

ADDRESS BY HIS EXCELLENCY DOCTOR GEORGE ABELA PRESIDENT OF MALTA ON THE OCCASION OF THE OPENING OF THE TWELFTH PARLIAMENT – SATURDAY - 6TH APRIL 2013

Mr Speaker,

Honourable members of the House of Representatives,

We have opened a new chapter in the history of this people. The time for pique, partisanship, arrogance in leadership, at all levels of administration, must become a part of the past. This will be a Government that looks towards building the future, rather than copying the past. This will be a Government which will lead with a sense of humility and will be ready to take decisions.

With the sign that it gave in the last general election the Maltese public has made it clear to all of us that it is tired of the politics of the past. It is a message to the political class and to all those who will form part of this administration and of this Parliament.

This is the beginning of the legislative work of this new Government. In all its parliamentary work, this Government will keep in mind that Malta does not belong to one part of the population or the other. It does not belong to a clique. Not even to a politician nor to a party. That time has passed.

As from today, from this Parliament, we will begin to serve our people. We will start to build on the positive and bring about a change where it is needed. This will be done carefully. As this Government already had the opportunity of doing in its first days, it will work with serenity and tranquility so that our country will keep striving ahead with no jolts while steering towards the targets which will lead the country to success.

This Government wants to ensure that everyone feels part of and contributes to the success of our country. This Government has been elected as a movement and will lead as a movement.

The historical majority won by this Government is not a mandate to override the Opposition in the decisions it takes.

This Government will not try to render the Opposition irrelevant. In the same way as Government wants to make sure that important decisions taken in this country are made with serenity, the Opposition must create an atmosphere where, while it should be firm in the role of scrutiny, it should refrain from being negative and destructive.

This Government will remain positive. Positive about the potential of the people of Malta and Gozo. Positive on the way in which families and businesses will work more than ever before to be successful. Positive on the strengthening of the economy so that the economic growth which we generate is enjoyed by everyone. Positive that in spite of the upheavals and economic crisis, the industriousness and the good sense of the people of Malta and Gozo will help us to conquer the waves. Positive on the creation of quality jobs. Furthermore, positive that we will take the path that leads us to generate energy with the use of gas for cleaner air and lower bills.

The positive attitude of this new Government comes from the fact that it feels that there is still a potential which this country can exploit. We must discover new areas which will help us strengthen our economy.

Thus while this new Government is committed to administer public finances sensibly and with appropriate priorities on our expenditure, it will ensure that measures taken spur on and strengthen the economy.

This country, this Government, this people will succeed!

The framework of this legislature will be based on clear priorities. No eye catching measures and plans which do not materialise but long-term projects that deliver a return.

We must focus on delivery.

More delivery, less excuses. More work, less words.

Budget 2013

Unlike other legislatures, the new Government found a scenario whereby the previous Government had been defeated when the Budget for 2013 was not approved.

The situation of uncertainty had been dragging for months and this Government wants to instill certainty once again so that our economy starts to surge and investors start seeing in our country the stability which it always enjoyed and be reassured that their investment is on a sound footing.

Thus the new Government will present the Budget for 2013 next Monday, the 8th of April, as the first Act to be passed by this Parliament.

The Budget for 2013 will be presented as it was proposed by the previous Government to ensure continuity for businesses, families and individuals who had made plans for this year and put their minds at rest. This was the responsible way forward to keep our country on track and not to undermine the foundations.

The only change that this new Government will implement in this budget will be to address the anomaly created with the changes in taxation whereby persons on a minimum wage, according to the proposed budget, would have to start paying income tax when previously they did not. The Opposition which until a few weeks ago was governing the country now also agrees on this change which also formed part of the electoral programme.

Energy as a Priority

The new Government has embarked in this legislature on a project to provide the country with the generation of energy which is fit for a modern European country.

This is the last country in Europe which is still completely dependent on oil. This must change. It is better for the health of the people of Malta and Gozo, it is better for businesses and investment in our country, it is better for our families' finances. Each segment which benefits from the field of energy means a more sound economy.

This Government will change the generation of energy from one which is completely dependent on oil to an energy mix featuring prominently the change from Heavy Fuel Oil to Gas.

The work on this project began during the first days of the legislature.

A detailed plan for the project of the change to the use of gas in Delimara has already been prepared and we have appointed a team of people who have drawn up the expression of interest which will be published on the eleventh of April.

Thus the process will start in five days time. We are hopeful that by the end of September we will be in a position to finalize the granting of the contract for the construction of the gas plant, with targets reached as planned.

