

**Closing speech by Her Excellency Dolores Cristina,
Acting President, on the occasion of the Malta
Architecture and Spatial Planning Awards 2020**

15 February 2020

Honourable Minister for the Environment, Climate
Change & Planning Aaron Farrugia,
Distinguished Guests,

It is my pleasure to be with you here tonight for this
memorable occasion. His Excellency, The President of
Malta is presently indisposed. He sends his best
regards and his compliments to the organisers and
participants of this evening's event.

On my behalf, allow me to join him in by congratulating
contenders and awardees alike of all the 11 categories
with a significant number of nominees. You represent

mastery and excellence in your respective fields. A group of individuals whose various expertise shape the environment we live in.

In fact, as architects and spatial planners you embrace all forms of transformative urban and rural activities. Through your disciplines you are provided with foresight to understand current challenges and to anticipate future challenges, as well as to predict future demands that an ever increasingly complex and fast paced society would expect.

Through your professions, you have direct control over new development, but you also carry the responsibility to renew existing communities and to protect the

continuously changing physical environment. Your duty is an onerous one.... to maintain a very delicate balance in order to ensure respect for the rights of all individuals by working for the common good.

In order to do this in the safest and most efficient manner you are assisted by a very detailed legal framework which sets out clear parameters that you can work within. This complements the rigorous training and studies that you went through earlier on in your careers and I, therefore, encourage all in the field to commit to continuous professional development to ensure that skills and competences remain *au courant* with the latest advances not only in materials, but also with new philosophies in the field.

Irrelevant of the context within which you operate, the ultimate goal of architects and spatial planners alike is to ensure the sustainable development of the community and of the natural environment that supports it. The best way to achieve this is by combining efforts from various fields from the world of science and technology and of creative conceptual thinking that produce practical solutions to bring together society and the natural environment in a more harmonious manner. It would also allow the search, development and advancement of new opportunities for the promotion of ideas leading to sustainable projects.

I would like to draw your attention to the fact that, as a country and a nation we, have committed ourselves to the UNs Agenda 2030 that sets down 17 Sustainable Development Goals. Out of these 17, 6 deal directly with the natural environment while Sustainable Development Goal 11 is specifically centred around making cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable. I urge all in this regard, legislators, regulators, professionals and builders alike, to keep these goals foremost in mind whenever you are planning and developing our environment.

I would like to commend the Planning Authority for taking this initiative in its fourth year. It truly fosters a culture of excellence as it gives tangible appreciation to

the outstanding contribution of many valid architects and spatial planners in the fields of design, rehabilitation, conservation planning and so much more.

Without high-quality planning professionals, it would be impossible to meet societal, cultural, economic and environmental challenges that every country, and in particular ours, faces. Keep in mind that you are more than architects and spatial planners. Considering the direct correlation between the environment and mental and physical health you are also our doctors, our teachers, our artists, our policy makers and you should also be our activists, all working for our wellbeing.

Once again, I congratulate you all for your professionalism and commitment and encourage you to continue developing pioneering concepts to enhance the quality of life of all citizens whilst safeguarding the ability of future generations to meet their needs.