

Opening Speech, delivered by H.E. Marie-Louise Coleiro Preca, President of Malta, at the Conference on Corporate Social Responsibility with the theme “X’Impenn Ghanda il Medja Lejn is-Socjeta’ fl-Isfond ta’ Responsabilta Socjali?” organised by the Tumas Fenech Foundation and the President’s Foundation for the Wellbeing of Society, 7 November 2018

Distinguished guests,

Dear friends.

It is my pleasure to welcome you to Sant Anton Palace, and to open today’s conference.

The conference has come at an ideal time. Important discussions are taking place in our country, about the role and the responsibilities of the media.

Let me begin by thanking His Excellency, Dr Ugo Mifsud Bonnici, President Emeritus, as patron of the Tumas Fenech Foundation for Education in Journalism.

I must also commend the Tumas Group, and the team at the President's Foundation for the Wellbeing of Society, who have partnered, to facilitate this conference.

The line-up of interesting speakers, both local and international, will surely give us plenty of food for thought, about how the media can further contribute, to assist the efforts of the private sector to achieve more effective corporate social responsibility endeavours.

I am pleased to note that this conference will create the opportunity to bring together a diverse group of speakers, panelists, and audience members from different companies, which are currently engaged in CSR initiatives, to share their good practices and strategies.

This conference is also a unique opportunity for networking.

**I have always considered corporate social responsibility to be a very essential contribution, which the private sector makes towards the social good.**

**In fact, back in 2015, I founded the Corporate Citizenship for Responsible Enterprises Platform, know as the CORE Platform.**

**This platform, under the excellent leadership of Ms Helga Ellul, is doing so much to encourage socially responsible initiatives in Malta and Gozo.**

**Furthermore, I am pleased to note that this conference is also an opportunity to take our conversation about CSR and media partnerships to the next level. The roundtable held about CSR and the Media, in September, was a well attended preparatory meeting, for this conference.**

**I am also glad that diverse members of civil society have been invited to this conference, with the aim to create a respectful**

space in which they will share their thoughts and suggestions on this subject matter.

During sessions of consultation among my Foundation for the Wellbeing of Society with diverse NGOs, many of these organisations expressed concerns that their activities were not being given sufficient media coverage, and that they could not afford to employ public relations specialists as part of their team.

I believe that we must do more, to motivate media representatives to respond to these concerns.

I believe that the media has the important role to be a catalyst for education, information, and an objective and inclusive voice, especially on delicate and sensitive matters.

The media, as the fourth estate of democracy, must maintain an ethical perspective which respects the dignity of all the members of society, at all times.

I am convinced that, in this way, the media will be strengthening its own professional standards.

I also believe that the media has a responsibility to help civil society, in the social development of our country.

This can be accomplished by actively engaging in the implementation of positive community initiatives, and by providing the necessary coverage.

At the same time, private sector stakeholders and non-governmental organisations will build greater trust in the local media, by being given the opportunity to showcase the work that they are doing.

I believe that corporate social responsibility is an important catalyst, to bring together key stakeholders and to promote responsible social investment practices, both nationally and internationally, as it contributes to sustainable development.

Corporate social responsibility has the ability to create constructive links between the private sector and society. I am convinced that the role of the media is necessary, to give visibility to this important two-way communication process.

For this reason, corporations, civil society, and the media have a duty to collaborate with one another. This collaboration will inspire others to follow their example of social responsibility.

The role of the media, as a guardian of the public good, has a valuable contribution to make, to share information about CSR endeavours.

Besides this contribution, the media can also act as a social conscience, by reminding corporations about the need to give back to society and to look beyond profits, by incorporating the principles of social justice in their work.

**It is encouraging that a large number of Maltese businesses are already very engaged in some form of CSR.**

**Let me therefore take this opportunity, to commend the efforts of all those businesses who have made corporate social responsibility an intrinsic part of their endeavours.**

**I would also like to take this opportunity to encourage those businesses who have not yet take up CSR as part of their operations, to consider supporting social initiatives.**

**A national study, conducted in 2011 by the Malta Chamber of Commerce, Enterprise and Industry in collaboration with Bank of Valletta, indicated that 88 per cent of the members of the Chamber are actively engaged in CSR.**

**Furthermore, 79 per cent of these members reported that they are experiencing direct benefits, as a result of their CSR initiatives.**

**Another survey, carried out in 2013 by PriceWaterhouseCoopers, found that 60 per cent of the Maltese companies included in the survey have a CSR policy or programme in place, and 48 per cent of these companies claim to have a department that is responsible for CSR.**

**I am convinced that such strategies for corporate social responsibility will be even more effective, when they are linked with the mandate of the United Nations' Agenda 2030, and its seventeen Sustainable Development Goals.**

**The United Nations' Agenda 2030 offers us the most structured and powerful framework, to achieve effective corporate social responsibility in today's world.**

**Corporate social responsibility is in synch with the fundamental principles of the Sustainable Development Goals, and the commitment that these goals portray, to implement a global social solidarity approach.**



**Another report by PricewaterhouseCoopers, published in 2015 and entitled, ‘Make it your business: Engaging with the Sustainable Development Goals’, states that 70 per cent of businesses, across the world, have already responded to the SDGs, and that their CSR commitments are being led by Agenda 2030.**

**Moreover, this same report goes on to say that an overwhelming 90 per cent of citizens believe that it is important for all businesses to implement the SDGs.**

**On concluding, let me urge the private sector to continue taking up CSR initiatives which are inspired by Agenda 2030, by adopting the SDGs as part of their proactive approach to development and sustainability.**

**I am convinced that the Maltese media has an equally powerful contribution to make, by working alongside businesses and civil society organisations, to give the SDGs the necessary visibility.**

**This united effort will empower the Maltese Islands to achieve our global responsibility:**

**to effectively address inequalities and to end all forms of discrimination;**

**to stop the degradation of our environment;**

**and to safeguard the full inclusion and the active participation of each and every member of our society.**

**Thank you for your attention.**