This Government's roadmap includes the definitive closing down and the switching off of the power Station in Marsa. As an immediate step, a call for innovative projects and ideas will be launched to regenerate the site in Marsa and its surroundings with the emphasis placed on projects which will prove environmentally beneficial to the citizens of the area.

As promised, this Government continued working on the project of the interconnector. In this field, as in others, Government did not find the situation which had been described. The cost estimated by the previous Government will be exceeded by 26 million euros owing to a lack of planning.

Thus, while this Government will remain positive that with a greater effort the project will be implemented on time, we cannot refrain from remarking that a number of discrepancies were discovered and we had to start to review the estimated costs and the planned timelines.

The Government also welcomes the granting of the permit for this project to start by the Italian Ministry of Economic Development and the Ministry for the Environment.

Also in the first days, the new Government separated the functions of the energy and water policy from the regulatory functions thus ensuring that the Malta Resources Authority starts to fulfill its role as an independent regulator.

An essential part of the energy policy of this Government will be the spurring on of the field of renewable energy. Malta is ranked lowest in Europe and we have fallen back in many targets set by the previous Government in particular as regards wind energy. The targets set cannot be reached because they are completely based on the project of Wind Farms which has fallen well behind and there are serious doubts on its viability.

The new Government will remedy this failure by investing in an aggressive manner, together with the private sector in solar energy and other renewable technologies while continuing to explore how to generate wind energy.

The new Government will begin, and has already begun to address the challenges of our water resources. The first step was the importance attached to the political portfolio pertaining to energy issues. We must ensure that our country's groundwater is sustainable and therefore we are launching a national planning project involving all stakeholders leading to a national plan for water conservation.

Another field that this Government wants to address is the level of service of ARMS Ltd. The level of service from ARMS Ltd presently is not acceptable and we have therefore launched a review to start the reform of the entity. The first cases of abuses have already emerged which have been detrimental to families and businesses.

Energy bills were and continue to be a burden on families and businesses and therefore at the very least, we need to ensure a high level of customer care and efficiency and the highest levels of transparency and accountability in the management of the people's funds.

Cleaning up Politics

The new Government wants to see the highest levels in public administration.

We must re-instill trust in politics and in politicians. At certain moments it was felt that this trust had diminished and for this reason the new Government will take steps to introduce higher standards in administration to reassure families and businesses that their money is not funding corruption.

During the last legislature, the rise in the salary of the Prime Minister, Ministers and Parliamentary Secretaries and the way it was not communicated in a transparent manner led the public to have doubts in the entire political class.

This serious political mistake has now been corrected. The message must be a clear one – that the performance of politicians and of the executive class will be measured according to what the people receive in return and not on how much politicians make. Any proposal in this sense must be made in an independent way by people who enjoy the public's trust and will only be given in the next legislature if the need arises and if the planned targets are reached.

Among Government's first legislative priorities there will be enactment of laws which have long been promised for the protection of the people from abuses and corruption.

The Whistleblower Act will be one of the first priorities of this legislature. The new Government wants to ensure that whoever comes forward to report cases of abuse or corruption is protected by the law. This law has been in the pipeline for years. It is now time for this law to be implemented.

In the same manner Government will remove the law on prescription for political corruption so that no politician may rest their mind over any abuses.

One of the most important weapons in the fight against political corruption is the law on party financing. We are committed to instill in political parties the highest standards of transparency even in their financing so that the people know exactly for whom they are voting and whom they can trust. This law, in the opinion of the new Government, has dragged on too long and therefore we need to improve the proposals made so far and introduce a law on party financing which is fit for a modern European country.

Education

For the new Government, education comes first and foremost. Education is first because it is the foundation of individual, social and economic development.

It is the key to social mobility and of people's aspirations. Education comes first because we want our country to continue to enhance its skills and expertise in a world that is increasingly competitive.

The main aim of the new Government in the field of education is to have more young people continuing their studies. We must provide them with the skills they need to find work that befits them.

To achieve this, we must work to ensure that from the outset every boy and girl, whoever they are, has the opportunity to develop their capabilities. Schools must better prepare our children, together with motivated teachers who are also given the opportunity to succeed. The new Government will sustain and strengthen the positive measures such as stipends.

This Government believes that teachers are experts in the field of education and therefore they will be given the opportunity to develop their skills while consulting them on important decisions which will daily affect our children in the classroom. They have to implement the new Government's proposals. They must be protagonists in the drawing up of the education policy of our country.

