

ANNUAL REPORT
2014

MINISTRY FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS

1. Directorate General Political, European Affairs and Maltese Abroad

1.1 European Affairs Directorate

During 2014, relations with European States were further consolidated as a result of State and official visits. Amongst others, the Prime Minister undertook official visits to Italy and the United Kingdom whilst visits at State Level were paid to Germany, Austria, Slovakia and the Holy See. The Foreign Minister undertook official visits to Switzerland, Germany, Austria, Slovakia, and the Holy See whilst a number of incoming visits also occurred including a State Visit from Greece.

In January 2014, the then President George Abela paid State Visits to Austria and to Slovakia accompanied by the Minister of Foreign Affairs. In Slovakia, a Memorandum of Understanding on Cooperation between the respective Ministries for Foreign Affairs and a further Agreement in the field of adoptions were officially concluded.

In March 2014, the then President paid a State Visit to Germany accompanied by Minister George W Vella and Minister Christian Cardona.

In February 2014, the Greek President of the Republic, Karolos Papoulias paid a State Visit to Malta. It should be recalled that Greek PM Samaras was in Malta on 21 October 2013.

In June 2014, President Marie-Louise Coleiro Preca attended the celebrations of the 25th anniversary of the participation of Solidarity in the first free elections in Poland whilst in August 2014, President Coleiro Preca attended the commemorations of the First World War alongside other Heads of State, in Liege, Belgium.

In September 2014, President Marie-Louise Coleiro Preca met with Pope Francis during a State Visit to the Holy See. The two Heads of State discussed the excellent relations between the Holy See and Malta and highlighted the significant contribution made by the Catholic Church in the fields of education and welfare, especially for the poor. The President was accompanied by Minister George Vella who also met with high ranking Vatican dignitaries.

In October 2014, the Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs of Slovakia, Miroslav Lajčák, visited Malta for talks with the Minister Dr George Vella. The discussion focused on bilateral relations between the two countries as well as the Troika program for the Presidency of the European Union, which will include Malta, Slovakia and the Netherlands (between 2016 and 2017).

In November 2014, Minister George W. Vella paid an official visit to Liechtenstein and Switzerland, during which he signed an memorandum of understanding on Cooperation between the Ministry for Foreign Affairs (MFA) and the Federal Department of Foreign Affairs of the Swiss Confederation. Whilst in Geneva, he also met with the Maltese community as well as the Diplo Foundation in Zurich.

High level visits paid by the Hon. Prime Minister included that to Italy, in February 2014, for talks with Prime Minister Renzi and in July 2014 in London for talks with Prime Minister Cameron. Prince William represented the Royal Family in the 50th Anniversary Independence Celebrations.

Important highlights in bilateral relations – country specific

A parliamentary delegation visited **France** in April 2014 as a follow up to the French visit in 2013. In July 2014, the Minister Manuel Mallia represented Malta at the commemorations of World War I (WWI) on the French National Day in Paris.

Since 2006, more than 280 immigrants were relocated from Malta to **Germany**. In 2013, Germany was the second largest trading partner of Malta with approximately €658.8 million in trade, whilst Germany represents the third most important tourism market for Malta. In 2013, the number of incoming tourists surged by almost 10,000, or 7.2 % compared with 2012. Meanwhile, a foremost German company continued to use Malta for home porting.

A delegation from the Committee on Petitions of the Parliament of the State of Baden-Württemberg visited Malta in February 2014. A further parliamentary delegation from the Bundestag (German Parliament) visited Malta in October 2014. Amongst the most prominent promotional activities undertaken by the Malta Embassy was the participation from 6 to 13 May 2014, along with Malta Tourism Authority (MTA) and Air Malta, at the Malta Week in Monheim, near Dusseldorf. Meanwhile, Government is looking closely at the German dual education system of apprenticeship training and vocational school training and in this regard a German delegation visited Malta in July 2014 for talks with authorities in the field. A Working Group was set up as a follow up to this visit, whilst talks are expected to pursue at a high level in 2015. It should be recalled that in November 2013 the German Government signed an agreement with the Academy for Diplomatic Studies Mediterranean (MEDAC) undertaking to financially maintain its support to the Academy until the end of 2016.

A German parliamentary delegation led by the Parliamentary Secretary of the Federal Ministry for Food and Agriculture visited Malta in October 2014 for meetings with the President of Malta, the Speaker of the House of Representatives and the Malta Financial Services Authority (MFSA). The delegation also visited the Marsa Open Centre.

Relations with **Italy** were consolidated further through a series of exchanges of bilateral visits. The two countries cooperated very closely on matters concerning migration whilst Malta actively assisted Rome in Operation Mare Nostrum. Prominent highlights include the work on the electricity interconnector, works on which have been finalised, while preliminary discussions have commenced on the possibility of gas pipeline project between Sicily and Malta. A Joint Declaration on Cooperation in the field of Health and Medical Sciences was signed in Rome in January 2014 by the respective Health Ministers, and in July 2014, Malta and Italy signed the Italo-Maltese XIV Executive Program for Culture and Educational Cooperation for the period 2014 to 2016.

Prime Minister Muscat visited Rome in February 2014 for official talks with Prime Minister Renzi whilst relations between Minister for Foreign Affairs Vella and Italian Minister for Foreign Affairs Mogherini were also very close with frequent meetings taking place. A common subject of bilateral discussions was irregular migration and the situation in Libya.

In May 2014, Dr Ian Borg held an official meeting in Rome with Sandro Gozi, Undersecretary for EU Affairs, as a result of which the Italian authorities accepted the attachment of two Maltese officials with the Italian presidency team, one in Rome and another one in Brussels.

Meanwhile, in August 2014, Undersecretary Sandro Gozi reciprocated this visit and attended the official launch of a new Armed Forces of Malta (AFM) helicopter purchased from Finmeccanica, Italy. During the visit he met with Minister George Vella. In July 2014, Deputy Minister of Economic Development Claudio De Vincenti visited Malta to participate in the "Conference of Mediterranean Energy: Security of Gas Supply". During his visit, he met with Minister Konrad Mizzi to discuss cooperation in the energy sector.

In September 2014, Gioacchino Alfano, Undersecretary of Defence paid an official visit to Malta. He met with Dr Emmanuel Mallia, Minister for Home Affairs and Security.

Cyprus - The Ministers for Foreign Affairs of Malta and Cyprus participated at the first informal meeting of the Med7 countries (European Ministers from Mediterranean States) in Alicante, Spain, on 16 April 2014.

In July 2014, Malta and Cyprus jointly organized an Energy Conference entitled 'Security of Gas Supply: The Role of Gas Developments in the-Mediterranean Region', which took place in Malta, with the presence of Konrad Mizzi, Minister of Energy and Health and George Lakkotrypīs, Minister of Energy, Commerce, Industry and Tourism of Cyprus. The Ministers agreed on the principle of creating a Euro-Mediterranean Gas Platform, with a view to facilitating the relations the Euro-Mediterranean in the gas field.

In January 2014, a Memorandum of Understanding on cooperation on Social Policy issues was concluded with **Portugal**.

