

28<sup>th</sup> February 2017

## **Media Release**

### **MEA Annual General Meeting – President’s Address**

Today the MEA held its 52<sup>nd</sup> Annual General Meeting when the performance of the Association was reviewed by the outgoing President, Mr Arthur Muscat, and the Director General, Mr Joseph Farrugia.

Reflecting its relevancy to Employers, the Association reported a further increase in its membership base. It is evident that the MEA is consolidating its position as the foremost Union of Maltese Employers.

The commitment of the Association to Social Dialogue, conducted through the Malta Council for Economic and Social Development, was confirmed. In addition, the MEA was not holding back from direct meetings with Government and Unions in its effort to confront and resolve problems that in industrial relations periodically present themselves.

The President singled out a current impasse regarding many features, unacceptable to Employers, in Government’s proposed “Equality Act 2015” and the “Human Rights and Equality Commission Act 2015”. It was declared that the MEA will, if required, be pushing its opposition, to particular passages in these Bills, all the way to the Law Courts.

A current divergence with Government on the proposed arbitrary and ill-advised raising of the minimum wage, was the subject of intense discussions and negotiations. Employers were proposing to Government and Unions, different and more effective interventions to really alleviate poverty.

The MEA commended the Ministry for Social Dialogue, for adopting in a law, many of the recommendations it made to tackle the disruptive problem of unregulated Union Recognition processes. Regulations are now in place that will allow Employers and Unions to peacefully resolve recognition issues. The Association expressed hope that pending MEA recommendations on a reform of the Industrial Tribunal get due consideration.

The President further commented on particular local issues, as these are affecting the work environment in which Employers have to operate. As to a large extent the MEA shares a common membership base with the Chamber of Commerce & Enterprise it was felt correct, and called for, to endorse the preoccupation expressed by the President of the Chamber on the critical issue of good governance. A loss of 10 places in an international corruption index is not an indicator of good governance. A strongly perceived regression in administrative transparency does not encourage local and foreign investment and the same applies to regulatory transparency which is such an important requisite for the health of the high employment Financial Sector. Irrespective of investment benefits, unorthodox and outside the norm sale of public property, does not contribute to business confidence. The integrity of Institutions and established procedures need to be nurtured and sustained. Furthermore it is not commendable for Malta, to introduce within the EU legal environment, a Media and Defamation Bill that derives its inspiration from legislation in countries which have extremely dubious free information credentials.