The first and most important role of teachers remains that of teaching. For this reason, Government will be committed to ensure that teachers focus more on this role and reduce clerical and bureaucratic work as much as possible.

This Government will launch incentives for teachers, head teachers, principals and all of those in other executive grades, among them LSAs and kindergarten assistants who wish to continue to develop their career, among them sabbaticals in the case of study periods relevant to their career. Discussions will also begin with all concerned to find the best way to extend these benefits to teachers in church and independent schools.

During this legislature we must overcome challenges such as the level of illiteracy which is still too high and above all, overcome the challenge to improve and increase the number of young people who continue their studies after the obligatory age to acquire more education and skills which are relevant to the needs of the world of today.

Technology and computer based education are no longer a new phenomenon. They are part of everyday life. Thus the new Government wants to introduce from a young age greater knowledge of Digital Literacy Skills so that from early on we educate children to use the internet and social media in a better way, as an important source of information and also a means of communication which helps them to acquire and improve e-networking skills. In this context, we must ensure that we teach children to better protect themselves from virtual abuses.

This Government is thus committed, in a responsible way, that a tablet will be given to all children that begin the fourth year of primary school to better accustom themselves with information technology. This measure cannot be done haphazardly but with a serious plan such that no type of reform has a negative impact on classes, and that teachers will have the opportunity to receive the necessary training to teach with this tool which has become crucial in working life and will therefore be crucial from the earliest age even in education.

The new Government is conscious of the number of students who attend Junior College and also of the fact that existing facilities are inadequate and intends to regenerate and modernise the Junior College.

Investment in the building of the new MCAST campus will continue. Post-secondary colleges of performing arts and sports will be launched where students can better develop their artistic skills while studying for their Matsec exams.

This Government wants to continue investing in the Institute of Tourism Studies to expand its operation on an international level with the potential to become one of the best in the region.

The system of National Vocational Qualifications will also be strengthened in recognition of vocational skills while guaranteeing a wider access to vocational training.

The Government's policy in the field of tertiary education will be based on two main paths: firstly to ensure continued investment in the University of Malta so that it is better prepared and geared to face the challenges of the future and secondly to promote and provide more incentives for a wider choice and new opportunities at the level of tertiary education in Malta.

Because we believe that stipends are a direct investment in the capacity of our young people we are guaranteeing that stipends are kept and strengthened. Therefore stipends will start increasing pro rata with the cost of living. We will increase supplementary assistance together with the stipend for students from lower income families. We will give the possibility to those who stop working or who lose their work to return to post-secondary and tertiary education by providing them with the stipend and providing them with full unemployment benefit. The stipend will also be paid to students attending Junior College, Higher Secondary and MCAST who wish to repeat a year in order to enter University.

The new Government will guarantee training to every young person over the age of 16 who is not studying or working. The main aim of this guarantee is to increase the number of students who continue studying after obligatory age and to improve their skills by means of relevant training. In parallel, we will launch a wide ranging project to channel the skills of Maltese youths to build a Skills Bank.

Employment

The new Government is focused on the creation of more jobs and suitable work, and views job creation not only from a quantitative perspective which is important, but also from the perspective of quality work which we need to generate as a country to achieve a level befitting a European country.

This Government wants to increase the number of people in employment by means of measures and incentives earmarked for this purpose with assistance to specific groups and with direct incentives to employers.

This can be done by:

- Specifically incentivising women to enter the world of work and to continue participating actively for a longer period of time.

- Improving the skills of those who are already working to acquire more skills to increase their productivity and widen their horizons.
- Attracting those who have depended on social services and who have the potential to work so that they will effectively enter the field of employment and become productive.
- Above all, creating the necessary climate wherein all those who are in employment not only feel they are earning their living, but are also contributors and participants in economic success and growing wealth.

The new Government confirms its policy in favour of active labour market policies expressed in the ratification of the programme Jobs + together with the social partners. For this aim, the new Government will set up an Active Labour Market Policy Counselling and Action Committee proposed and agreed to upgrade work policies based on this set of principles together with all the social partners.

To help more parents to continue working, the new Government will provide the opportunity of childcare centres to Maltese and Gozitan families where they can send their children free of charge. This is expected to continue attracting more parents, mostly women to enter the field of employment or to continue working. This project, which is expected to create hundreds of related jobs, will be implemented among others in conjunction with the private sector by means of a public private partnership. For those who still wish to send their children to private childcare centres, there will increased benefits in deductions from their income tax according to the fees paid for the childcare centres. In the spirit of this, the new Government will continue to broaden and strengthen these services by means of Club 3-16 for those families whose children are over the age of three (3).

