

**SPEECH BY THE HON LAWRENCE GONZI, PRIME MINISTER DURING THE 5+5
DIALOGUE WORKING LUNCH, AUBERGE DE CASTILLE, VALLETTA - FRIDAY
5TH OCTOBER 2012**

Excellencies

I extend a warm welcome to you all once again and it is my honour on behalf of the Government and people of Malta to host you at the Auberge de Castille. Built by the Portuguese langue of The Knights of Saint John and subsequently availed of by the French and British, this building is a living historical monument.

As was said earlier on during the opening ceremony, we are at this very moment living history ourselves.

All countries, large and small, European and North African, are facing national, regional and global challenges. Our interdependency in the globalised world has meant that these challenges are intertwined as never before.

As we are called to face these challenges we are conscious of the limitations we face especially in these economically trying times. It is precisely for this reason that we need to develop new regional cooperation mechanisms to face these common challenges.

Regional cooperation is not an end in itself but a means to an end. It has to be pursued with a clear strategy, defined objectives and priorities and supported by financial and other instruments to advance long-term objectives.

These have to be centered on the dignity of the human person. Be it economic policies through increased employment opportunities or civil society participation or the protection of fundamental rights and freedoms, the human being must be placed at the centre of our policies, projects and vision.

It is with these sentiments in mind that I express our collective concern at what is happening in Syria. The daily reports are highlighting the alarming brutality being used against civilian protestors. A more active engagement is also needed to renew the Middle East Peace Process.

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The Arab Spring has necessitated a change in the policy outlook undertaken by the European Union and its member states. It is becoming increasingly evident that a more comprehensive approach is needed whilst taking into account the respective sensitivities of individual countries.

Basing ourselves on the notion of the centrality of the human being and the need for comprehensive regional cooperation, Malta proposes that the 5+5 Dialogue should;

- reaffirm scope and relevance of the Forum to act as an incubator of projects,**
- undertake a general review of the new areas of cooperation like education, the environment and energy, and;**
- seek synergy with the Union for the Mediterranean and the European Neighbourhood Policy with a view to bring forward regional projects.**

Political Support needs to be sustained by economic assistance and partnership.

I am confident that this second Summit of the 5+5 Dialogue provides an ideal setting for fresh thinking to be explored on an enhanced relationship between the European Union and its North African neighbours.

Malta remains committed to fulfill its vocation of promoting stability and dialogue in the Mediterranean. Inspired by common values and driven by a shared vision of durable stability in a common neighbourhood, we are all partners in this project and I am confident that our deliberations and work over the coming days will be a lasting sign of a renewed hope for Mediterranean peace, stability and prosperity.

Thank you.