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*Opening Speech by H.E. Marie-Louise Coleiro Preca, President of Malta at the  
12<sup>th</sup> Mediterranean Congress of Physical and Rehabilitation Medicine*

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**Hon. Chris Fearne, Maltese Minister for Health**

**Dr. Stephen Zammit, President of the Malta Physical and  
Rehabilitation Medicine Association**

**President of the Mediterranean Forum of Physical and Rehabilitation  
Medicine**

**President of the European Society of Physical and Rehabilitation  
Medicine,**

**President of the International Society of Physical and Rehabilitation  
Medicine**

**It is my pleasure to address this 12th Mediterranean Congress of Physical and Rehabilitation Medicine.**

**Before I go further into my remarks, I would like to welcome the international participants to our Maltese Islands. I do hope that while in Malta, you will have the opportunity to enjoy visiting some of our historical and cultural sites.**

**I also would like to commend the Malta Physical and Rehabilitation Medicine Association in collaboration with the Mediterranean Forum of Physical and Rehabilitation Medicine, for successfully bringing together such a large, global group of professionals and practitioners for this congress.**

**As I see it, this conference is a wonderful opportunity for unity, as no matter where you come from in the world, you are all dedicated to pursue excellence, in the field of, physical and rehabilitation medicine.**

**I am convinced that, you have come together with one common goal, that is, to highlight the achievements, in this sector, while also to encourage, promote, and share new developments for the benefit of your profession, and the people in your respective care.**

**I am so pleased to note that, by hosting this congress in Malta, the Malta Physical and Rehabilitation Medicine Association in**

**collaboration with the Mediterranean Forum of Physical and Rehabilitation Medicine, are bringing a much-needed focus to the area of physical and rehabilitation care, within our respective countries, and the Mediterranean Region at large.**

**You are all very special professionals, as the work that each one of you does, in rehabilitation, helps people in your care, to overcome important health challenges, which, if not overcome successfully, it will hinder seriously their wellbeing.**

**As professionals and practitioners in this important field, you are promoting essential processes of care and support, which have far-reaching implications, on the people you serve, their families, and whole communities.**

**Undoubtedly, the successful rehabilitation of people facing such challenges, leads to community integration, independent living, and an eventual return to productivity, within our societies.**

**For this reason, I believe that opportunities such as this congress provide a much necessary space for you to connect, and for building necessary friendships.**

**I augur you, as stakeholders from diverse areas, to share your experiences, and challenges, and also to celebrate your successes, while even learning from one another, in the process.**

**Such a congress creates an essential community of learning, in this important field of medicine. I feel truly honoured to have been given this opportunity to address you as specialists and practitioners, that bring together such varied expertise. Your expertise allows you to improve the quality of life, for people who are living with disabling conditions.**

**As we are all aware, such conditions can have a devastating impact on a person's life, and the lives of their loved ones.**

**Therefore, diagnosing and treating pain, as a result of injuries, illnesses, or disabling conditions, is a way of giving an individual a new opportunity to live again, to be reintegrated into one's family, in the community, and in society as a whole.**

**Thanks to your expertise, you are managing to determine and lead towards effective treatment and prevention plans, by working within an interconnected and an interdisciplinary team of professionals.**

**Your work is very powerful.....your work has the potential to treat the person holistically, not only the symptomatic manifestations of their conditions, but also the general wellbeing of the individual, and one's family.**

**The central message, which I want to share with you today, is that, I believe that it is vital for our healthcare systems to focus on helping people become, and stay, healthy, rather than simply managing their diseases, or conditions.**

**I also believe that we must continue to create and sustain synergies between diverse fields and areas of specialisation, in order to implement a system of care, that not only optimises the body's amazing abilities of self-healing, and rehabilitation, but also to nurture an approach, which respects the holistic wellbeing of the whole human person.**

**The contribution that you make, as physical and rehabilitation specialists and practitioners, to highlight this integrative holistic approach to care, is very important, towards healthy, resilient, and inclusive communities.**

**Therefore, I would like to encourage you, to continue your focus on rehabilitation medicine, across our countries and across the world, by pushing it to the next level, by keeping this essential sector, high on our respective national agendas, for our policymakers and our authorities, to take the necessary actions, towards providing the necessary resources, where necessary.**

**I believe that the title for this congress, “Rehabilitation: Evolution in Practice”, is evidence of how committed you all are, to promote and share, innovative and new developments within your sector.**

**I urge you to keep emphasising the need for far-reaching collaborations, between and among the respective associations and societies, that operate within this area, especially by creating regional synergies in the Euro-Mediterranean region.**

**I urge you to encourage everyone, within your sector, to put all your strengths together, to create an effective movement, for the needed ongoing enhancement, of this important medical field.**

**On concluding, let me say how confident I am, that this congress will be an opportunity for all stakeholders to share knowledge and good practices, and to build on your achievements in a spirit of shared growth.**

**With the united efforts of all the rehabilitation specialists, trainees, nurses, and other allied health professionals, who are sharing their experiences over the next four days.**

**I am sure that you will deepen your vision of the benefits that rehabilitation medicine can make possible, in the lives of your patients.**

**I am also certain that the contributions of the international academics, who will be addressing you, will provide a valuable stimulus for your thoughts and discussions.**

**One very final note...I would like to commend you all, for coming together, as you are not just sharing your expertise, but also bringing to the fore a diverse spectrum of nations and cultures, in a spirit of friendship, and hence, you are showcasing, another way of enriching oneself by appreciating and respecting each other, and by creating, an opportunity for medical diplomacy.**

**I augur you a fruitful congress, and I look forward to exploring the outcomes of your deliberations.**

**Thank you for your attention.**