

MALTA'S DIASPORA CONTRIBUTING TO HOMELAND AND HOST COUNTRIES: DIASPORA MINISTERIAL CONFERENCE

Statement by the Permanent Representative of the Republic of Malta to the UN and International Organisations in Geneva, H.E. Dr. John Paul Grech

Mr Chairperson,

The Republic of Malta welcomes the organisation of this ministerial conference on Diasporas. It comes at a fitting time following some important developments in Malta and amongst its Diaspora. In 2011, Parliament passed Act XX establishing the Council for the Maltese Living Abroad creating a forum and bringing together leading Diaspora community leaders and experts from around the world. The decisions of this Council are implemented by a new Directorate for the Maltese Living Abroad established last December facilitating frequent video-conferencing, an annual convening in Malta of the Council which has commenced preparation for the 4th World Convention of the Maltese Living Abroad scheduled in 2015. The previous conventions were organised in 1969, 2000 and 2010.

However, Malta's migration, return migration and re-migration trends and patterns know their origin in the first half of the 19th century to various destinations – primarily Algeria, Australia, Canada, Egypt, France, Tunisia, the United States and the United Kingdom. More recently, following Malta's membership to the European Union in 2004 such trends shifted to the Benelux, Italy, Germany and the United Arab Emirates. Needless to say, despite its tiny geographic size, Maltese people have settled in various countries and territories around the world and account for 1.1 million compared to the 420,000 found in the homeland.

The reputation of the Maltese Diaspora is a positive one – they are constructive, hardworking and integrate easily in the countries where they seek to settle. Malta's communities around the world have contributed economically, socially, culturally and at times also religiously to their respective host country. Return migrants have, significantly, contributed to Malta's improved economic performance through earned income, but more importantly knowhow in areas where expertise might have still been lacking locally. This recent development concerning the administrative structures and fora for created to assist Malta's Diaspora will certainly contribute positively to their development, while at the same time attain a quantum leap forward for both the Diaspora countries as well as homeland Malta.

Mr Chairperson,

In conclusion, one may safely state that Malta's recent efforts to direct its diaspora talent and energy to the Maltese islands has resulted in a fruitful win-win situation both for our country and diaspora citizenry alike.

Thank You.