Malta maintained its support for **Turkey's** EU membership bid. It also actively sought to further strengthen political and commercial relations. An important meeting in 2014 was that between the Minister Konrad Mizzi and his Turkish homologue responsible for Energy. An agreement between MEDAC and the School of Diplomacy of the Turkish MFA has been concluded and is ready for signing.

Turkey is Malta's tenth largest commercial partner; in 2013, €292.1 million were recorded in commercial exchanges. There are 230 Turkish ships registered with MMA representing 30% of Turkish ships. Discussions are also ongoing for the establishment of a JETCO - Economic and Commercial Joint Committee between the two countries.

Relations between Malta, the **Netherlands** and the **Slovak Republic** continued to gain momentum also in view of the sharing of the trio presidency. During 2014, a number of meetings were held in preparation for the EU Presidency. Furthermore, Slovak DPM/MFA Mirolsav Lajack paid an official visit to Malta on 10 October 2014 which visit was preceded by that of State Secretary for European Affairs, Peter Javorick on 18 October 2013.

In November 2014 the President of the **Slovak Republic** paid an informal visit to the President of the Republic of Malta, whilst on holiday in Malta. During this meeting several geo-political-culture-philanthropic matters were discussed, including Visegrad issues, with an emphasis on the socio-philanthropic initiatives of the two countries.

Visits from the **Netherlands** included that in February 2014 by Minister of Immigration, Security and Justice Frederick Teeven and in May 2014 by Jet Bussemaker, Minister of Education, Culture and Science.

Two Memoranda of Understanding were signed in May 2014 and in August 2014 respectively. The first one concerned the detachment of a Maltese contingent of 22

AFM officers aboard the Dutch ship HNLMS military de Zeven Provinciën as part of the Military Mission of EU NAVFOR ATALANTA and a second one detailing the AFM's support of Vessel Protection Detachments by the Netherlands.

Meanwhile, negotiations between Malta and Curacao (a Dutch island constituency) for the conclusion of an Agreement on the Avoidance of Double Taxation and Prevention of Fiscal Evasion of Income Tax are in the final stages. For this purpose, technical delegations met in Malta between 15 and 17 October 2013 whence the agreement was initialled.

In November 2014, Dutch gambling regulator Kansspelautoriteit and the Malta Lotteries and Gaming Authority entered into a letter of intent that will eventually become an Memorandum of Understanding once the Dutch draft bill for remote gaming enters into law. The two bodies intend to cooperate in terms of the development of uniform legislation and information exchange.

Liechtenstein has offered financial assistance to Malta in the field of migration which will eventually see the AFM having more specialised night vision equipment aboard their vessels. Bilateral negotiations are ongoing in this regard. In November 2014, Minister George Vella paid an **historic** visit to Liechtenstein – the first ever visit by a Maltese Minister, as well as the first ever visit to Liechtenstein by any foreign minister.

Norway - Minister George Vella met with Vidar Helgesen, Minister for the EEA and European Affairs, in the margins of the 69th meeting of the General Assembly of the United Nations (September 2014). Among matters discussed were migration and the situation in Libya.

Parliamentary Secretary Dr Ian Borg paid an official visit to **Poland** in November 2014 where he met Henryka Moscicka-Dendys, Deputy Minister in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Poland, in charge of European Policy, Human Rights & Parliamentary Affairs. Talks focused on Malta's preparations for the EU Presidency as well as Malta's interest when it comes to the EU's relations with Maghreb countries, immigration and maritime strategy.

Andorra - Minister George Vella met with the Minister for Foreign Affairs Andorra Gilbert Saboya SUNYE in the margins of the 69th meeting of the General Assembly of the United Nations. Topics discussed included the possibility of negotiating an agreement on the avoidance of double taxation as well as the Association Agreement Andorra would like to conclude with the European Union.

The Enlargement Process of the European Union

Another competency of the Department for European Affairs is to oversee Malta's position on the Enlargement and Stabilization and Association Process of the European Union. Malta considers enlargement as a positive element for the future of the Union and supports the candidate countries (Turkey, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia (FYROM), Iceland, Montenegro, Serbia and Albania) as well as potential candidate countries (Kosovo and Bosnia and Herzegovina) in their negotiation process.

During 2014 the Department was active in developing and providing Malta positions both for the Council and the Working Group level. Amongst the most prominent developments were:

Turkey: European Council Conclusions were adopted in October 2014. Malta believes that the EU should remain Turkey's anchor of reform and in this regard maintains its position that the opening benchmarks of the rule of law chapters should be communicated to Ankara in short order.

Montenegro: Malta together with like minded states sought to further assist and support Podgorica and in 2014 sixteen new chapters were opened and considerable progress was achieved.

Serbia: Malta was a keen supporter of the opening of accession negotiations with Serbia that took place on 21 January 2014 and was amongst those countries pushing for the opening of the first chapter of the accession negotiations in 2014.

Iceland: Fully respectful of Iceland's decision to cancel membership talks with the EU Commission, Malta continued to work closely with Iceland both bilaterally and also within the European Economic Area.

Albania: Malta supported the granting of candidate status to Albania which was secured in January 2014. This achievement marked an important step forward in EU-Albania relations which underscores Albania's progress in implementing necessary reforms.

fYROM: Malta agrees with the European Commission's Opinion that fYROM continues to sufficiently fulfil the political criteria for EU membership and in this respect it supports the opening of accession negotiations.

Kosovo: As in previous years, Malta was supportive to Kosovo's EU perspective and was pleased with the successful completion of the Stabilization and Association Agreement negotiations with Kosovo and the initialization of the agreement on July 2014.

Bosnia and Herzegovina (BiH): In December 2014, Malta together with the other Member States endorsed a renewed EU approach towards Bosnia and Herzegovina with a view of ensuring that BiH prepares itself for future EU membership.

Foreign Affairs Council

On the EU front, the Directorate for European Affairs and the Directorate for External Relations and Mediterranean Affairs also actively assisted the Director General in all the necessary preparations for Malta to be represented and effectively participate in the discussion that took place at the Political and Security Committee (PSC) and COREPER, as well as at the Foreign Affairs Council and at GYMNICH (informal Foreign Ministers' meeting), underscoring the importance of reacting to ongoing developments that were taking place, particularly in the countries of both the Southern Neighbourhood and Eastern Neighbourhood, particularly in the light of their emerging realities. This line of thought guided the Directorates throughout 2014 in their efforts to seek every opportunity to offer support and assistance to the countries of the Southern Neighbourhood, in full respect of the people's needs and specific requests, also through participation in a number of working groups for the coordination of assistance from EU Member States. During 2014, discussions at EU level focused on Ukraine, Middle East

Peace Process, the Southern Neighbourhood including Libya, Ebola as well as the ISIS threat.

Events and developments in the international scenario underlined the need for a strong EU foreign policy and in this respect the European Affairs Directorate also contributed towards Malta's active participation in discussions concerning the European External Action Services and better working methods for the EU with regards to Foreign Policy.

