawn il-kmamar storiċi kif inhuma llum, bil-għan li, l-Palazz ta' Sant' Anton, jerga jieħu x-xejra ta' Palazz, li jirrifletti perjodi differenti tal-istorja ta' pajjiżna.

Irrid niringrazzja minn qalbi lil kull min hadem u għen biex dan il-proġett ambizzjuż seta' jsir realta'.

Let me now continue my remarks in English, for the benefit of our English-speaking guests.

It is truly my pleasure to inaugurate this four-year long project of restoration and development of the new state rooms in Sant' Anton Palace.

By means of this project, we are bringing Sant' Anton Palace to its former glory, and also ensuring that the different historical periods are duly represented.

Today, it is truly a historical occasion. I feel truly proud of the work that has been achieved so far, to safeguard our Maltese built heritage for the benefit of the people of our Maltese Islands.

We are gathered here to inaugurate seven new State Rooms, which have been named after various statesmen and stateswomen, and other historical personalities, who have all contributed to the history of Malta and Gozo.

These seven new State Rooms are: Sala Antonie de Paule; Sala Agatha Barbara; Librerija Anton Buttigieg; Sala Ugo Mifsud Bonnici; Sala Pawlu Xuereb; Sala Censu Tabone; and the Mikiel Anton Vassalli Suite, where we host State Guests.

Moreover, the Present State Rooms: The Drawing Room; the Dining Room; and the Grandmasters' Hall, have also been named after three former Presidents, namely, Sala Guido de Marco, Sala Eddie Fenech Adami and Sala George Abela, respectively.

Ever since the beginning of my Presidency, four years ago today, we have also focused on the importance of promoting our uniquely Maltese identity, and heritage.

I am proud to say that this identity is perfectly expressed in the architectural and cultural heritage of our islands, which connects us to the values and the traditions of our ancestors, while also guiding us into the future.

The respectful and sustainable restoration of Sant' Anton Palace, during my presidency, is aimed to put these values of cultural and historical conservation, into effective visibility and practical action.

Our vision, to restore and develop Sant' Anton Palace to its former glory, and beyond, would not have been possible without the work and dedication, of a diverse team of professionals, experts and crafts-people.

By bringing the talents of this diverse, able team, to this project, we have succeeded in renovating many parts of the palace to their original splendour. In this way, we have worked together, to ensure that Sant' Anton Palace continues to flourish in the 21st Century.

This successful project is evidence of how essential it is, to keep creating opportunities for collaboration, between our national authorities, the private sector and civil society, to protect and preserve, our cultural and architectural heritage.

Such protection and preservation of our cultural and architectural heritage, is not only important from an educational perspective, but is also important, in terms of historical research, and the strong link that our heritage provides, to our own sense of Maltese identity.

Sant' Anton Palace is evidence of the many layers of our nation's history, and a clear example of our complex identity as the people of Malta.

Sant' Anton Palace contains elements of Baroque, British, and more contemporary styles, united together, in a way, that symbolises the unique synthesis of these influences, within our Maltese built heritage.

Besides investing in the renovation, restoration, and upkeep of Sant' Anton Palace, during my Presidency, we have also supported studies, to make this unique historical building, more ecologically sustainable.

In this context, I look forward to this Friday's seminar, where Perit Amber Wismayer will be presenting the findings of her four-year PhD project, exploring Sustainable Regeneration of Built Heritage, which has been conducted, using Sant' Anton Palace as a case study.

Moreover, we have also invested in the restoration of the original 400-year old water reservoir, which takes 1.8m litres of water, and which will be used for the irrigation of the Palace Gardens and orange grove.

Malta is so rich in its heritage, that whatever we do, there will always be more to be done.

That is why, I would like to once again encourage, our national authorities, our private sector and civil society, to continue to do more, to bring together the knowledge of the past with the demands of today.

We must continue to invest in a holistic approach, to be applied to other heritage buildings in Malta.

Sant' Anton Palace is an ideal model for other heritage buildings, seeking to create a balance between respectful restoration and cultural integrity.

I augur that Sant' Anton Palace shall not only be remembered as a building of intrinsic historical and cultural worth, but also as a place of forward-thinking creativity, where the principles of sustainability are being put into practice, for the benefit of both present and future generations.

Ippermettuli nerga nitkellem bil-lingwa materna, għax irrid ngħid lill-Maltin u l-Għawdxin, li għandna biex nkunu kburin bil-wirt storiku kbir li għandna, u li dawn il-kmamar li ser ninawguraw illum, saru b'ħafna mħabba u dedikazzjoni, b'risq, b'għieħ, u għall-Poplu Malti u Għawdxi.

Thank you for your attention.