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*Speech delivered by H.E. Marie-Louise Coleiro Preca, President of Malta at a workshop organised by Perit Amber Wismayer, about the Sustainable Regeneration of Built Heritage – 6th April 2018*

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[Salutations]  
Distinguished guests,  
Dear friends.

It is my pleasure to deliver these opening remarks, ahead of today's seminar on the Sustainable Regeneration of our Built Heritage.

Following last year's successful seminar, I am certain that this shall be an equally informative opportunity, to explore the values of architectural conservation, alongside the promotion of our national heritage, and a focus on strategies for sustainable development.

Let me therefore begin by welcoming the esteemed speakers of today's seminar, namely, Dr Nick McCullen, Dr Carolyn Hayles, and Professor Vincent Buhagiar, from the Universities of Bath, Wales Trinity Saint David, and Malta.

I must also thank my Foundation ..... the President's Foundation for the Wellbeing of Society, for contributing to the facilitation of this seminar.

Above all, let me take this opportunity to commend Perit Amber Wismayer, for her tireless enthusiasm and dedication to this important project.

The historical and cultural identity of Sant Anton Palace has a special place in the history of our islands. In fact, throughout my Presidency, we have undertaken various initiatives to renovate, conserve, and authentically develop important state rooms in the Palace.

Moreover, work has been done to upgrade the ground floor rooms from workshops into office spaces, equipped to meet today's needs. Outdoor areas have also been developed, including the restoration of a 400 year old reservoir with a capacity of 1.8 m litres, which will irrigate the palace gardens and orange grove.

I believe this commitment, to our architectural heritage, is not only a responsibility towards the people of Malta and the many visitors who come to our islands, but most importantly, it is our duty towards future generations.

I am certain we all agree, that each and every one of us has the responsibility to work in synergy, across all levels of society, to create a more sustainable future for all humanity.

For this reason, energy efficiency and sustainability are topics that are discussed, however, they are rarely linked to the importance of protecting and conserving our architectural heritage.

I am informed that this seminar will develop these essential themes, bringing the much-needed awareness to the potential of our heritage buildings, and how they can provide ideal models for sustainable design and energy efficiency.

I am pleased to note that exploring these connections is at the centre of the work being done by Perit Wismayer, and this project is now in its fourth, and final, year.

The research that has been undertaken here at Sant Anton Palace is making an effective contribution to the development of a more holistic balance, between heritage and energy conservation.

I am confident that the work being carried out here at the Palace will also provide a guide and a framework for other examples of energy efficiency in built heritage, not only in Malta, but also across the Euro-Mediterranean.

Furthermore, such research is sensitising the public to the rich potential of our architectural heritage, not only in terms of its historical and cultural value, but also its potential for energy savings and sustainability.

Indeed, these are key concerns for countries and regions across the world, as identified by the international community in the United Nations' Agenda for 2030 and its seventeen Sustainable Development Goals.

Sustainable Development Goal Number 13, in particular, is explicit in stating that we must take urgent action to promote energy sustainability in the context of a rapidly changing climate.

On concluding, let me take this opportunity to urge our policy-makers, to make use of the outcomes of this research, to develop a national strategy that is based on a socially sensitive, as well as technically advanced, approach.

We must ensure that our future strategies will effectively maximise the energy performance of heritage buildings, while also prioritising the wellbeing of their occupants.

In this way, our national authorities will be more capable of effectively facilitating and encouraging the respectful use of heritage buildings, in both the public and private sector.

I am confident that Perit Wismayer and her colleagues shall rise to the challenge, by motivating society to adopt more sustainable approaches to our built environment, as an integral part of our lifestyles, both now and in the future.

Thank you for your attention.