1.2 Directorate for the Maltese Living Abroad

The Directorate for the Maltese Living Abroad (DMLA) has been established for the past two years by Article 8 of Chapter 515 – Council for Maltese Living Abroad (CMLA), Act XX of 2011. It functions as part of the Directorate-General for Political, EU Affairs and Maltese Abroad. DMLA is responsible to ensure the implementation of Act XX. The overall vision of the DMLA is to aspire to become the central focal point for information, advice and co-ordination to Maltese living abroad and any association representing Maltese abroad or non-governmental organisation.

Establishment of an Organising Committee in preparation for the IV Convention for Maltese Living Abroad 2015 and the IV Annual CMLA Convening

The Government decided to organise the fourth Convention for Maltese Living Abroad between 20 and 23 April 2015, the second by the Ministry for Foreign Affairs following the first in 1969 and in 2000 by the Malta Emigrants Commission (MEC). The DMLA assisted the Secretary for CMLA in conducting 11 meetings during 2014 along with the Directorate Financial Management (DFM), the Office of the Communications Coordinator and representative from the Minister's Secretariat. Besides the two-day Convention programme a Diaspora Art Exhibition, a Literary Symposium are planned along with a Diaspora art competition amongst Primary and Secondary schools in Malta and Gozo and a Diaspora Monument competition amongst MCAST (Malta and Gozo Campus) and Wistin Camilleri School of Arts and Crafts of ix-Xewkija, Gozo. A Diaspora Drama event is being prepared by DMLA in conjunction with the Drama Unit of the Ministry for Education and Employment (MEDE).

Assisted in organising the 2015 Annual CMLA Convening in Malta

On 2-3 October 2014, the Ministry for Foreign Affairs organised the III Annual CMLA Convening in Malta. DMLA assisted the Secretary of the CMLA in the organisation of the meeting. Furthermore, the Director presented to the CMLA, the DMLA Annual Reports for 2013 and 2014 (January-September), besides responding to questions and requests for progress registered on proposals presented at the II Annual CMLA Convening in Malta, which took place on 3-4 October 2013. A range of issues from biometric passports, a CMLA website, taxation issues and voting rights for our Diaspora, amongst other matters, were discussed and a set of decisions were registered.

Consultation with Diaspora Stakeholders

During 2014, Director DMLA identified and organised periodic meetings with a number of stakeholders. Stakeholders include:

- (a) *MFA*: CIO, MFA Legal Unit, the Communications Office and MFA Senior Architect;
- (b) *CMLA Councillors*: The Directorate for Maltese Living Abroad facilitated a number of meetings for some CMLA Councillors with the Director for Passports, the Director for Citizenship and the Executive Chairperson of Identity Malta Agency, to discuss issues on the agenda of the 2014 CMLA Convention in Malta. The Directorate officials and CMLA Councillor Professor Maurice N. Cauchi also met officials from the Malta Council for Culture and The Arts (MCCA) to discuss the Diaspora Art Exhibition to be organised in the margins of the IV Convention for Maltese Living Abroad 2015. Meetings with other Councillors were also held as courtesy calls.
- (c) *Cross Government stakeholders*: The President of Malta Marie-Louise Coleiro-Preca, officials from the Office of Data Protection and Information Commissioner (DPIC), *Santo Spirito* National Archives Centre, Ministry for Education and Employment (MEDE) officials, the CHOGM Task Force, Heritage Malta officials, V18 officials, Malta Council for Culture and the Arts (MCCA), the Local Council Association (LCA) and Malta Films Commission (MFC).
- (d) *External stakeholders*: A seminar was held for Local Diaspora NGOs. Meetings were held with 31 local, mainly religious orders, missionaries and NGOs who have Maltese nationals serving throughout the globe.
- (e) *Peripheral stakeholders*: The missionary sections of the Pontifical Mission, Mission Fund, YMCA, Youtheme, Ghana Foundation, Living Waters Mission team, Happy Moments Kenya, MUSEUM and a number of University of Malta (UOM) lecturers, on various issues, amongst them the UOM Pro-Rector and the Chaplaincy;
- (f) *Diplomatic stakeholders*: The Australian High Commissioner and Canadian Consulate.

A number of internal operating structures included: (1) meetings with CMLA Secretary: (a) an info sheet forwarded every fortnight to CMLA Councillors relating to employment, scholarships and cultural events in Malta; (b) periodic alerts to and concerning Malta Government proposed legislation that might affect Diaspora; (c) monthly minuted meetings between the DMLA and CMLA; (2) DMLA weekly staff meetings; (3) communication with local Diaspora NGOs. Furthermore, Director DMLA delegated the directorate's Health and Safety Office, Fire Warden, Data Protection Focal Point, Green Initiative Officer, Inventory Office and First Aid Officer.

During the summer months of 2014 with the assistance of two university students, DMLA coordinated the organisation of the research material utilised for the formulation of Diaspora country chapters.

Categories of Maltese Diaspora

Throughout 2014, DMLA conducted very thorough research on how our Diaspora can be categorised to be further understood and assisted. Besides holidaymaking, Maltese and Gozitans leave the Maltese Islands primarily for the following five reasons: Permanent Diaspora, those who leave our Islands with intention of residing permanently in another country; Temporary Diaspora, those who leave for a period of more than a year and return after a number of years; Short-term Diaspora, primarily volunteers with religious orders, missionaries and NGOs; Missionaries, who operate in about 170 countries for an undetermined number of years; and finally, off-shore workers primarily on oil/gas installations.

The major Maltese communities are found in Australia, the United States of America, Canada and the United Kingdom, these countries account for 91% of all the Maltese living abroad. These communities are organised by means of about 75 associations, federations and organisations present in a number of major cities of these countries. There are five other countries which have communities of over 500 persons, namely, Belgium, France, Greece, Italy and the United Arab Emirates. DMLA delivered a presentation at the Annual Ambassador's Meeting organised by the Ministry for Foreign Affairs between 9 and 11 July 2014.

Formulating and managing Notification D Form

DMLA facilitated and channelled numerous consular issues to the Protocol and Consular Directorate primarily related to living abroad. Over a year available to the public, *Notification D – Voluntary Registration for Maltese Living Abroad* has had a good response amongst our Diaspora throughout the world.

Formulation of Forms O and P

In accordance with Article 10 (1-3) of Act XX of 2011 (Chapter 515 – Council for Maltese Living Abroad), the DMLA formulated Form O to establish a Registerer of non-governmental organisations set up outside Malta, which are involved in the promotion and protection of the interests of Maltese living abroad, as well as Form P to establish a Register of prominent Maltese living abroad who have distinguished themselves in their respective profession, vocation or work outside Malta. Both forms are currently progressing through the filtering stages of Data Protection.

Diaspora Chapters for Country Briefs

During 2014, DMLA researched and formulated Diaspora Chapters for the following countries/briefs: Commonwealth of Australia, the Kingdom of Belgium, the Republic of Bulgaria, Canada, Czech Republic, Denmark, the French Republic, the Hellenic Republic, Italy, New Zealand, the Kingdom of Norway, the Republic of Poland, the Republic of Slovenia, Sweden, the Swiss Federation, Tunisia, the Republic of Turkey and the United Kingdom. These Diaspora Chapters were requested and utilised while in delegations and visits to our Diaspora communities by the President of the Republic, the Prime Minister, and the Minister for Foreign Affairs and the Speaker of the House of Representatives in these countries.

