

**Keynote Speech, delivered by H.E. Marie-Louise Coleiro Preca,
President of Malta, at the International Tourism & Investment
Conference (ITIC), London, 2 November 2018**

Hon. Ministers

Excellencies

Distinguished guests,

Dear friends,

**I would like to start by commending the work of the ITIC
Advisory Board, and in particular its Chair, my friend, His
Excellency, Dr Taleb Rifai and Mr. Ibrahim Ayoub for bringing us
together for this important conference.**

**Dr Rifai, your presence and your endeavors for the organisation
of this important conference gives us the assurance of success.
Your experience as former Secretary-General of the UNWTO
will undoubtedly provide inspiring leadership.**

**I am convinced that this important conference will be an
opportunity for us to share our experience and expertise
regarding the urgent need for the development of sustainable
tourism.**

In today's world Tourism has become a way of life.

I believe that the powerful potential of the tourism sector, is a unique catalyst, for the benefit of our entire human family.

Tourism is definitely a motivator for sustainable development, that can help us achieve inclusive prosperity, and peace.

Indicators from the World Economic Forum makes it clear that tourism and the hospitality industry can boost the competitiveness of national economies in a massive way, and can enhance economic opportunities for the benefit of our peoples.

A recent report published by Harvard University, also states that tourism can create an ideal context for communities to work with governments.

Let me take Malta as an example of how political will and community action have come together.

In Malta we have built our brand on the identity and characteristics of our nation, our diversity; our Euro-Mediterranean heritage; and a focus on hospitality.

In this way we are providing an authentic experience to our visitors.

The impressive increase in visitors to Malta is evidence that tourists today are seeking the enriching experience of knowing and understanding the country that they visit.

According to the latest indicators for Malta, from the World Travel and Tourism Council, the tourism sector represents 11.2 per cent of total investment in the Maltese economy, and 28.3 per cent of total employment. Moreover, it contributes 27.1 per cent to the GDP, and it is being projected to increase to 33 per cent by 2028.

Even though Malta is experiencing this impressive growth in the tourism sector we are not sitting on our laurels. So much so, we are continuing to enhance the touristic product and our island's connectivity, to mention a few examples.

There should be a strategy, policy and a plan of action for the development of Sustainable Tourism. In fact Malta has a thorough tourism policy which is being implemented. I will leave the presentation of more details of this policy to my Minister of Tourism, the Hon. Dr Konrad Mizzi.

From my experience, from my own country, I am even more convinced, that tourism, is the industry that can bring prosperity to our communities in the most direct and immediate of ways.

Policies in the tourism sector must also respond to the grass-roots realities of our communities. This is a way to ensure that we manage to find the right balance and to address the increasing pressure of 'Over-Tourism'.

Sustainable Tourism is the only way forward.

This can be achieved by working in synergy and also keep at the heart of our investment our commitment to sustainable development. I believe that the United Nations' Agenda 2030 is the perfect roadmap, for us to achieve this objective.

All of our countries, and all of the stakeholders in the tourism sector, are responsible, to effectively implement the mandate of Agenda 2030.

SDG Number 8 Target 9 focuses on the importance of sustainable economies and tourism.

While SDG number 14 and 15 focus on the sustainable future of our oceans and land mass, respectively.

We must also keep the environmental wellbeing of our ecosystems at the heart of our endeavors because as we all know, the disruptions caused by climate change will only increase in the future.

As the Honorary co-Chair of the newly established Global Tourism Resilience and Crisis Management Centre, let me take this opportunity to encourage all of you to join us in our work, to implement practical policies, to address, and to mitigate the challenges caused by climate change.

The issue of climate change must stimulate the tourism sector to be innovative; to adopt good practices that increase environmental protection; and to safeguard the natural heritage of our countries.

Let me quote from a report published last year, by the International Centre for Agriculture and Biosciences, entitled 'The Potential of the Blue Economy in Tourism'.

The report states that sustainable tourism can be a central contributor to the blue economy, by promoting conservation and the sustainable management of marine environments.

