

Honourable Chris Said, Dr Ferstl (European Commission)

HerO partners, Distinguished guests, ladies and gentlemen,

It is both a privilege and a great pleasure to welcome you all here in our beautiful capital city and world heritage site Valletta, for this HerO Mid-term Conference 2009. Valletta is pleased to offer its hospitality to this conference and its delegates. During their stay in Malta nearly five centuries ago, the Knights of St John brought over to our country the best architects and engineers to plan and build this fortified city, its streets, its palaces and churches.

> The city is not ours, it belongs to our future generations and we have a responsibility and obligation to preserve it for them.

Today I am pleased to welcome you, to share with us your expertise, to help us manage our historical city better, to help us make Valletta a more sustainable capital. Yes, events such as this provide us with the opportunity to share our experiences together and to learn from one another in order to secure for our cities a bright future.

> The Valletta Local Council attaches great importance to this conference. I also hope you enjoyed your tour yesterday, walking through the streets of Valletta and through that tour I hope you experienced firsthand the challenges, our rich cultural heritage is facing. Today, experts from Malta and other European countries have met for this mid-term meeting in order to present the Strategy Paper. We are positive that this conference will come up with sustainable management strategies for our urban landscapes. These reports are important, but in the end, urban regeneration projects will make the real difference in the life of our citizens.

> Because of this, I believe we must expedite our processes and once we get to the findings and conclusions, we should apply immediately for additional projects under the European Regional Development Fund and European Social Fund. Only through the regeneration of the various areas can we guarantee the gestation of future leaders that will take over from where we left and create a better city.

During these two days, you will get a broader picture of plans that are being envisaged for the areas under study as well as for the prestigious project for Valletta's entrance that have been put forward by the renowned Italian architect Renzo Piano.

> Leading Maltese Architects and also representatives from the Malta Environment and Planning Authority will be delivering various presentations to give you a clear insight into our plans and proposals.

Before I hand over to Honorable Dr Said let me thank all those that were involved in the organization of this conference. I would also like to thank those that attended the HerO project meetings; my team, representatives for the Valletta Local Support Group and last but not least Heritage Enterprise for their expertise and continuous support in this project.

> I sincerely hope that you have very fruitful discussions. I am convinced that this conference will give us all further ideas in the development of many more sustainable historic capitals in the future. Finally, may I finally wish all our European guests a very pleasant stay in Malta.