

**Closing Speech, delivered by H.E.Marie-Louise Coleiro Preca,
President of Malta, at the IFS Malta Graduation Ceremony, 22 March
2019**

[Salutations]

Distinguished guests,

And most especially, dear students.

**It is my pleasure to offer these closing reflections on this important day,
after presenting you with your qualifications.**

**Let me begin my remarks by commending the management at IFS
Malta, in particular the valuable leadership of its President, Mr
Kenneth Micallef.**

**Over the decades, IFS Malta has provided an excellent level of
education in the Maltese Islands, and created opportunities for
countless Maltese and foreign students to deepen their knowledge of
financial services.**

Thanks to these efforts, the bar is being continuously raised in this essential sector, by expanding the areas of specialisation that are on offer.

I believe that such an approach is crucial, because, as we all know, the financial sector is always expanding and transforming in response to global challenges and concerns.

For this reason, an innovative approach will ensure that IFS Malta remains well connected with its partner institutions overseas, thereby providing educational opportunities for students, who are either beginning or developing their careers.

Dear students,

Graduation is an important step in your lives.

Graduation confirms that you have gained new skills and abilities, which make you more capable and competent contributors, to achieve the holistic wellbeing of our society.

Graduation is also a moment in your lives that marks the end of one chapter, while offering new and exciting opportunities.

You are at a moment when the experiences and skills which you have developed over the past years can be put to good use, to achieve your aspirations for the future.

Moreover, I believe that as representatives of our financial services, institutions, and authorities, you have a particular responsibility to set the benchmark of ethical behaviour.

This is because, without an ethical and equitable perspective in the economic sector, there can be no justice in other areas of social importance, which are all interconnected with our economy.

For this reason, the United Nations agreed upon Agenda 2030, which is a roadmap for all of our countries to achieve a more peaceful, inclusive, and respectful world.

Agenda 2030, and its seventeen Sustainable Development Goals, places the eradication of poverty and the dignified distribution of wealth as its first and most essential goal.

We are all aware that international uncertainties are affecting the political and economic sectors in many countries, which often leads to social tensions and persistent inequalities.

I believe it is important for professionals, such as yourselves, to be one step ahead of these ongoing challenges.

Your qualifications are another tool, which make you more effective contributors, to ensure that the financial sector is working with the best interests of all our communities in mind.

Malta may be a small nation, however, the financial services industry is an important driver of our national economy.

This sector connects us with stakeholders all over the globe, and has made the impressive economic growth possible, which is being enjoyed by the people of these islands.

As you are all aware, Malta is not resting on its laurels.

Our country is also a pioneer in the area of disruptive technologies, with a framework of regulatory legislation in the area of blockchain that has made this country world-renowned as the “blockchain island”.

Keeping ahead of such advances in the world of technology is crucial, to create new opportunities for the future, and to give the necessary added boost to your careers.

Let me also say that, in order to maintain this competitive edge, it is necessary to invest your efforts in continuous professional development.

By doing so, you will continue to excel in the years ahead.

On concluding, let me encourage you, as you go out into the world as new graduates, to always keep ethical and respectful behaviour as a cornerstone of your endeavours.

In this way, your profession will always be kept in the highest regard, as a source of respect and trust in society.

Let me once again congratulate you on your graduation, and offer you all my best wishes for the future.

Thank you.