



**Malta-EU Steering & Action Committee**

**Public Dialogue – Spanish Presidency  
Tuesday 26 January 2010  
Welcome address – Dr Vanni Xuereb, Head MEUSAC**

Deputy Prime Minister Hon. Dr. Borg, Excellencies Ambassadors Vicandi, Delahaut, and Merényi, Parliamentary Secretary Hon. Dr. Said, Your Excellency President Emeritus, Hon. Members of Parliament, Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is now customary that at the start of every new presidency of the Council of the European Union, the Malta-EU Steering & Action Committee (MEUSAC) collaborates with the Embassy of the Member State assuming the 6 month rotating presidency of the Council to organise a Public Dialogue on the Programme and Priorities of the new Presidency, also giving the Maltese Government the opportunity to outline Malta's priorities as a Member State actively participating in the proceedings of the Council, and stakeholders and the general public the possibility to contribute to the discussion.

Today's Public Dialogue is, however, a different one. Different in the sense that this is the first presidency to occur following the coming into force of the Treaty of Lisbon last December, and, hence, the changes to the basic EU treaties that Lisbon brought about. Of particular significance to us today is that whereas prior to the 1<sup>st</sup> December 2009, the Member State assuming the presidency, would chair the European Council and all Council configurations, the situation is now somewhat altered. The European Council has a permanent president, Herman Van Rompuy, whose term of office will span over the next two and a half years; the Council of Ministers of Foreign Affairs is now chaired by the High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, Catherine Ashton, who will also be the Vice President of the European Commission. The presiding Member State will chair all other configurations of the Council of Ministers. Moreover, this is being done in tandem with two other Member States - the so-called trio that will ensure greater continuity from one presidency to another. Spain, Belgium and Hungary have, in fact, worked out an 18 month programme covering the period January 2010 to June 2011.

The Programme is presented in two parts. The first part outlines the strategic framework for the programme, setting it in a wider context, and specifically within the perspective of more long-term objectives running into the subsequent three Presidencies (Polish, Danish and Cypriot). The second part is the operational programme setting out the issues which are expected to be covered during the 18 month period.

I am therefore, deeply honoured and grateful to have with us this morning the Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs, the Hon. Dr. Tonio Borg, the Ambassador of the Kingdom of Spain, Her Excellency María Isabel Vicandi, the Ambassador of the Kingdom of Belgium, His Excellency Jean-François Delahaut, and the Ambassador of the Republic of Hungary, His Excellency Miklós Merényi. Ambassador Merényi has come purposely from Rome, where he is resident, for this occasion.

A particular word of thanks goes to Ambassador Vicandi and her collaborators at the Embassy of Spain, the co-organiser of this Public Dialogue. It is, therefore, my great pleasure to invite Her Excellency Ambassador María Isabel Vicandi to deliver the first speech this morning. She will be followed by the Deputy Prime Minister and by the Ambassadors of Belgium and Hungary respectively, following which, the discussion will be open to the floor.