To increase and improve women's participation at work, a tax credit will be given to every woman who enters the field of employment and is over the age of thirty five (35) and has never worked before.

This Government is committed to strengthen schemes such as flexi-time, job sharing, compressed week, reduced hours and teleworking.

The new Government is aware that many workers, students and pensioners feel the need to work part-time to improve their financial income and will reduce tax on part-time employment.

Persons working full-time, students or pensioners who also have a business on a part-time basis and employ not more than two (2) persons will benefit from a lower tax rate. This will provide an incentive to increase the number of small businesses while providing incentives to micro industries to employ more people and pay the part-time tax rate, which is so far not available.

The new Government will be actively combatting precarious work, which not only constitutes an abuse towards workers but is also harmful to the economy and to employers themselves. Precarious work is not fitting for workers. Precarious work denies workers their dignity, a proper wage for their skills and sacrifices and erodes the rights and conditions of work by means of practices which potentially evade the law.

Therefore, the new Government will be actively discouraging and combatting precarious work of every type and form by taking a number of measures among them:

Disqualifying from participating in offers for governmental work those companies which do not observe the conditions and rights stipulated in the law or which systematically use practices related to precarious work.

Giving more resources to the Employment and Industrial Relations Department to be in a better position to investigate and take prompt action wherever needed.

Health

This Government believes in an excellent health service which is free of charge as a right to all.

The first decision taken by this Government in this field was by means of the setting up of an office at Mater Dei Hospital, conveying the message that this Government will be close to the people and close to the problem. This administration believes that to address a challenge, it needs to be understood and for this to happen, one must also understand those who are experiencing the problem.

In spite of the positive investment by previous Governments, the personal experience of patients shows that a lot still needs to be done for Mater Dei to be able to face as it should the needs and challenges in the health field. We will therefore ensure that we improve the administration of the hospital so that timely care is given to everyone who needs it.

The new Government will improve the way appointments are made in hospital to avoid long waiting lists and over-crowding. The new Government will introduce a Charter for the rights of patients specifying the maximum waiting time for every operation. If a patient is left waiting for more than the specified time, they will have the right to be treated privately with the Government paying the bill.

The improvement of primary care will be of prime importance for the health service to be closer to communities. The new Government will ensure the best health centres for patients, which are not only modern centres and more accessible but offering a wider range of services.

Gozo General Hospital – which in this legislature will be under the responsibility of the Minister of Health – will undergo modernisation to have the best possible hospital for Gozitans. A plan will be implemented to extend the services provided in Gozo, amongst other things there will be an investment to provide chemotherapy for the treatment of cancer for Gozitan patients in Gozo.

The new Government will give priority to patients at greater risk of various types of cancer to avoid waiting lists. These patients require immediate diagnosis. The oncology hospital will be finished and more screening programmes will be extended to other groups of women.

The number of medicines which are out of stock must decrease drastically while the list of pills given by Government must increase. The Pharmacy of Your Choice Scheme needs to improve with less bureaucracy and greater focus on the needs of the patients.

The improvement in health services can only be achieved by means of continuous investment in human resources in this field. We salute doctors, nurses, paramedics and other workers in the field of health and we thank them for their unconditional dedication. This Government will be committed to working closely with them to provide the best possible health service.

Economic Targets

An important target of the new Government is to attain economic growth that can be enjoyed by everyone. Social mobility must be fostered so that those who are behind are given the opportunity to move up, where the middle class is no longer the class of sacrifices but once again becomes a class of aspiration.

The new Government will be a sensible Government which stimulates the economy, encourages business, promotes the creation of jobs and helps to create a climate that is attractive for those who want to invest. Unnecessary bureaucracy will be cut and for this purpose a Commissioner responsible for the simplification of administration will be appointed. By continually monitoring the practices of Government entities and introducing more efficient methods, this Commissioner will help in reducing bureaucratic procedures by twenty-five per cent.

The new Government acknowledges its role as a regulator which gives a clear economic direction. It will promote a policy of giving more space to the private sector, with the main component being the self-employed.

Business in Gozo will be incentivised more strongly because this Government is conscious of the challenges which the Gozitans have to face. In this way the Government will build on the courage and good sense of the Gozitan people to create employment for Gozitans in Gozo itself.

