Press Release

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Malta's Economic Strength Must Continue to Improve Families' Quality of Life

Prime Minister Robert Abela answers questions from three journalists

In an interview with three journalists from independent media outlets Lovin Malta, WhosWho.mt and Malta Daily, Prime Minister and Partit Laburista Leader Robert Abela explained that the strength of Malta's economy must continue to put more money in families' pockets, enabling them to enjoy an ever-improving quality of life.

The Prime Minister made these remarks in response to questions on housing affordability, Budget measures and the Government's strategic direction regarding third-country nationals (TCNs), particularly foreign workers who have not yet acquired long-term resident status.

On housing affordability, Dr Abela acknowledged that property values have increased but pointed out that the figures also show that Malta has a high homeownership rate. Some 85% of Maltese and Gozitan residents own their homes, compared with the European average of 68%. He noted that there are 122,000 homeowners in Malta, of whom 93,000 have no outstanding loans on their property.

Regarding foreign workers, Prime Minister Robert Abela stressed that the Government's message was clearly set out in the Budget and is based on the principle that third-country nationals should contribute towards the benefits they receive from Malta. These include healthcare and education, as well as the stability provided by Government measures to keep energy and fuel prices under control.

He said there were legitimate considerations around strengthening Identità's efficiency in processing long-term residence applications once workers have completed five years of residence in Malta. Dr Abela also emphasised that the dignity of work and the respect it commands must be upheld for everyone, regardless of their country of origin. By contrast, he noted, the Opposition repeatedly reverses its positions to suit its populist agenda.

On artificial intelligence, Prime Minister Robert Abela described it as an important area for investment but stressed that it must be developed within the right framework and must never come at the expense of people. He also highlighted the Government's AI for Everyone initiative, which provides training in the use of artificial intelligence. "Through AI for Everyone, an average of 1,000 people are completing the course every week," the Partit Laburista leader said.

Turning to planning, the Prime Minister said that those who had sought to spread the narrative that the Government would ride roughshod over the planning sector after the election had now received their answer: that was simply not the case. Dr Abela said he had listened to the public's concerns and that the Government was now delivering on the first reform it had promised: introducing an immediate amendment to ensure that development works covered by a permit cannot begin until any appeal against that permit has been decided.

On the regularisation of illegal developments through sanctions, Dr Abela said he would never legitimise illegality but insisted that the issue must be considered within its proper and realistic context. He clarified that industrial developments would not fall within the proposed sanctions framework. Referring to DC27, which addresses how DC15 can be adapted and updated, he said the process must ultimately lead to a review of local plans. DC27 is intended to address existing gaps and ambiguities, strengthen design standards that respect the character and context of individual localities, provide better protection for Malta's built heritage and improve residential quality.

On transport, Prime Minister Robert Abela reiterated that the Government has a holistic strategy through its Malta in Motion plan. He said the Government was responsibly undertaking the necessary technical studies, including assessments of the feasibility of mass public transport, rather than making irresponsible promises, as others had done, by claiming that such a massive project could begin within just three months. Dr Abela also referred to maritime transport and the way forward for awarding a new concession for land public transport once the current one ends.

The Prime Minister also addressed the arts sector, referring to comments that had been perceived as insensitive. However, he described Minister Malcolm Paul Agius Galea as a genuine person who understood the responsibility he now carried: to work hard to rebuild the trust that had been shaken and to continue championing the aspirations of artists.

Asked about reform of the jury system, Dr Abela stressed that the timing of any changes must also be taken into account, particularly in circumstances where certain cases are still sub judice. He argued that the need for reform cannot be assessed solely on the basis of verdicts, adding that he hoped the public would never lose confidence in the ability of ordinary citizens to serve as jurors. After all, members of the public had already demonstrated their capacity to serve as jurors in trials.

Concluding the interview, Prime Minister Robert Abela emphasised that, despite the international challenges facing the country, Malta continues to deliver tangible benefits to its people. These include a substantial bonus, a tax cut that doubles for working parents, and the continuation of Government subsidies. He said he remained focused on delivering further results and ensuring that the Government fulfilled its ambitious electoral manifesto in its entirety, in the interests of Maltese and Gozitan families.