

Toward maritime excellence

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JOSÉ HERRERA

was born in 1961 and graduated from the University of Malta as Notary Public in 1985 and then as Lawyer in 1986. For 27 years, Herrera practiced as a lawyer, owning a legal office, specialising in criminal law. He has served as a Member of Parliament for 19 years and in 2013 was appointed Parliamentary Secretary for Culture and Local Government following the Labour Party's election victory. Now as Parliamentary Secretary for Competitiveness and Economic Growth he is responsible for the Maritime Policy and Promotion, the Promotional of Financial Services, Information and Communication Strategy and Digital Economy.

Since the start of its term, in 2013, this government has been committed to developing Malta's maritime potential. Marine and Maritime activities have long provided great economic value to our societal well-being. In a recent study it was determined that 15.4 per cent of Malta's economy is dependent on the marine environment. This compares favourably to the 3-5 per cent of the EU's GDP. This is not surprising, considering that Malta is a small island in the middle of the Mediterranean.

In 2007 the European Union launched the Integrated Maritime Policy for Europe. All member states were encouraged to adopt National Maritime Policies based on improved governance, increased cooperation at national and sea-basin level, ensuring more secure and cleaner seas. Furthermore, in 2011, the Integrated Maritime Policy Financial Regulations came into force, constituting the first operational programme and in 2012, the Commission launched a communication on Blue Growth. This communication identified five areas in which additional effort at EU level could stimulate long-term growth and increase jobs.

This year Malta launched its integrated Maritime Policy; a policy aimed at sustainable economic growth.

The Malta Integrated Maritime Policy identified four economic maritime pillars:

Firstly, Maritime Logistics, where we intend to foster more added value within our ports, as well as promote e-Maritime and Green Shipping opportunities.

Secondly, Maritime Services, where our focus is on various fronts, including improved maritime commerce, further development of nautical tourism and marina development, and the ship repair industry.

Thirdly, Fisheries and Aquaculture, in order to foster sustainable fisheries, see a reduction in illegal, unregulated fisheries, and improve the safety standards and efficiency of our fishing fleets. The latter is also a major contributor in aquaculture development, where Malta has been active for decades, and it should now prepare for the next stage of development with studies in advanced aquaculture technologies for improved environmental conditions. The sector also has new frontier opportunities in areas of biotechnology and blue pharma.

And lastly Energy – where renewables such as wind and solar energy need to be researched as well as oil

and gas exploration opportunities. We also intend to strengthen our commitment to clean energy shipping.

In order for these economic pillars to be successful, they need to be well integrated and relate to other national policies. Opportunities for sustainable development need to be considered in a holistic manner, and research and innovation is key to achieving results and securing economic growth. For example, data and information sharing is of particular importance. The development of Virtual Knowledge Centres would facilitate cooperation and coordination of investment and innovation.

Education is another important factor – human capital development is our main source of wealth. The development of a skilled and flexible workforce is vital for the survival and development of the maritime sector.

Security and Surveillance are also indispensable for safe investment. Our European neighbours know too well the conditions we are facing and the European Commission is striving to create the necessary environment for such efforts to be a success.

Finally, and most importantly, Governance is key to successful policy. The marine and maritime field is a vast and dynamic sector. Ocean governance is an important aspect that is being developed nationally within the European vision of good governance. It is worth noting that most of the Mediterranean Sea remains international waters. I believe this leaves room for development and opportunities, but this can only be secured through cooperation, which is why forums such as CHOGM are so important.

Policies are frameworks for development, and in this direction Malta is in the process of setting up a Maritime Agency – Malta Marittima. We have launched a private public partnership because we believe that participation by industry will yield the desired results. We have identified a cluster-based management approach that will bring industry, academia and government together to collaborate and develop policies and standards. We consider this model to be an essential part of the integrated Maritime Policy, and a vehicle for cross-border cooperation.

Our vision is for Malta to be a centre for Maritime Excellence, with a programme of Maritime Initiatives that are balanced and add value. We want to do this through cooperation with other states who share our common goals and values.