Assistance to Maltese Diaspora visits to Malta

In June 2013 DMLA assisted a group of 40 Maltese-American youths who visited Malta and Gozo.

Membership in Europeans Throughout The World (ETTW)

The CMLA retained membership in the ETTW organisation based in Brussels. Director, DMLA attended ten meetings throughout 2014 and was re-elected Vice-President of the ETTW in November. Within the ETTW framework, a Council of Europe-wide questionnaire concerning Diaspora Affairs information was distributed and compiled, and DMLA conducted the analysis of the compiled data. This study was conducted in preparation for the Latvian EU Presidency.

Lecturing and Assistance in Diaspora Affairs research for students

DMLA delivered a number of lectures related to our Diaspora at the University of Malta and assisted research students and lecturers in undergoing research in relation to Diaspora studies.

1.3 External Relations and Mediterranean Affairs Directorate

Relations with the Maghreb Countries

Relations with **Libya** in 2014 proved to be eventful and challenging. In the past year, Libya's path to democracy and political achievement has been tumultuous. Progress on the political, economic and security fronts were confronted with a number of obstacles and the political situation deteriorated especially after the end of July 2014. These unfavourable developments hindered the strengthening of the bilateral relations between the two neighbouring countries. In November 2014, due to the security scenario in Tripoli the last 2 Maltese diplomats at the Embassy of Malta in Tripoli were temporary relocated back in Malta.

This Directorate continued to follow closely events in Libya, and continued to put forth the Libyan case on the European agenda so as to involve the international community in our efforts to help Libya manage its difficult democratic transition. Prior to the escalation of the conflicts in Tripoli and Benghazi in July 2014, relations between the two countries were positively recorded and several bilateral exchange visits had taken place. During these developments, Malta once again offered its humanitarian services to Libya by accepting to assist and treat several Libyan injured patients in local hospitals. In August, a three-member delegation from the internationally recognised Parliament of Tobruk paid an official visit to Malta to further enhance the existing relations between the two countries. This Libyan delegation held a meeting with the Deputy Prime Minister Louis Grech and the Minister for Foreign Affairs George Vella where the political situation was discussed. Due to the dynamic and continuous developments in Libya, a Crisis Centre was set up at the Ministry with the staff's expertise contributing from this Directorate in order to offer assistance to the Maltese community in Libya. Through intensive diplomatic negotiations, coordinated by the Ministry for Foreign Affairs, a Maltese national who had been abducted was released within a week without any ransom being paid.

Before the escalation of developments in Libya, exchanges at the technical delegations were held on the bilateral level both in Malta and in Libya in a number of fields, including, education, vocational training, transport, waste management and energy, trade, health, defence, media, communications and tourism. To this effect, a Memorandum of Understanding between the Ministry for Home Affairs and National Security and the Libyan Ministry of Interior was signed in July 2014. In October 2014, a Libyan delegation headed by the Libyan Prime Minister Al-Thinni, including five cabinet Ministers, visited Malta for a series of talks on issues ranging from education, economy and services. They were welcomed by Prime Minister Joseph Muscat. During this high level Libyan Delegation in Malta, the Foreign Minister George Vella received Mr Bernardino Leon, the Special Representative of the United Nations Secretary General. Mr Leon came to Malta at short notice, on the invitation of the Government of Malta to meet the Libyan Prime Minister Abdullah Al Thinni and his accompanying delegation, which arrived in Malta on the 20th October 2014. The focus of the discussions was the latest developments of the Libyan crisis and how Malta could be further involved in facilitating the political dialogue already initiated on the initiative of the UN Secretary General and led by his Special Envoy

On the international front, this Directorate participated actively in the preparations for conferences or discussions at the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) and the EU which mainly had Libya on their agendas. At the UNGA, Malta stressed the importance that Libya is assisted as much as possible due to the implications of internal security that could have dire consequences for its neighbouring countries. Malta also welcomed and supported the appointment of UNSRSC Bernardino Leon in his mission to bring peace among the warring parties in Libya. In the EU fora, this Directorate was continuously involved in the preparations for discussions at the MaMa as well as the Foreign Affairs Council meetings and Gymnich, seeking to underline the importance of offering support and assistance to the Libyan nation in full respect of the Libyan people's needs. In this context, this Directorate also participated in the identification of possible assistance through the Coordination Meetings on Libya, which resulted in Malta's participation within EU Civilian Mission on Border Management in Libya (EUBAM) now operating from Tunisia. The Minister for Foreign Affairs and officials from this Directorate participated in the Ministerial Conference on Stability and Development on Libya held in Madrid on Wednesday 17 September 2014, where the Minister appealed for continuous dialogue, mediation and compromise among the main actors. The Conference brought together the 5+5 Western Mediterranean Countries, the Libya Neighbouring Countries Group as well as the United Nations, the League of Arab States, the African Union, the European Union and the Union for the Mediterranean. The Minister for Foreign Affairs had in March also participated at the Rome Conference on International Support for Libya.

The Ministry for Foreign Affairs continued to exert substantial efforts to strengthen further its relations with the Republic of **Tunisia**. In noting the importance that support and assistance to the Tunisian people is sustained, the Directorate once again assisted in facilitating a scholarship for a Master of Diplomacy at the Mediterranean Academy of Diplomatic Studies (MEDAC) for the fourth consecutive year. The Directorate provided assistance and facilitation in other scholarships for training of ten Tunisian officers to study maritime search and rescue with the AFM and partially funded by the Swiss government.

During 2014, Malta and Tunisia continued to implement the bilateral agreement signed in the previous year on youth exchange in collaboration with *Aġenzija Żgħażaġħ*, where

various youth delegations participated in exchange visits and artistic activities held in Malta and Tunisia. The Directorate recalls also the success of the first Right4U course for Tunisian youths held in Malta in August 2014. These youth exchanges and activities were made possible through the co-ordination and collaboration of this Directorate with *Aġenzija Żgħażaġħ* and the Maltese and Tunisian Diplomatic Missions.

On a technical front, this Directorate was engaged in the preparation and or co-ordination for two different conferences. In May 2014, *Malta-Tunisia-Libya B2B Networking Forum 2014* was organised in Malta. The aim of the *Malta-Tunisia-Libya B2B Networking Forum 2014* was to promote private enterprise and bring together all stakeholders of the Maltese business community that trade with Libya and Tunisia. Then in September an international conference was organised in Tunisia. The Minister for Foreign Affairs participated in a high-level Conference entitled “Invest Tunisia – Start-up Democracy” following an invitation by the Tunisian government with the main objective being to attract foreign investment and commercial confidence building in Tunisia.

Bilateral relations with the Republic of **Algeria** continued to come to fruition as this year Malta opened its Consulate in Algiers and flights between the two countries have been initiated. In this context, the Directorate extended its assistance to officials from Air Malta and Transport Malta to hold technical discussions in Malta to update the air service agreement. To this effect a high technical delegation from Algeria visited Malta in October 2014, whereby an air services agreement and a memorandum of understanding with Algeria were concluded superseding the memorandum signed in 1982.

