

SPEECH

1st August 2017

Opening Remarks by Mr Frank V. Farrugia, President of the Malta Chamber of Commerce, Enterprise and Industry on occasion of a Council Meeting with the Prime Minister and members of the Cabinet

Honourable Prime Minister, Ministers, Parliamentary Secretaries, fellow Council Members,

Allow me to start by formally congratulating you Prime Minister, and your team and thank you for accepting my invitation – at such short notice - to meet and address our Council.

Today's meeting is hopefully the first of many fruitful discussions on matters of national and economic importance throughout this thirteenth legislature.

I have already had the opportunity to meet and discuss with you, urgent matters concerning business while most of the numerous sectoral formations within the Chamber have already met with many of the new elements in your government. We appreciate their proactive approach towards government built on the underlying and mutual 'pro-business' principle that has driven the country's positive economic results in recent years.

We feel that on many fronts, we share common ideas and priorities such as the importance of upgrading the island's infrastructure, the simplification of bureaucratic practices, continued fiscal consolidation, the preservation of the country's reputation, resolving the issues that plague our national airline, and dealing with the acute skill shortages in our labour market. In a nutshell, enhancing the economic competitiveness of our nation and our businesses.

Today's Agenda, in fact, is primarily intended to draw due attention to issues of high and urgent importance in terms of our country's competitiveness. These include issues related to regional aid, banking, the continued abuse in free movement of goods, excise duties and investment in Research, Development, Technology and Innovation.

Other sectoral issues of significant importance include loading and unloading difficulties faced by delivery vehicles, the forthcoming POYC reform, the establishment of a Medicines Verification organisation, as well as visas for workers, tourists and language students.

In terms of the European agenda, we intend to discuss the effects of Brexit on our economy, the European Commission's proposals for a directive on Work Life Balance for Parents and Carers and the ongoing debate on the Future of the European Union.

Lastly, we shall also be discussing the matter of public holidays falling on a weekend. The Chamber issued a statement denouncing this proposal on the day it was made during the last electoral campaign.

As evidenced by the issues I have mentioned, our Chamber is currently working hard on numerous fronts to create ever more favourable economic conditions for our businesses – both large and small. We are grateful that your government is eager to collaborate on efforts with one common goal in mind – that of generating wealth and prosperity for our people. We look forward to today's fruitful discussion.

Thank you

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