This Government will give priority to stability and fiscal consolidation, more so through better control of the deficit in public finances with the aim of keeping this at a sustainable level and in accordance with European Union and the Euro zone criteria. The new Government is committed to better controlling the national debt by not permitting it to grow at an alarming rate as it grew during recent years.

A sensible country deserves a sensible Government. The public's finances will be managed responsibly, guided by the values of accountability, transparency and social justice. This Government will reduce waste and will produce more work with less expense.

A Fair Society

For this Government, social justice remains one of the values enshrined in its beliefs and motivations. Whatever is done during this legislature will be motivated by this value. For there is a very important aim – that of building a society based on solidarity.

During these five years, one of the greatest social measures to be ever implemented will be carried out. This Government will guarantee the parents of disabled persons that, in their absence, the state will provide, they will find a society that will take care of their children if they can no longer lead an independent life. The new Government will give an assurance that

every person with a disability will be found residence in the community in a small sized home to lead a comfortable and dignified life.

This is the politicians' job. This is where the public funds are to be spent.

Within the framework of this project, the Government will exempt from tax the inheritance left as trusts to disabled persons so that the financial resources and assets left by parents and others to disabled persons will be used in the best possible way and in the best interest of their children.

This is the social heritage which this Government intends to leave for posterity, so that our children are better off than we are.

Home Affairs, Security and Justice

In its first days this Government appointed not only a Law Commissioner but also the Commission to carry out holistic reform in the field of justice. This reform is relevant and urgent.

It is to be carried out in a determined way to win back the people's trust in this cornerstone of democracy. Cases of corruption by members of the judiciary must come to an end. Not only for the public in general who deserve a blind but not dumb and deaf justice, but also for the members of the judiciary who carried out their duties with loyalty and rectitude, this reform is needed urgently.

The Commission for an holistic reform of justice is constituted by the best legal minds in the country. The new Government is committed not to waste time in this reform. An analysis of the administration of justice system and the legal system has to be completed by the end of June so that those involved will be consulted and the salient points may be put into effect by the end of the year.

Everything will be centred on the sole purpose of introducing more checks and balances from the very appointment of the judiciary to its performance. This Government will introduce a citizens' charter for the Courts where the citizens's rights in the judicial system are explained. A Civil Administrative Court will be set up in order to strengthen further the citizens' rights in administrative cases against the Government and its agencies. A Judge will be appointed to serve in the Gozo Court, so that the majority of appeal cases can be held in Gozo. Information technology will help to introduce a better scheduling system and certainty in Court sittings, thus avoiding situations where people summoned to Court have their cases suddenly deferred.

During this legislature the Police Corps will undergo a process of modernisation. This Government wants a Corps equipped and motivated for the present day and future challenges. There should be more police on patrols to protect our citizens in their locality. Only in this way can the citizen feel secure.

The right to be union members will be introduced for the forces of Law and order. The new Government wants institutions to function for the citizen and systems ensuring the highest level of security which are implemented by forces who know that their efforts are being appreciated.

Civil Liberties

During its first days, the new Government announced the amendments it will present to the Marriage Act so that persons who have changed their gender will not be hindered by the Director of the Public Registry to be provided with a marriage certificate. These amendments will be discussed in Parliament in the second week after its official opening.

It was after this news was announced that a person, a Maltese citizen like us, dropped the case filed against this country to see that her wish and right to marry are respected. Her first words were “Now Malta has acknowledged me as her daughter.” This is the type of society which this new Government wants. A society whose doors are open to all. A society which celebrates diversity, which acknowledges the realities around us and which understands the needs for equality and respect for minorities.

This Government recognizes the woman’s role in our society, conscious that the majority of graduates is consistently female. We must ensure that in no way will women be discriminated against in factors such as salaries, conditions and opportunities for advancement in the workplace. This Government will give a greater role to women in positions of decision making. It will ensure that more members serving on boards, commissions and other appointments by Government are women.

The time has come to strengthen our civil liberties. This is why a politician has been appointed to be responsible for civil liberties. This is why a law on cohabitation will be introduced to protect the rights of couples living together and their children. This is why the right of civil union will be introduced for same-sex couples. This is why a law regulating the identification of trans-gender persons will be introduced.

For this Government, it does not matter who you are. It will not interfere in the conscious and free choices of the individual. You are worthy of reaching your aspirations as you are.

MEPA Reform

This Government believes that Malta should be at the very front of environmental standards. Not because it is mandatory by European directives but because that is what our children deserve. A better environment will lead us to better health, for a better quality of life.

