

# Malta welcomes the world

By **PHYLLIS MUSCAT**

HEAD OF THE CHOGM 2015 TASKFORCE



**PHYLLIS MUSCAT** is an entrepreneur and businesswoman, chosen by the Prime Minister of Malta to head the CHOGM 2015 Taskforce. She is renowned in Malta as a leading entrepreneur within the health and beauty industry. She also serves as Chairperson for the Coordinating Board for Cultural Projects, which aims to establish the first International Contemporary Art Space in Malta. She was the first woman to be appointed Chairperson of a Maltese Media Group and has also served on the executive committee of the Maltese-American Chamber of Commerce, the Malta Association of Women in Business and the Action for Breast Cancer Foundation.

Fort St Angelo will host the retreat

Malta is ready once again to welcome the Commonwealth of Nations. It is the second Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting (CHOGM) that we are hosting in a decade and it is an honour to be doing so again. Indeed, Malta is establishing itself as a centre of international diplomacy. Already this month we have held the Valletta Summit, bringing the European Union and Africa together to discuss migration.

We have spent two years preparing for this CHOGM and we look forward to welcoming over 4,000 delegates as well as around 800 journalists from the Commonwealth and beyond.

The theme for this CHOGM is 'The Commonwealth – Adding Global Value'. It has been chosen to illustrate how the Commonwealth makes a real difference to the lives of people around the world, and to give impetus to the 53 Heads of Government gathering in Malta to seek to give a sense of purpose to the Commonwealth at this sensitive juncture.

One way they are doing this is by addressing the issue of climate change. The objective is to produce a message of support and commitment from the Commonwealth when global talks get underway in Paris next month. The Commonwealth leaders will be joined by HRH Prince Charles, The Prince of Wales, the French President, François Hollande, and the United Nations Secretary General, Ban Ki-moon.

There are other relevant issues on the agenda, such as the sustainability of small states. Migration, a phenomenon that is a priority for all countries will also be discussed. Overall, there is a general desire for this CHOGM to be less talk and more action.

CHOGM is about the citizens of the Commonwealth and their everyday concerns as much as it is about diplomacy. This CHOGM will also deliver added value through a new forum. Besides the Business Forum, the People's Forum and the Youth Forum, Malta will be hosting the inaugural Women's Forum, with the theme of Women Ahead: Be All You Can Be. It will be a space dedicated to the celebration of the advancement of women and should inspire all women to reach their full potential. When Malta first suggested a Women's Forum, we were pleased that it was received with great enthusiasm by the Commonwealth Secretariat. We are delighted that it will become a permanent fixture of future CHOGMs.

This CHOGM will showcase Malta's most stunning locations. The main venue is situated at Golden Bay. It is an area of natural beauty characterised by a uniquely Mediterranean landscape; sharp cliffs dominated by garrigue and inhabited by a diverse range of fauna. The retreat will be at the newly restored Fort St Angelo, against the backdrop of the magnificent Grand Harbour. Dating back to the 16th century, the Fort boasts centuries of history and has been the site of momentous events that changed the course of Malta's history.

The participation of four members of the British Royal Family adds to the excitement in Malta. Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II is being accompanied by His Royal Highness The Duke of Edinburgh, His Royal Highness The Prince of Wales and Her Royal Highness The Duchess of Cornwall.

His Royal Highness The Prince of Wales, will be addressing the Commonwealth Business Forum, and he will also join the CHOGM leaders for their special session on climate action.

Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II, Head of the Commonwealth, will of course, be central to all ceremonies. She will preside over the spectacular opening ceremony in the Mediterranean Conference Centre in Valletta and will host the traditional CHOGM banquet where especially engraved goblets, one for each country, are raised for the Commonwealth toasts.

The CHOGM Malta Taskforce team, in collaboration with the Ministry for Foreign Affairs and our High Commission in London, have worked incredibly hard to ensure this event goes like clockwork. Lastly, CHOGM would not be possible without the support of the army of volunteers who recognise the importance of the summit and want to be part of history as Malta welcomes the world. **E**