Tourism is, therefore, a critical component in our strategies to preserve healthy and sustainable life on this planet, while also investing in strategies for innovation in the blue and green economy.

As we all know, environmental consciousness among consumers is rising. Certainly, this will increasingly be reflected in the choices that are being made by tourists and visitors, to all of our countries.

The Green Economy Report, published by the United Nations Environment Programme and the UNWTO, emphasises that further investment is required, to keep us on track, to transform tourism into a greener industry.

I believe that a long-term investment in the sustainable future of our planet, and the diversity of its ecosystems, must be a motivator for all of our national and international endeavors in this sector.

It is for this reason that I am so proud that earlier this year my country took on board the white flag international commitment to free our beaches and sea from plastics.

On a regional level I am also proud to say that the Mediterranean Tourism Foundation, is also endeavoring within the euro Mediterranean region to further develop the tourism sector in a sustainable manner.

In fact one of its ground breaking initiatives, is an app developed with the support of the Maltese Government, to measure energy consumption within the hospitality industry.

This app has been developed to address two main objectives.

Firstly, the high cost of energy expenditure in the hospitality industry, and secondly, most importantly, to contribute towards the reduction of CO2 emissions.

This is clear evidence of the effectiveness that can be achieved, when the tourism sector and governments work together. Such synergy will definitely lead to significant benefits, for both the national and international economy, while also addressing the effects of climate change.

Furthermore, tourism has the ability to create positive multiplier effects. This means that a well planned strategy for tourism, with the necessary investment, and partnerships, between our authorities and private sector, cascades down to communities.

Such a cascading effect will also definitely address issues of poverty and social exclusion.

Research by the Overseas Development Institute, based in the United Kingdom, explains... that investment and growth of the national economy depends upon a number of factors, such as the empowerment of women, and a conducive environment for entrepreneurship and enterprise.

Regarding the status of women, evidence shows us that by investing in sustainable tourism strategies, we are also investing in the dignity of women.

According to data from the UNWTO, women are more likely to have a leadership role in tourism businesses, associations, and tourism governance.

Looking at the sector in a holistic way, we can see that travel, tourism, and hospitality are already supporting one in every ten jobs on the planet.

With the right regulatory conditions and political will, the World Travel and Tourism Council Economic Impact Report for 2018, states..... that travel and tourism generates 10.4 per cent of global GDP and 9.9 per cent of total global employment.

The sector's direct growth, of 4.6 per cent, is outpacing the global economy for the seventh successive year.

Moreover, a cross-country study by the International Monetary Fund has shown that there is a direct link between tourism development and economic growth.

For this reason, governments, particularly in lower-income economies, should view investing in its tourism industry as a means to stimulate growth over the long term.

As we know, tourism is one of the only industries in the world where services and goods are consumed at the place where they are produced.

For this reason, local communities are both at an advantage to reap the benefits associated with the sector. A well planned, regulated and responsible tourism sector can be an excellent mechanism of channelling resources in a more equitable way, for the benefit of all of our communities.

This is why a sustainable and responsible investment in tourism is a powerful potential contributor to achieve the goals of social solidarity, and to put into action the principles of social justice.

I would like to emphasize that an investment in sustainable tourism development does not only protect the environment or boost the economy. It is also a catalyst to bring people together in respect towards diverse cultures.

We all know that tourism does not only lead to economic growth and job opportunities. It is also an effective gateway for building sustainable and meaningful friendships, which have the long-term potential to create peace and prosperity.

Undoubtedly, tourism is a gateway for global cultural diplomacy, by reminding us of the most fundamental values, of respect and harmony, which underpin our humanity.

On concluding, I must say that I am so proud, that, a strategic partnership will soon be announced, among the International Tourism and Investment Conference, the Global Tourism Resilience and Crisis Management Centre, and the Mediterranean Tourism Foundation.

This is a practical example of how we can work together, to build sustainable tourism across regions and across the globe.

I truly believe that sustainable tourism is our way forward, to ensure the much needed peaceful co-existence and inclusive prosperity for our entire human family.

Thank you for your attention.