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*Opening Remarks, delivered by HE Marie-Louise Coleiro Preca, President of Malta,  
at the “From Valletta to Abidjan: Creating Job Opportunities for Youth and  
Women”, Africa Industrialisation Day Roundtable in Brussels*

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20<sup>th</sup> November 2017

**Your Excellency, Ajay Bramdeo**

**Distinguished Guests**

**Dear Friends**

**It is an honour to exchange some opening remarks at this round table on the occasion of the Africa Industrialisation Day and on the eve of the African EU Summit in Ivory Coast.**

**Let me also take this opportunity to commend the work of UNIDO, Global Africa, other collaborators for bringing much needed visibility to Africa’s needs for prosperity.**

**From the outset I would like to state that I believe that our European outlook towards Africa has to be re engineered.**

**Europe’s interconnectedness with the African Continent is not just a contemporary experience or situation, but it goes back to historic centuries. Hence, though Africa’s prosperity should be the concern of all of us, as an international community, however I believe that Europe has an extremely important and particular responsibility, role and advantage.**

**It is not just the proximity of our two continents that brings us close to each other, but also a particular shared history.**

**Historically, Africa was seen as a land of opportunity by European States. The result of which was the historical colonisation period. Unfortunately today some European States do not perceive Africa as such. I believe that Africa is even more today a continent of opportunity.**

**Africa is an emergent huge market with an astounding potential young workforce. By 2050 Africa's population will reach 2.5 billion.**

**We cannot continue to see Africa as a continent that creates insurmountable challenges to Europe.**

**We must stop looking at Africa as the land of migration.**

**We must see ourselves as two complimentary continents.**

**Ten years after the supposedly joint Africa EU Strategy, we must assess its failure to meet its targets, and call a spade a spade.**

**We are at a point where we have to ask some pertinent questions, to appraise properly, and effectively review, the whole outlook, objectives and any plans of action that need to subsequently be implemented.**

**I think we need to ask: How have Europeans and the International community at large, looked at Africa during all these years?**

**Have Europeans and the International Community truly invested in Africa or just thrown money at what is perceived as problematic, by our standards?**

**Africa does not need our charity!**

**Africa needs and deserves proper sustainable investment.**

**Africa must be looked at as a strategic partner and not as a mammoth problem.**

**Africa has the necessary resources but needs effective strategic partners to help develop effectively and sustainably its full potential.**

**An example of our failure, as international community towards Africa it is clearly outlined in a study report, entitled: “Honest Accounts 2017 report”, compiled by a coalition of UK and African NGOs. This report states that the countries of Africa were collectively net creditors to the rest of the world, to the tune of 41.3 billion dollars in 2015 alone. Thus much more wealth is leaving Africa than entering it.**

**Therefore, I believe that the very first and foremost investment that the countries of Sub Saharan Africa is our genuine investment in the dignity of the peoples of Africa.**

**Secondly I believe that we must perceive Africa from an African vision and point of view, and not solely linked to Europe's strategic interests.**

**Definitely Africans are best placed to put forward their vision, their aspirations and their needs.**

**Europe cannot continue to be presumptuous and think that it knows best and everything for this continent.**

**Let's hope that the Africa EU Summit revitalises the intention of a continuous process of dialogue between the two continents but even more so for a proper plan of action with effective and targeted deadlines for its implementation.**

**Let's hope that this Africa EU Summit will bring a genuine sense of commitment towards the prosperity of Africa, from all sides.**

**Definitely after so many years of neglect, unfulfilled intentions and missed opportunities Europe's relation with Africa needs to be revisited and reset.**

**Europe needs to fulfil its democratic vision with Africa by opening up to a full democratic and continuous process of proper consultation where African nations are properly heard. So that what the Africans envisage for their continent can be what their peoples aspire and deserve for their future.**

**Europe cannot continue to take a godfather's position assuming to know everything about Africa. Europe must see itself as a strategic partner to the African Continent.**

**On the other hand we all know what needs to be done.**

**The United Nations agenda 2030 and its 17 sustainable development goals spells out the way in a most structured framework. Agenda 2030 present to the international community a tangible pathway to overcome the socioeconomic challenges that Africa faces.**

**However, Africa needs proper commitment towards a tangible process to ensure that education, to mention one aspect, is truly accessible to young Africans. SDG 4 outlines the importance of education.**

**Education is key to prosperity.**

**Africa needs a strong collaboration between our respective governments and the private sector to identify the needs to further education and training.**

**The European Union and our respective governments need to become effective enablers for our European private sector to tangibly invest in Africa.**

**Personally I have been to a number of African Countries, whereby I lead business delegations and could experience first hand the urge of African Businesses to find collaborations and strategic partnerships to grow and prosper together.**

**There is huge potential for Europe's businesses to invest and benefit from the huge market of Africa. However our governments must not proceed half heartedly.**

**Africa needs commitment.**

**Africa needs long term investment.**

**Europe must effectively help to develop Africa's youth potential.**

**I hope that this Roundtable and other discussions being held today on the occasion of Africa industrialization day and on the eve of the African EU Summit, will be effective catalysts to encourage our government authorities, our private sector, international organisations and civil society to work in synergy. I hope that all these discussions will bring mutual benefit and in particular to the African young people to improve their opportunities for education, vocational training and subsequent job opportunities.**

**We need to look at Africa in an innovative way. Just a prima face glance one can easily conclude that Africa with its climate characteristics can easily become an ideal example of alternative energy.**

**Africa can become a powerhouse which can create millions of green jobs in the process to climate change mitigation and adaption.**

**I truly dream, for example, of the Sahara Desert becoming a powerhouse for Africa and probably for a part of Europe.**

**This can address the serious issues of CO2 emissions. Solar energy is sustainable and an eternal natural resource. Such a project will not only create jobs for African young people, but it can also supply Africa with electricity and water. Having water will give food security and resources for climate adaptations.**

**I do hope that the upcoming Africa EU Summit will be effectively more fruitful than those in the past.**