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# Press Release

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**PRESS RELEASE BY THE MINISTRY WITHIN THE OFFICE OF THE PRIME MINISTER, BY THE MINISTRY FOR FOREIGN AND EUROPEAN AFFAIRS, AND BY THE PARLIAMENTARY SECRETARY FOR EUROPEAN FUNDS**

*Malta calls for a united Europe, essential for Europe's economic and social recovery*

The Government of Malta calls on EU member states to come together to reach an agreement on the EU's recovery from COVID-19 and show solidarity on migration, under Germany's EU Council Presidency. This was highlighted during an online discussion on Germany's presidency programme organised by MEUSAC and the Embassy of the Federal Republic of Germany in Malta to mark the start of the Presidency of the Council of the European Union (1 July to 31 December 2020). Throughout the session, other topics included the new Multiannual Financial Framework 2021-2027, the rule of law, shaping the future EU relations with Britain and the European Green Deal.

During the discussion, the Ambassador of the Federal Republic of Germany to Malta Walter Haßmann and Head of MEUSAC Mandy Falzon, were joined by the Minister within the Office of the Prime Minister Carmelo Abela, the Minister for Foreign and European Affairs Evarist Bartolo, and the Parliamentary Secretary for European Funds Stefan Zrinzo Azzopardi. The discussion was followed by several representatives of diplomatic missions in Malta and abroad, civil society representatives and government officials and members of the public.

In his intervention, Minister Carmelo Abela augured the German EU Presidency for its ambitious programme and said that he hopes that in the coming six months, the EU will manage to overcome the consequences of the pandemic in the interest of its citizens. He noted how the EU should look back and learn from the past where opting for austerity measures did not help people, families, and economies to come out from difficulties. Minister Abela also spoke on the challenges towards the EU reaching the 2030 Sustainable Development Goals. As Carmelo Abela stated, "we need more sustainability and fairness". With reference to MEUSAC's work, he referred to its important role to provide information to the Maltese public on ongoing work in the EU institutions. The discussion revolved on EU-Africa relations with Minister Abela saying that the EU should convey the message that both continents should act together as partners with policies centred around people's well-being. He recalled that Malta was the second EU member state to launch the strategy 'Malta and Africa: A strategy for partnership 2020-2025'.

Minister for Foreign and European Affairs, Evarist Bartolo explained that in this time of recovery, the European Union must show that it is truly a Union founded on solidarity between its member states. He said that cooperation shown during the repatriation efforts in the midst of the pandemic should serve as a good prelude for what the German Presidency intends to achieve. In this context, Minister Bartolo underlined migration, besides the economic recovery, as the toughest challenge

facing the Presidency, with a mandatory relocation mechanism still proving to be a major stumbling block within the Council of the European Union. Nevertheless, Evarist Bartolo stressed that relocation is not the solution, and that the EU should work closer with our African neighbours to address this common challenge at source by building resilience and offering a sustainable future for African citizens within Africa itself.

Parliamentary Secretary Stefan Zrinzo Azzopardi, said that the German Presidency's motto is very appropriate considering the situation Europe is in, whereby, "there will be no recovery without working together". He remarked that the Multi-annual Financial Framework's negotiations will be very different from previous ones, because of both the coronavirus pandemic which has put all European countries in a dire situation, and also the UK's exit from the European Union. Stefan Zrinzo Azzopardi stated that all countries have their own realities and face different challenges. In Malta's case it was evident that the pandemic brought out its vulnerabilities when tourism was halted. He noted that before these complications came into play, there were already disagreements, however, now it has become of essence for the European Union to agree on a recovery plan to assert its credibility. He said that this plan should be focused on citizens not institutions to ensure job retention and creation and further economic regeneration for all member states.

The Ambassador of the Federal Republic of Germany to Malta Walter Haßmann spoke of his country's presidency's direct focus on overcoming the pandemic by driving forward the EU Council's work on fighting the spread of the virus, supporting the European economy to recover and reinforcing social cohesion in Europe. To achieve this, as a neutral broker at the helm of the EU Council, Germany is committed to reinforce joint approved action, solidarity and common values. Driven by its motto, 'Together for Europe's Recovery', Ambassador Haßmann spoke of the German Presidency's priorities for a long-term economic and social recovery, a stronger and more innovative Europe, a fair and sustainable Europe, a Europe of security and common values and a strong Europe in the world.