

**Speech delivered by H.E. Marie-Louise Coleiro Preca, President of Malta, at the
HSBC Malta Business Woman of the Year Award, 9 February 2019**

[Salutations]

Distinguished guests,

Dear friends,

**It is my pleasure to join you, and to celebrate the Malta Business Woman of the
Year Awards.**

**Let me begin by commending HSBC Malta, the President's Trust Foundation, the
EMPOWER Platform, and all of our sponsors, for making this event a reality.**

**As patron of these awards, I am proud to say that, by working together, we are
giving the necessary visibility to the immense contributions that are being made
by women in the world of work, here in our Maltese Islands.**

**One important point that I wish to share with you is that it is essential, for us to
continue to promote this visibility. We must urge the media and other
communication platforms, to share our message of gender equality.**

**When girls and young women see the success that you have achieved, as strong
women in business, then they will take their aspirations more seriously.**

In this way, we will be ensuring that woman are further represented, at every level of our private sector, and making their voices heard, as the enablers and implementors of policy.

Although Malta has made significant steps forward, to empower the participation of women in the economic sector, there is still more that needs to be done.

For example, the EU's gender equality index shows us that Maltese women are in a very small minority, as the directors and committee members of both public and private entities.

This is notwithstanding the fact that 60 per cent of University of Malta graduates are women.

Unfortunately, it seems that, as a nation, we are wasting the education, the skills, and the potential of these young graduates, who are not being given their rightful chance to fulfil their ambitions.

As the nominees and winners of these awards, I am sure that all of you have experienced some form of discrimination or prejudice, because of your gender.

However, you have also demonstrated that you are resilient, and capable of making an important contribution, to promote gender equality in the economic sector of our country.

All of us know that the empowerment of women, as managers, employees, producers, and consumers is a catalyst, to expand the growth of our businesses and our society as a whole.

Women are key drivers of economic growth, but to fulfil this role, they must be enabled to effectively enjoy their rights.

For this reason, I urge all stakeholders from the private sector to collaborate with our authorities and civil society activists, to improve the opportunities that are available to women, as part of a holistic strategy that is rooted in the principles of equality, equity, and social justice.

This is what these awards are all about.

Furthermore, gender equality and women's empowerment are a cornerstone of the United Nations' Agenda 2030 for Sustainable Development, which was adopted by all of our countries in 2015.

Agenda 2030 is global wakeup call, pushing the world to take action for a better future.

The Agenda gives us a clear mandate, to ensure that every person, regardless of their gender or their age, can share the benefits of economic growth and development by 2030.

Time is passing, and we cannot allow anybody to be left behind.

For this reason, I believe that there is still more that must be done, in Malta, to build upon our successes.

We must work in synergy, to encourage more women to be in a position of control over their lives and their businesses, especially as entrepreneurs.

According to the latest data from the National Statistics Office, there are still too few women who are achieving this level of self-determination and empowerment, as entrepreneurs and business owners.

For this reason, we must eliminate the structural and social barriers, which are preventing our girls and women from achieving their aspirations.

We must take concrete actions, through strategic partnerships, which create innovative opportunities for women in business to thrive and grow.

Empowered women are essential collaborators, to create more resilient communities.

I am confident that the effective inclusion of women will drive the national economic development of Malta even further.

In this way, we will also be effectively promoting our national aspirations, to achieve full gender equality and equity, for the benefit of both present and future generations.

Thank you.