Three scholarships were granted to three Algerian officials to study maritime search and rescue with the AFM. These scholarships were partially funded by the Swiss government and co-ordinated by this Directorate.

Mr. Tarcisio Zammit presented his credentials as Ambassador of Malta to the Kingdom of Morocco. Preparations are ongoing for a State Visit to Morocco by The President of Malta in 2015. This Directorate is further working to facilitate technical meetings and visits between the two sides.

Relations with Mashreq countries

During 2014, the Ministry was actively engaged in strengthening relations with Mashreq countries. Malta followed closely the progress of the political and constitutional reform in **Egypt**. In meeting the challenges in the transition process to democracy, the Government of Malta urged the Egyptian Government to take measures to foster an inclusive political environment and to implement the rights enshrined in the Egyptian Constitution particularly in the area of freedom of expression and association. The Government of Malta expressed the wish to work with the new Administration so that cooperation with Egypt would be strengthened. Possible fields of cooperation include aviation, youth, trade and the cinematography industry.

Relations with **Israel** focused on cooperation in agriculture, restoration, water and culture and in the medical field. In the latter context, following the visit to Israel by Minister George Vella at the end of October, an impetus was given to focus on Emergency and Trauma Care and Preparedness and e-Health.

Malta continued its diplomatic engagement in support of the **Palestinian** cause within the EU, International fora and through its position as Rapporteur of the UN Committee on the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinians. From a bilateral perspective two scholarships funded by the Maltese Government were awarded to Palestinian students to study at the University of Malta. It is to be recalled that Minister George Vella visited Palestine towards the end of October and signed a Joint Declaration on the establishment of a Joint Intergovernmental Committee on Cooperation in the fields of Education, Tourism and Economy. In Ramallah, Minister George Vella also had the opportunity to meet with Palestinian charitable entities that benefitted from Malta's Overseas Development Assistance in the fields of health, education and female empowerment. Whilst in Ramallah, Minister George Vella announced that the Government of Malta was donating another €50,000 towards the work of UNRWA with Palestinian families. This donation followed a donation of €25,000 to UNRWA in January 2014 and another €25,000 to UNRWA in May 2014 intended for Palestinian refugees in Syria.

During the visit to **Jordan** towards the end of October, Minister George Vella met with Prime Minister Abdullah Ensour and the Speaker of the Lower House Atef Tarawneh. The Minister also held discussions on regional developments at the Jordanian Institute for Diplomatic Studies in Amman. During this visit three bilateral agreements were signed with Jordan, concerning cooperation between the Ministries for Foreign Affairs of the two countries, the waiver of visas for diplomatic passport and, the cooperation in combating crime and illicit trafficking of drugs. Minister George Vella also visited the Za'atri Refugee Camp where thousands of Syrian refugees are being hosted.

The conflict in **Syria** continued to dominate the work of the Directorate which involved active continuous engagement in EU and International fora to promote a diplomatic solution to the crisis whilst highlighting the priority of a ceasefire and end of violence against the Syrian population by all actors involved in the conflict. In the course of meetings within the EU, Malta underlined the importance of protecting the rights of ethnic and religious minorities in Syria. Malta expressed its solidarity with Syria's neighbouring countries, Lebanon, Turkey, Jordan and Iraq that opened their frontiers to millions of Syrians fleeing from the escalation of violence and desperation.

Malta pursued its engagement in supporting diplomatic efforts to revive the **Middle East Peace Process** including the US initiative and efforts by the International Community to bring about direct negotiations between Israel and Palestine. Malta was actively engaged both within EU and International fora meetings to focus attention on supporting the peace process. In various releases, Malta condemned unreservedly all forms of violence, stressed the importance of an end to hostilities and drew attention to the alarming humanitarian situation in Gaza. Malta also expressed the view that the EU and the International community should give more attention to the generation of youth raised in an environment of war and violence. Malta welcomed the ceasefire between Israel and Hamas in Gaza towards the end of August 2014 and in this context Malta urged the two sides to work together on the ceasefire agreement reached in Cairo to ensure a durable and sustainable return to peace. In a press release published on 28 August Malta reiterated that a durable ceasefire can only be effective against a backdrop of resumed peace negotiations based on an agreement on the 1967 borders of two states, security arrangements that respect Palestinian sovereignty, a just resolution to the refugee question and the status of Jerusalem as the future capital of both states. In subsequent press releases from September to the end of the year, Malta condemned continued Israeli settlement expansion, as well as acts of violence and deaths at a Jerusalem synagogue in mid November.

Mediterranean Regional Organisations

Active participation in regional fora and initiatives of direct relevance to the Mediterranean region, particularly within the Union for the Mediterranean (UfM) and the Western Mediterranean (5+5) Dialogue was ensured with timely contributions to the largely thematic approach adopted by these two organisations. The Directorate coordinated with line Ministries to ensure Malta's participation in sectoral meetings including at the level of Senior Officials Meetings in the respective fora.

As a truly Mediterranean country, Malta continued to strongly support regional cooperation. In this regard, Malta actively participated in meetings covering Mediterranean issues. The UfM remains the only forum which includes all Euro-Mediterranean countries and, although burdened with the Arab-Israeli conflict and other serious political issues, retains its relevance as a tool for fulfilling the objectives of the Barcelona Process and the Paris Declaration of 2008 which established it. Malta continued its direct contribution to the Secretariat of the UfM that is hosted in Barcelona through the secondment of Ambassador George Saliba, as a Special Envoy of the Deputy Secretary-General within the UfM with his duties of representing the Secretary General at public events and conferences to enhance its visibility.

The Ministry for Foreign Affairs has also been involved in the preparation of meetings and conferences at Ministerial or experts' level organised within the framework of the UfM. During 2014, various UfM Ministerial meetings were held on the following issues: Commerce/Industrial Cooperation, Environment and Climate Change, and Digital Economy.

Beside Ministerial meetings, decisions within the UfM are often taken during the regular Senior Officials meetings. These meetings are co-chaired by the European External Action Service and Jordan. The European Commission, the UfM Secretariat, Libya, the League of Arab States, the European Investment Bank, the Parliamentary Assembly of the UfM, ARLEM, and the Anna Lindh Foundation participate as observers in most meetings. It is important to note that Malta hosts the Parliamentary Assembly for the Mediterranean which serves to facilitate dialogue amongst Parliamentarians in the Mediterranean.

Malta considers softer approaches such as inter-cultural dialogue between civil societies of utmost importance, and in this regard, the Mediterranean boasts of the Anna Lindh Foundation which works to bring people on the two shores of the Mediterranean closer together. This year the Foundation celebrated its ten years anniversary with activities in Naples together with the Senior Officials Meeting between 28 to 30 October 2014. The Ministry for Foreign Affairs continued to represent Malta at the Board of Governors of the Foundation and has always kept in touch with the head of the national network of associations in Malta that are members of this Foundation.

