

VALLETTA 450 SEMINAR – 25th October 2008
Event organized by the Valletta Alive Foundation

Address by Dr Alexiei Dingli

Honourable Minister, Distinguished Guests, Friends

It is my pleasure and honour as Mayor of Valletta to address this conference.

As you can imagine, managing the city is a huge task in itself, there is so much to do and it is impossible for the council to do everything. But even though the task at hand is huge, this should not discourage us, but it should give us more drive to pull up our sleeves and work together in order to overcome the challenges of our beloved city.

First and foremost, we all have to realise that we have a duty towards the city. Valletta is mine as much as it is yours! If you are a resident, Valletta is your home. If you're a self-employed or an employee in the City, Valletta provides you with your daily bread. If you live somewhere else in Malta, Valletta is your Capital City apart from being also a place where you can find entertainment, culture and shopping. If you're a tourist, Valletta is yours too since it is a World Heritage site. So Valletta belongs to each and every one of us and as such, we must take care of it, protect it and nurture it.

2015 happens to be the year when we start celebrating the 450 years of the foundation of Valletta. Back in those days, Grandmaster Jean Parisot De La Valette founded the city and gave it the motto of Malta Renaissance – the rebirth of Malta. In recent months, 2015 was proposed by the Prime Minister of Malta Dr Lawrence Gonzi to be the year by which Malta should become a centre of excellence in various sectors. So in essence, that year will signal a new rebirth for Malta, where we are all called to participate and excel in what we do. Just as Valletta marked the rebirth of Malta back in 1566, Valletta should also shine in the new rebirth of Malta in 2015.

If we were to take a birds-eye view of Valletta, we will see two majestic harbours framing Mount Sceberras. This mount was originally an arid peninsula but skilled hands transformed it into what today is one of the Capital Cities of the European Union and a World Heritage site. Stone alone can give a city its aesthetics but definitely does not breathe life into it. It is the people that provide this. In the last century, we have experienced an exodus out of Valletta. Luckily, the setting up of

the local council and the injection of funding by central government contributed towards slowing down this trend whilst encouraging regeneration. Notwithstanding this and when considering the various drives to pump life into Valletta both by government and several entities, we still need to work harder.

In my opinion, Valletta is a city of different realities and to turn it into a modern European capital we have to ensure that all of these realities flourish together. To do so, we have to reach the following 10 objectives.

1. Create in the city, a genuine safe environment where our children and youth can grow and develop their full potential.
2. Make it a moulding ground where our families are nurtured into solid values, which contribute towards strengthening the fibre of our society.
3. Turn it into a place which shines with opportunities for those on the outskirts of our society.
4. Ensure it becomes a haven for our elder generation, which allows them to live a comfortable secure life, in an accessible city.
5. Offer a healthy lifestyle which encourages the use of alternative open spaces and promotes the affiliation to various social and sport organisations.
6. Turn it into an open-air museum, easy to navigate which offers its visitors a unique learning experience.
7. Offer it as a canvas where artists can practice different forms of art and contribution to the cultural enhancement of everyone in our society.
8. Use it as a prototype for green approaches, which finds the correct balance between the architectonic limitations imposed by the city and the respect for the environment.
9. Market it as a five star shopping centre which offers value for money whilst ensuring that the shopping experience is an exceptional one.
10. Show a new face of the city as a result of regeneration, maintenance and the uplifting of depressed areas.

The council is willing to work closer with anyone who shares our vision because we know, that only by working together, we can amplify our strengths and achieve greater goals.

It is true that we have huge limitations. But the size of our limitations does not matter. It is the size of our ideas, and what we do with them that does!

Thank you

~~~~~