

PRESS RELEASE

20th July 2023

ACT NOW!

The Malta Chamber of Commerce, Enterprise and Industry is seriously concerned about the current state of play and the way the challenges we face as a country are being handled. The economy and the quality of life of people are suffering because of lack of foresight, poor planning, lack of transparency, weak enforcement, and slow action where action needs to be taken. The country is in a nose-dive and we persist in denial, failing to read the signs of the times. It is time to stop trying to please everyone at once and to prioritise the long-term national interest over immediate partisan interests. Government needs to listen more to the warnings voiced by people whose interests are non-partisan, and address structural issues that are impairing productivity and undermining competitiveness, the country's attractiveness, and people's well-being and quality of life. The time for patched up, short-term quick fixes is over.

Year-on-year, we continue talking about the same matters in multiple fora. We register occasional improvements here and there, but the approach is uncoordinated, and the general situation continues to deteriorate because when issues are not addressed promptly and effectively, they grow bigger. The damage done in the meantime is in many cases irreversible, as evidenced by our urban landscape. The traffic situation, the power outages, the shabbiness, the lack of proper waste management and the tragedies at workplaces are just some examples of issues that The Malta Chamber is constantly harping on. These factors contribute to an erosion in the quality of life of people and make the country unattractive for high quality investors and visitors alike. Visions, strategies and reforms which remain on paper are pointless. The country's leadership needs to step up and take the right decisions with the required urgency, however tough these decisions may be.

We need to:

1. Implement tangible measures to reduce traffic congestion, such as attaching car license fees to usage, introducing parking fees in central urban areas with fees paid being transferred into an e-mobility wallet for use of sustainable means of transport, and restricting certain congesting activities during peak hours;
2. Ensure a reliable supply of electricity that can cater for our predictably hot summers without recurring power outages;
3. Ensure proper maintenance and cleansing of public areas;
4. Ensure proper enforcement of laws and regulations in all spheres of business activity and for all residents and visitors;
5. Provide assistance to real low-income earners rather than indulge in distributing handouts;

6. Direct subsidies to businesses operating a sustainable model to help such businesses become more viable and prevalent in our economy;

7. Incentivise a shift away from labour-intensive activities towards an economic model which is not dependent on increasing the population - the present economic model requires the importation of an additional 20,000 workers annually, which is unsustainable and is pushing the country's infrastructure to breaking point.

The Malta Chamber reiterates that we need to overcome the illusion that because we are small, we only need to attract a small portion of the business from the global economy to succeed. Our GDP may be growing, but the country is progressing way too slowly in addressing what will increasingly mean more to people and to sustainable business models. Eventually, we will be outpaced by our competitors on all fronts. We cannot continue to grow the bottom-line GDP without a clear strategy beyond the seemingly quick-fix solution of importing foreign labour indefinitely, in the hope that this will help support the growing needs of our ageing population, not least of which is the pensions timebomb. The Malta Chamber urges Government to rise up to the challenge and act now before it is too late.

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