

Hon. Dr. Tonio Borg, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs of Malta

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The promotion of democracy and fostering good governance are interlinked concepts. The path to **democratization** can be a long and difficult process, particularly in war-torn countries or in post-conflict situations. Weak legal and judicial systems, undermine progress towards sustainable development. Functioning legal institutions and governments bound by the rule of law are, in turn, vital to good governance. Whilst rule of law, respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms, provide the basic parameters for the peace and stability required for sustainable development, the absence of democracy and good governance induce movements of people and are bound to provide fertile ground for criminal organizations to exploit, not least in the smuggling of human beings.

Malta firmly believes that democratization is the best means through which individuals can contribute, influence and actively participate in shaping their future and that of their society. Democracy can boost the social and economic priorities of people and promote human development. There must be a vibrant civil society that is aware of its rights and the government must be willing to provide space for civic engagement.

Democracy and good governance are directly linked to social and economic development. **Economic development** cannot come about unless there is a secure and stable political climate. Without proper functioning institutions of governance that promote social stability and legal certainty, there cannot be investment and assumption of risk that form the basis of market economy development, let alone sustainable development. Deficiency in governance encourages high rates of corruption, with devastating consequences on the confidence of donor countries and potential investors. This lack of investment, in turn, slows economic growth and consequently deprives the governments of resources to invest in education, social safety nets, and sound environmental management, all of which are critical for sustainable development. Indeed, the strength of the rule of law is the best predictor of a country's economic success.

Good governance promotes accountability, transparency, efficiency, and rule of law in public institutions at all levels. It allows for sound and efficient management of human, natural, economic, and financial resources for sustainable development. Clear decision making procedures at the level of public authorities, civil society participation and the ability to enforce rights and obligations through legal mechanisms, are essential ingredients.

The strengths and experiences at international and regional level need to be fully exploited and combined to good effect. For instance, I firmly believe that the Commonwealth and the European Union could do more to complement each other to bolster the institutional capacity in various corners of the globe, and to co-ordinate their actions better to bring pressure to bear wherever democratic principles are threatened.

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