Malta participated in the final UfM Seniors Officials for 2014 that took place in Barcelona between 4-5 December. During the aforementioned meeting the Senior Officials approved unanimously the renewal of the mandate of Fathallah Sijilmassi as Secretary General of the Union for the Mediterranean for a second mandate of three years. During the **Anna Lindh Foundation** meeting the Board of Governors unanimously approved and appointed the new President Ms. Liz Guigou from France.

As to the **5+5 Dialogue – Western Mediterranean Forum**, this Directorate continued to build on the success of the Second 5+5 Summit held in Malta in 2012, in

collaboration with the other nine countries of this forum. In 2014, the Ministry for Foreign Affairs continued to cooperate with the nine partner countries members of this dialogue. Malta considers this forum as an important tool for diplomacy in the Mediterranean, as well as a useful mechanism to discuss and cooperate in many areas. Under the co-Presidency of Portugal and Morocco, the 5+5 Dialogue has increased its activity and widened its scope for sectoral and political cooperation among the ten Partners. It is important to note that Morocco succeeded Mauritania as the co-Presidency with Portugal.

During the month of March 2014, the Ministry for Foreign Affairs assisted and coordinated with other Ministries in the preparations for the upcoming UfM and 5+5 Ministerial together with other meetings. These included a seminar on 5+5 Defence held in Spain (Embassy - Madrid represented Malta); a meeting for Diplomatic Training Directors of 5+5 countries in Lisbon which MEDAC participated and a stakeholders meeting as follow-up to the UfM Paris Women's Meeting held last year. The first 5+5 Foreign Ministers meeting for 2014 was held in Lisbon, Portugal on 22 May.

Since the Malta Summit of 2012, Ministerial meetings were held in the sectors of Interior Affairs, Transport, Agriculture and Food Security, Defence, Scientific Research and Economic Cooperation. In this regard, several Ministerial meetings were held on various topics in 2014 covering Higher Education 27-28 October 2014, Marseilles, Transport 21-22 October 2014, Lisbon, Defence, 10-11 December 2014, Granada and Tourism 2-3 December 2014, Lisbon. Morocco hosted the First Ministerial Meeting on Scientific Research on 19-20 September 2014. While Ministerial meetings are held annually or every few years, meetings at technical level and seminars for senior officials from line Ministries are more frequent. A meeting for experts on Health was held in Morocco on 17 January 2014. Morocco has also hosted a similar meeting for experts on Higher Education and Research on 27-28 February 2014. The Moroccan 5+5 co-chairmanship held a "Vigilance Committee" meeting to review progress and activities held during 2014 including those in the sectorial field. In this regard, the Ministry for Foreign Affairs participated at this meeting that was held in Rabat, Morocco on 27 November 2014.

The **Parliamentary Assembly of the Mediterranean** (PAM) was closely followed by this Directorate. The Permanent Secretariat General of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Mediterranean is situated at Palazzo Spinola in St. Julians. As a manifestation of Malta's commitment in support of PAM, and with the scope of conserving the country's historical and architectural heritage, the Ministry for Foreign Affairs carried out the restoration of Palazzo Spinola and its garden. On 10 December 2014, the Minister for Foreign Affairs, Dr George W. Vella met with Francesco Maria Amoruso President of the PAM, and reiterated Malta's support and ongoing commitment in the Assembly whilst recalling the important role that Malta played in setting up of the Parliamentary Assembly since the early days of its inception. During the meeting, Dr George Vella and Francesco Maria Amoruso signed the Protocol extending the agreement between the Government of Malta and PAM on the Judicial Status of the Parliamentary Assembly in Malta.

This directorate participated at the meeting of **The Mediterranean Group of EU Member States**, referred to as the "Med Group" or "Med 7" comprised of Spain, Portugal, France, Italy, Greece, Cyprus and Malta that was held in Alicante, Spain on 16 April 2014. The objective was to discuss and share the viewpoints amongst the EU Mediterranean Member States on sensitive regional matters pertaining to the Mediterranean, including the transitional process of neighbouring southern countries

such as Libya and Tunisia, as well as cooperation in trans-border issues such as migration, water and mediation. The Alicante meeting served as an opportunity to meet the Secretary-General of the UfM, Fathallah Sijilmassi, which provided a presentation on UfM projects.

On 17 September 2014, the Med 7 members met at the Ministerial Conference on Stability and Development in Libya that was held in Madrid, Spain under an extended format to include the North African countries, the Special Representative of the UN Secretary General for Libya, EU, Arab League, the African Union and the UfM. The main aim of the meeting was to reaffirm their committed support to Libya.

Dr George W. Vella, Minister for Foreign Affairs, participated in the two MED 7 meetings that were held this year. The MED 7 is a vehicle for dialogue which can be used to discuss and share its view points on salient issues that affect the Mediterranean countries.

Relations with the League of Arab States

On 20 May 2014, the Minister for Foreign Affairs held a meeting with the members of the Monitoring Committee at the EU-LAS Liaison Office in Malta, which offices is managed by representative of the Maltese Government, the EU and from the League of Arab States. This meeting was a preparation for the Ministerial which was held on the 11 June 2014. All delegations at the Ministerial Meeting spoke about the challenges being faced by both regions. However, a note of optimism was expressed for the future. In this regard, fora such as the Maghreb Group, the Gulf Cooperation Council, the Union for the Mediterranean and the 5+5 were established in order to promote cooperation, peace and prosperity between the EU and the Arab States. Malta referred to the first meeting held in Malta in 2008 and agreed that countries such as Syria and Libya justified the concern of the international community. With regards to Libya, Malta feels obliged to raise the issue in international fora.

At the end of the meeting, a Declaration was adopted in which Ministers underlined the importance of strategic cooperation, institutional cooperation, socio-economic cooperation, as well as political issues in relations between the European Union and the League of Arab States.

During the meeting, the Minister referred to the first meeting in Malta in 2008, and stated that further attention should be given to the fast-evolving situation in North Africa. The Minister also noted that he was encouraged by his earlier visit to the Gulf, and expressed satisfaction on the cooperation between Gulf countries and Europe.

In June 2014, the Minister for Foreign Affairs held a cordial meeting on the margins of the Ministerial Meeting with the Arab League Secretary General Nabil El Arabi in Athens. During the meeting the Minister and the Secretary General discussed the situation in North Africa in particular Libya, the different scenarios that may develop in the country and the effects these might have on neighbouring countries. Furthermore stability and security in the Mediterranean was also discussed.

On 30 November 2014, a meeting was held in Cairo with a representative of the EEAS and a representative of the League of Arab States during which the future of the European Commission-Arab League Liaison Office was discussed.

Relations with African countries

The Directorate took an active role in promoting and enhancing the relationship between Malta and Africa in 2014. The Directorate has helped in the organisation of a number of delegation visits to Malta from Botswana and Kenya.

A **Botswana** delegation visited Malta on issues of E-Legislation Benchmarking. The Botswana delegation visited a number of Maltese government departments and private institutions, including Bank of Valletta, the Law Courts, MFSA, Malta Communications Authority, the Police, MITA, the Data Protection Commissioner and the Ministry for Justice in relation to the Whistleblower's Act. The delegation had discussions on how the information system works and what lessons could be learned by Botswana.