This Government is determined to make up for lost time. There are various difficult decisions to be taken, amongst which is the radical reform of MEPA. The separation of planning from the environment section will be announced by the end of next year.

Planning will be under the Planning and Sustainable Development Authority. This function must be more professionalised and must be focused on reducing bureaucracy and assuring more accountability of professionals in the sector – architects, planners and engineers.

On the other hand the environment will be given priority by the Authority for the Environment and Resources to be established ad hoc and will work in a proactive and strategic manner on the protection and improvement of the environment. It will also assume the important role of environmental regulator which at present our country still lacks.

This measure, which is supported by the principal stakeholders, will strengthen the autonomy of the two important sectors. Our country must reach a better balance between environmental protection and sustainable development.

Malta and Countries Outside the EU

This Government's commitment is that foreign policy will be focused not only on Europe but will give due importance to our country's relations with the rest of the world. We must strive for peace, particularly in nearby regions such as the Mediterranean and Middle East.

This Government believes that we can have closer and more productive relations with the main partners besides the European Union. Among them are China, the United States, Libya, Australia, Russia, Turkey, countries in the Gulf and in the Middle East, India and Brazil.

Malta can make its presence better felt in Asia and Latin America which have a great potential, both at present as well as in the future. We can make better use of the structure provided by the Commonwealth to promote Malta as an ideal partner in Europe and in the Mediterranean for countries in other continents.

The Future

A look at the future. This Government wants our country to progress further.

We want to modernise the State's structures, to give them their due strength and be really representative of society in general. The political parties are no longer the centre of society, but a part of it. Thus the new Government will see to the reduction of party rule in various state institutions so that civil society is truly represented.

In this way the Constitutional Convention will be central to this legislature to provide our country with a new constitution, a stronger democratic structure, including the rules and the way Parliament functions. This will lead us to structures representative of the people and the diversity of opinions that modern day society presents.

Not simply being members of the European Union, not only being quite good, not only being amongst the best, but to be the best in Europe. The Maltese and Gozitans have all the potential of fulfilling this ambition.

The Government will act as a catalyst in all this and therefore, for the first time, a Minister was appointed specifically responsible for European Affairs which will see to Malta's voice being heard more.

Funds that our country receives from the European Union must be used in a more efficient manner.

The new Government immediately began with the preparations for Malta's first presidency of the European Union in 2017. Also in this domain, a politician was appointed to be henceforth responsible in preparing for the organisational challenge so that our country will be ready in the best way possible for the event.

This will be a moment of national unity. A moment offering a positive experience for everyone. A moment in which Malta will show to all, as it did on other occasions, that despite its small size, it can still be at the forefront.

This aspiration will be shown also during 2018 when Valletta will be the European Capital of Culture. It will serve as a means to show the contemporary vision of our country. An exceptional opportunity to celebrate Maltese arts and culture in the broad background of European diversity. We look forward to this event which will give a strong stimulus to the regeneration of Valletta towards a more living, vibrant city.

Conclusion

Since Malta's Independence, the Maltese and Gozitan people have never given a clearer sign to any political party as they did on the ninth of March. The public chose to be a protagonist, not a spectator. It showed how prepared it was to unite to take the right decisions for the country.

It is now the Government's turn to answer the call of the people. After the historic mandate given on the ninth of March, the responsibility of this Government is greater still than that given to previous Governments. But the Government, with energy and determination, is ready to bear this heavy burden as it has shown from the very first moments.

This Government is committed to write another new page in the political history of our country.

It is not its intention to govern in the traditional political manner but in a new style of politics. This Government will offer the hand of friendship to everyone. It will not complain. It will not say that all that was promised cannot be done because it encountered problems. In these five years the Government will carry out sensibly what was prudently promised during the last five years.

This Government will remain firmly with its feet on the ground as if it had won with just one vote. It will continue to listen to the people. The Government will remain with the people, will care for the people, live for the people, monitor the pulse of the people.

It will use all its strength and energy for the people. Because what we wish for our children, we wish for our country. For all the families of our country. Without any distinction. Without looking at faces and colours.

A fair society for everyone where what counts is what you know and not whom you know. A fair society where your children, and my children, can dream and make their life's ambitions come true. A fair society which believes in different ideas and which lives in harmony without discord. A fair society where the people are united in the belief that the best times for our country are still to come.

The Government is convinced that time – that Malta is for All – is now with us.