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INTERNATIONAL SEMINAR: ICT-ENABLED SUSTAINABILITY IN 'SMART' CITIES

The Hon. Austin Gatt, Minister for the Infrastructure, Transport and Communications, this morning delivered a speech at the Opening of an International Seminar on “ICT-enabled sustainability in ‘smart’ cities”, held in St Julian’s.

Points from Minister Gatt’s Speech delivered at the opening of the Conference:

- In 2001, Smart Island policy was launched. At that time this Ministry was seen as ambitious.
- We knew that the way forward was technology, making it people centric. Last year we were proven right as the Malta was declared as first in Europe as regards E-Government services and classified 5th in the world by The Economist with regards to IT investments.
- When trying to introduce new technologies you have to face cultural challenges and changes. It is the capability to drive smart cities and not just building them.
- We now are at an infrastructural challenge with introducing the Fibre to the Home project.
- My Ministry is working hard on reinventing the public transport with the objective of achieving a clean, efficient and sustainable system smart enough to reduce both congestion and pollution. We’re not alone though, ICT has enabled us to go into the finite detail of its management. The new system will enable pinpoint accuracy of bus locations and time-to-destination.
- Some months ago we started implementing smart meters and instrumentation to make the power grids in their cities more stable, efficient and ready to integrate renewable energy sources and electric vehicles. We were dubbed as the first country to embrace smart meters across the board, exceeding even the European Commission’s expectations.

- As technologists we need to embrace programmes geared at innovation. Innovation drives competitiveness and if we wish Malta to become an a smart city of a future - whilst creating further *sustainable* economic growth - then technology is the key for our enterprise.
- CIP gives us the opportunity to re-write our boundaries and establish new pan-European relationships. With EU programmes such as this one, our SMEs can reach out for support through a series of initiatives aimed at providing financial aid to innovators, innovation support services for SMEs, developing and testing new forms of business support.
- And through the correct ICT policy we will be able to build our smarter cities as it will encourage a better take-up and use of ICT and help to develop the information society which in turn will nurture the benefits of this positive environment we have created.
- We need to re-think our dynamics to fit into this opportunity and to help us, help me build a smarter country - though with an overall budget of €3621 million for the CIP.

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