

Opening Speech by H.E. Marie-Louise Coleiro Preca, President of Malta at the Sustainable Regeneration of Built Heritage Platform Launch, 28 January 2019

[Salutations]

Distinguished guests,

Dear friends.

It is my pleasure to welcome you, once again, to San Anton Palace, this time to celebrate the end of Perit Wismayer's research on the sustainable regeneration of built heritage.

However, this is not the end to Amber's endeavours.

Today we will be launching the next phase of this project, that is, the official launch of a platform for the Sustainable Regeneration of Built Heritage.

I am so pleased the tireless enthusiasm and dedication of Perit Wismayer to this important project, and which has developed over four years, is finally coming to fruition.

I would like to commend Perit Wismayer for her determination and for her vision, to make a difference at this very particular time, when we know that issues of climate change and architectural conservation will only increase in importance.

Let me take this opportunity to thank Professor Alex Torpiano, for supporting this project and promoting its objectives in Malta.

I also wish to extend my appreciation to Dr Nick McCullen, from the University of Bath and Dr Carolyn Hayles, from the Cardiff Metropolitan University, for sharing their expertise and support.

Welcome, once again, to San Anton Palace, and thank you for joining us at this important event.

I am also pleased to note that this project has attracted so many diverse representatives, coming from government, national and International academia, and civil society.

I am pleased to see you here, to celebrate with us this groundbreaking research.

I am confident that your participation will help to successfully implement this initiative on a national level.

In recent years, there has been growing awareness of architectural conservation and restoration. I do hope that, together will all the efforts that have been made,

you will also take on board the findings of this research, to ensure that our build heritage will be sustainably conserved.

In order to ensure that these efforts continue to be effective in the future, I believe that the goals of energy efficiency and sustainability must remain interlinked, and be placed high on our national agenda.

I have been proud to champion and provide support to Perit Wismayer's research, since the very first conversation we had, more than four years ago.

I feel very proud to have put San Anton Palace at Perit Wismayer's disposal, to ensure that this research is effectively tried and tested. As you know, San Anton Palace is an ideal showcase of our Maltese build heritage.

Moreover, this research is undoubtably bringing the much-needed awareness, to the importance of merging the concepts of sustainable development, energy conservation, and architectural heritage.

Furthermore, I am pleased to note that the University of Malta intends to continue this line of research.

I am confident that what Perit Wismayer has achieved, in terms of the convergence of sustainability, conservation, and heritage, will be taken up by all

stakeholders. This will not only continue to increase the visibility of our heritage buildings, but also create a context for more evidence-based data to be effectively promoted.

Such data is invaluable, because it entices stakeholders from the public and private sector to become strong partners, and become the effective custodians of our architectural legacy.

There is no doubt that the built heritage of the Maltese Islands is invaluable.

There is no doubt that this project makes it clear, that improving the energy efficiency of our Maltese built heritage will enhance our architectural legacy, while in the process it will promote energy savings at a national level.

Although this research is of national interest, it is not only applicable for our islands, but it is also of great importance across the Euro-Mediterranean Region and beyond.

The need for sustainable development must be at the heart of our endeavours, if we want to continue to prosper and grow, as one human family. There is no other option, other than to take up our responsibility in our respective capacities, to ensure the sustainable wellbeing of our nation and our world.

This is clearly indicated by the international community's commitment to effectively implement the United Nations' Agenda 2030, and its seventeen Sustainable Development Goals.

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

This has put great responsibility on our shoulders, and I am glad that Perit Amber Wisamayer has responded to this responsibility, as one of her career goals.

Protecting the cultural and architectural heritage of our country is essential.

These precious buildings are part-and-parcel of our Maltese identity. However, they are also central to the continuing success of our tourism industry, which is one of our main economic pillars.

I believe that a strong commitment, to protect and to celebrate our architectural heritage, is not only a responsibility towards the people of Malta and the many visitors who come to our islands ... Most importantly, it is our duty towards future generations.

Sustainability is the key, to ensure that our future is prosperous and peaceful.

I am proud of the fact that during my Presidency, I have taken time to advocate the importance of information about these values, and to hopefully motivate our authorities, our communities, and Maltese society in general, to adopt more sustainable lifestyles.

I am looking forward, that this Platform for the Sustainable Regeneration of Built Heritage, being launched today, will do so much to bring architectural sustainability to the top of the national agenda.

I am also hopeful that this Platform will incentivise a positive change in how our heritage buildings are used and safeguarded, at the level of legislation, policy, and behaviour.

I would like to encourage civil society to support these endeavours, because I believe that a grass-roots commitment is essential, to ensure that the necessary legislation and policies are in place, but also, effectively implemented.

We must ensure that sustainably regenerating and managing our built heritage is part of the legacy which we hand down to our children.

Our endeavours in this important sector must reflect the values of resilience, inclusion, and the wellbeing of each and every person in our Maltese Islands.

These are the values that we must share, with our neighbours in the Euro-Mediterranean Region and beyond.

Finally, let me once again thank you, Amber, for your enthusiasm and your hard work. I am so very proud of you.

Thank you for your attention.