

Speech by Minister for Foreign Affairs, Dr George W Vella, on the occasion of the second anniversary of the establishment of the International Institute for Justice and the Rule of Law, Valletta, Malta

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**The International Institute for Justice and the Rule of Law**  
**University of Malta – Valletta Campus**

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Excellencies  
Ladies and Gentlemen

On behalf of the Government of Malta, I warmly welcome you to Valletta to mark the second anniversary of the establishment of the International Institute for Justice and the Rule of Law. It is indeed a great pleasure for me to be here today on this occasion.

I recall with pleasure the instance H.E. Gina Abercrombie-Wistanley, the former US Ambassador to Malta proposed for the first time the setting up of this Institute in Malta, and the subsequent negotiations to agree on the setting up of this institute here in Malta on a permanent basis leading to its official launching. I have also followed day in day out the process of identifying an adequate historical building in Vittoriosa and the complexities involved in drafting a Host Country Agreement and other necessary documents to ascertain the privileges and the immunities such institutes normally carry and enjoy.

I am proud to have been involved in bringing such a prestigious institute to Malta and wish to thank two persons that have worked assiduously to see that this initiative succeeds: Ambassador Alfred Zarb, who was out front man in making Malta's position and interests known to the representatives of the global anti-terrorism forum, and Mr Robert Strang, the Executive Secretary, who ably steered this institute with success from day one. Thank you both.

Since the launch of IIJ, or as it is becoming increasingly referred to, the 'Malta Institute', over a thousand practitioners including lawmakers, police, prosecutors, judges, correction officials, and other justice sector stakeholders, have received training on how to address terrorism and related transnational criminal activities within a rule of law framework. The countries and regions that have benefitted from all this work are mainly North Africa and the Middle East, as well as the Sahel and Horn of Africa, but also Asia and more recently the Western Balkans. Through its work, the IIJ has become a credible and fully operational institution with a mission to pursue sustainable strategies to prevent and counter terrorism as well as proactively foster necessary regional and inter-regional cooperation mechanisms. Malta holds great pride in hosting and in offering support to this Institute and its efforts.

Malta firmly believes that strengthening the rule of law and judiciary in States where such activity is gaining ground is the most effective way through which to counter terrorism. In a climate where foreign terrorist fighters, returnees, terrorist financing, arms smuggling and radicalisation are daily concerns, the IIJ provides much insight in countering terrorism through justice and rule of law. Societal growth and the full realisation of all human rights and fundamental freedoms is best evidenced in communities where rule of law is deeply embedded. It is imperative for States to have utmost capacity in retaining justice and the rule of law, even in situations where terrorist organisations seek to profit from societal crevices. It is well known that weak legislation and chaotic environments serve as breeding ground for terrorism. A society committed to rule of law acts as a detriment to advancement in terrorist ideology and actions. As an organisation active in the region, the IIJ presents a strong signal that we are united against terrorist movements seeking to instil fear and schisms in our communities.

Excellencies

Ladies and Gentlemen

The attacks in Europe and in other parts of the world, including in the US and Asia, claimed by ISIL/Da'esh demonstrate that we are all vulnerable. The repercussions of actions of terrorist organizations in some countries and regions are felt worldwide. Terrorism poses a direct threat to all countries and all people regardless of their ethnic background, religion or belief. This challenge is compounded by the fact that this is a crime with no borders and subject to various jurisdictions. There is no doubt that terrorism requires a united and global response. It is only through closer cooperation between the governments and the law enforcement authorities of various countries that the fight against terrorism can be properly fought. No one nation on its own can have an effective battle against this phenomenon.

In just over six months' time Malta will assume the Presidency of the European Council. Countering terrorism is a clear priority for the EU. While Member States have the primary responsibility for addressing terrorism, the EU as such can add value in many ways. The external engagement and outreach that the EU has undertaken and continues to do, especially to and with countries in the Middle East, North Africa, the Sahel and the Gulf, has ensured more emphasis on the prevention of terrorism, in particular countering radicalisation, recruitment, equipment and financing of terrorism, as well as in addressing underlying factors such as conflict, poverty, proliferation of arms and state fragility that provide opportunities for terrorist groups to flourish.

Malta, during its Presidency, will strive to continue the mainstreaming of counterterrorism further into the broader EU policies and strategies, as well as creating synergy between the internal and external aspects of counterterrorism. The threat to the EU has evolved in a way whereby the threats emanating from third countries, particularly in the EU's neighbourhood have increasingly affected the EU's internal security. Cooperation with international fora will also be a key feature, particularly with the United Nations, following the ongoing review of the Global Counterterrorism Strategy, and with regional organizations such as the League of Arab States. The EU will continue supporting cooperation with the UN on counterterrorism capacity building initiatives in the MENA region. Efforts are also underway with the IJJ to work on a judicial and law enforcement approach to counterterrorism.

In conclusion, I thank once again the Executive Secretary, Mr Strang for the work done by the Institute in such short span of time. It is a great honour for Malta to serve as home to this valuable and vital Institute.