A delegation from the **Kenyan** Salaries and Remuneration Commission visited Malta. The visit provided a thorough insight at government and parastatal wages system and held meetings with officials at PAHRO and PACBU at the Office of the Prime Minister and with the Ministry for Finance.

The Directorate liaised with the High Commissions of **Ghana** and Nigeria, both in Tripoli, with a view to coordinate the organisation of visits by Ghanaian and Nigerian Consular Officers with a view to expedite the repatriation of a number of nationals whose application for asylum submitted in Malta had been finalised.

Following discussions started in 2013 and as a result of the tense political situation in Libya, the High Commission of the Republic of Ghana moved from Tripoli to Malta. This was the first case of a Sub-Saharan African country moving its diplomatic mission to Malta. Bilateral cooperation with the government of Ghana, which is a Commonwealth country, also increased particularly with a number of bilateral meetings held between the respective foreign Ministers and by the signing of the Memorandum of Understanding Establishing a Joint Commission between the two Countries signed on 27 September 2014. The process to organise the first meeting of the Joint Commission during the first half of 2015 has been initiated and bilateral discussions are in progress.

In April 2014, Malta signed a Memorandum of Understanding on Migration Matters with **Nigeria**. Discussions on similar memoranda are going on with other sub-Sahara African countries including Ghana.

The **Somali** community is the largest community of migrants in Malta. In 2014, the Directorate concluded procedures for the establishment of diplomatic relations between Malta and the Federal Republic of Somalia. The Directorate made arrangements for a meeting between the Prime Minister of Malta and the Somali Deputy Prime Minister on the margins of the EU-Africa Summit, when this matter was broached in earnest. A draft Protocol on the Establishment of Diplomatic Relations was subsequently transmitted to the pertinent Somali authorities. This protocol was signed and entered into force on 11 June 2014 at the margins of the EU-LAS Summit which was held in Athens.

The Directorate, together with the Development Unit further helped to disburse the first tranche of Malta's pledge of €150,000 for the "New Deal for Somalia" which were pledged by Malta in September 2013. Furthermore, the Directorate also supported Malta's accession and participation to the Contact Group on Piracy Off the Coast of Somalia. The Contact Group is an international forum established in New York on January 14, 2009 to facilitate the discussion and coordination of actions among states

and organizations to suppress piracy off the coast of Somalia. The Permanent Representative of Malta to the UN institutions in New York attended the first meeting of this Contact Group on 14 May 2014.

A revised copy of the Memorandum of Understanding on Political Consultations with the **Republic of Angola** was sent on 2 May 2014 to the Angolan Embassy for consultation. Contacts are underway between the Directorate and the pertinent cultural authorities in Malta with a view to conclude the Cultural Cooperation Agreement.

The Directorate is also liaising with a number of Embassies and High Commissions of sub-Saharan countries, accredited to Malta, proposing a draft text for the conclusion of a Convention on the Avoidance of Double Taxation and the Prevention of Fiscal Evasion (DTA) with respect to Taxes on Income with Botswana, the Gambia, Ghana, Kenya, Malawi, Namibia, Uganda and Zambia respectively. Whilst a DTA was signed with Mauritius on 15 October 2014, favourable replies were also received from Ethiopia, which counter-draft remains to be discussed by Ministry for Finance (MFIN) authorities.

On 15 October 2014, a Double Taxation Agreement was signed in New York with **Mauritius** as a further step to open business opportunities between the two countries. This Agreement was ratified by Malta in December 2014. The Mauritian authorities are still awaiting to ratify the agreement.

On the EU front, the Directorate attended **COAFR Working Group** meetings in capitals formation and assisted the Ministry in international events such as the EU-Africa Summit which was held in Brussels on 2-4 April 2014. In the Summit Declaration, leaders highlighted the close nature of EU-Africa relations and the shared values of democracy, respect for human rights, the rule of law and good governance as well as the right to development. Meetings on the margins of the Summit were held with the delegations of Somalia, Nigeria and Ghana. Malta was also successful in negotiating a Declaration on Migration and Mobility which together with a Political Declaration were the main documents of the Summit.

Within the **CSDP** perspective, a new CSDP Military Mission was launched in 2014 by the EU. With reference to Malta's participation in EUFOR RCA, the Permanent Representation of Malta to the EU in Brussels suggested on 10 January 2014, that Malta considers the possibility of nominal participation with an AFM staff officer. This suggestion was considered by the Ministry for Home Affairs and National Security from a defence perspective, however it was concluded that this possibility was unrealistic since the AFM has finite resources which need to be prioritized according to Malta's national requirements.

Relations with Gulf countries

The Ministry for Foreign Affairs continued to strengthen Malta's relations with the Gulf States. The Ministry continued negotiations with these countries in order to strengthen commercial and political relations, and also to facilitate access to these countries by Maltese nationals.

Following on the first meeting of the Economic Joint Commission with **Saudi Arabia** held in Malta in 2013, the Ministry for Foreign Affairs expressed its wish to revive cooperation in main areas of cooperation which were discussed in Malta and indicated possible dates for the holding of the second session of the Joint Commission. The

second Joint Commission is being planned for 28 May 2015 in Riyadh and preparations with the lead Ministry have already begun.

In March 2014, technical delegation from Malta and Saudi Arabia met in order to discuss an Air Services Agreement. Both sides agreed on a Memorandum of Understanding between both Aeronautical Authorities and on the Air Services Agreement. The Memorandum of Understanding has been signed and entered into effect immediately.

Diplomatic efforts are underway in order to conclude the Air Services Agreement which is still awaiting internal procedures clearance in Saudi Arabia. The Ministry for Foreign Affairs is also working on the conclusion of an Agreement on Cooperation in Higher Education which has already been agreed with Saudi Arabia and which will allow Saudi Arabian students to study at the University of Malta.

In June 2014, Prince Abdulaziz bin Abdullah bin Abdulaziz Al Saud, Deputy Minister for Foreign Affairs received the credentials of the new Maltese Ambassador Mr Martin Valentino in Jeddah. During this meeting the Ambassador emphasised the importance to strengthen bilateral relations between Malta and Saudi Arabia and that both countries cooperate and explore areas of common interest. Ambassador Valentino remarked the potentials and prospects for economic growth between both countries. Prince Abdulaziz bin Abdullah bin Abdulaziz Al Saud expressed his Kingdom's wish to strengthen the relations for the benefit of both countries.

Following the official invitation made by Prime Minister Dr Joseph Muscat to the Emir of the State of **Qatar** to visit Malta, this invitation was officially accepted. This Ministry had proposed that the visit takes place in the first two months of 2014. Unfortunately the visit had to be postponed.

In January 2014 His Excellency Ali Bin Saad Ali Al-Kharj presented his credential as the new Qatari Ambassador resident in Malta. During the meeting with the Minister for Foreign Affairs, both sides discussed the bilateral relations and also regional issues following the Arab Spring.

In October 2013, following discussions on the margins of the United Nations General Assembly, the Prime Minister, Dr Joseph Muscat, invited the Prime Minister of **Kuwait** Sheik Jaber Al Mubarak Al Hamad Al Sabah to visit Malta. In light of the changes in the Legislative Assembly of Kuwait the Ministry proposed that the visit takes place in June 2014. However, no confirmation was received from the Kuwaiti authorities.

During 2014, preparations began on the Minister's visit to Kuwait on 21 January 2015. During this visit a number of meetings with Kuwaiti high Government Officials are being planned, as well as the inauguration of the Consulate of Malta in Kuwait City.

Other areas Malta is interested in cooperating with Kuwait include an Agreement on Higher Education and Scientific Research, and a Cooperation Agreement on the fight against Illicit Trafficking in Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances and against Organised Crime.

In May 2014, the Minister for Foreign Affairs held meetings in **Bahrain** during an official visit in Gulf Region. In Bahrain, the Minister met with the Minister for Foreign Affairs, Khalid Al Khalifa Sheihk. Discussions focused on strengthening relations between Malta and Bahrain, including cooperation in the political, business and social aspects.

The Minister for Foreign Affairs of Bahrain expressed his appreciation for the visit of the Minister and augured that this will continue to pave the way to further strengthen the bilateral relations. Minister Al Khalifa also showed interest in working with Malta.

The Minister for Foreign Affairs also met with the Prime Minister of Bahrain, Prince Khalifa Bin Salman the al Khalifa.

In April 2014, Ambassador Joseph Mangion visited the Sultanate of **Oman** and presented his credentials to Sultan Said bin Qaboos. During the visit Ambassador Mangion had the opportunity to discuss bilateral issues with the Secretary General of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and trade relations with the Chamber of Commerce and Industry of Oman.

In May 2014, the Minister for Foreign Affairs visited Oman and met with the Secretary General of the Ministry for Foreign Affairs who described the meeting as an important development in the bilateral relations. Both sides discussed potential areas for cooperation including education, financial services, banking, maritime, aviation and energy. Secretary-General BADEL Al Busaidi said that cooperation with Malta has very good prospects and that familiarization visits are expected to take place on various sectors. Both sides also discussed developments in the Gulf, North Africa and Ukraine.

The Minister for Foreign Affairs also held talks with the Minister of Education of Oman to discuss the possibilities for strengthening exchanges in the field of higher education. The intention of the authorities of Oman to increase their students in Malta was discussed.

Minister George Vella also discussed cooperation in the field of culture with the Under Secretary of the Ministry of heritage and culture, Sheikh Hamed bin Hilal Al Mamari.

Discussions are being held to sign an Air Services Agreement, as well as an Agreement on the Avoidance of Double Taxation and the Prevention of Fiscal Evasion with respect to Taxes on Income.

A Memorandum of Understanding on Political Cooperation and a Memorandum of Understanding on Visa Waiver for holders of Diplomatic Passports were also signed during the visit.

In February 2014, Malta accepted a mutual agreement on the recognition of driving licenses of category B with the **United Arab Emirates**. However, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs sent a draft Memorandum of Understanding to be agreed and signed as soon as possible.

In May 2014, the Minister for Foreign Affairs met with the Minister for Foreign Affairs of the United Arab Emirates, Sheikh Abdullah Bin Zayed Al Nahyan. Both Ministers spoke at length about the developments in the respective regions and discussed how to strengthen bilateral ties. Discussions also touched upon cooperation in various fields, including education, culture, trade and consular issues.

During the visit, the two ministers signed a Memorandum of Understanding on political cooperation in the framework for further exchanges between the two Ministries.

Other work underway with this country include the signing of an agreement on cooperation in the field of higher education, as well as agreement on the release of visas for diplomatic and Protocol for the establishment of a Joint Action Plan.

The Ministry for Foreign Affairs continued to work on the agreement of a Memorandum for a Joint Action Plan between Malta and the **Gulf Cooperation Council** which should serve as a basis for discussions between the two sides. It was expected that the document be finalized on the occasion of the visit of the Secretary-General in Malta, however this had to be postponed.

Relations with Asia and Australia

This year Malta and **Australia** celebrated the 50th anniversary of the establishment of relations with Australia. Despite being separated by a fair distance, both countries enjoy close relations due to Commonwealth links, the objective of good governance, and the emigration link. At the same time, the Ministry continued to assist in efforts so that the centenary of the Gallipoli Campaign, which falls in 2015 and in which Malta had assumed the role of 'the Nurse of the Mediterranean', be celebrated in a fitting manner.

The Ministry for Foreign Affairs continued to assist in the strengthening of bilateral relations with Asian countries, particularly **China** with which Malta has well established links in a wide range of fields. The Ministry assisted in the preparations for the visit of the Prime Minister to China at the beginning of July. In China the Prime Minister met the Prime Minister of the People's Republic of China Li Keqiang and an accompanying Chinese delegation. The two sides signed a Memorandum of Understanding for Cooperation which encompasses a wide ranging plan for future bilateral Cooperation for the forthcoming 5 years. This is the first such memorandum of understanding that China has ever undertaken with a European Union Member State. The areas for cooperation include the following: infrastructure, financial services, energy, aviation, sports and culture, amongst others. During the visit it was also confirmed that all procedures associated with the opening of Malta's Consulate in Shanghai had been completed. The Ministry for Foreign Affairs assisted in the preparations for the meeting Minister George Vella had with Mr Wang Chao, Deputy Minister for Foreign Affairs, during his May visit to Malta. The Ministry for Foreign Affairs was actively involved in preparations for the **Malta-China Joint Commission on Trade and Economic Cooperation** held in Beijing on 9 December 2014 in which Economic Services Minister Chris Cardona participated.

A Joint Communiqué establishing diplomatic relations between Malta and **Fiji** was signed on 11 December 2014.

The Directorate assisted in the procedures to bring into force the Agreement for the Avoidance of Double Taxation with **India**, signed in April 2013.

The Directorate was involved in the preparations for the visit that the Prime Minister made to **Singapore** from 27 October to 1 November, 2014. During his visit, the Prime Minister met his counterpart Lee Hsien Loong and discussed cooperation in the fields of energy, health and the Commonwealth.

Andre Spiteri presented his credentials as Malta's new non resident Ambassador accredited to **Tokyo** at the beginning of July 2014.

The Directorate was involved in the preparations for the events associated with the 40th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations between Malta and **Vietnam** which was commemorated on 28 August, 2014.

Minister George Vella participated in the 20th Meeting of **EU and ASEAN Foreign Ministers** which took place on the 23 of July 2014 in Brussels. During his intervention, Minister George Vella especially focused on developments in the Middle East.

Another activity which the Ministry was involved in was assisting in the Prime Minister and Minister George Vella's participation at the **Asia-Europe meeting** held on 16-17 October, 2014 in Milan, Italy which was held under the theme of "*Enhancing Dialogue and Cooperation between Europe and Asia and the Future Direction of ASEM.*" The Prime Minister's intervention underlined that the seas which over the past centuries served as paths of war, could be transformed into a formidable path of growth for the two continents. Furthermore, he referred in particular to the Gulf of Aden which is very important for trade connection between Europe and Asia, and noted that the European Union-led Atlanta operation off the coast of Somalia, to which Malta actively contributes, is crucial in terms of maintaining maritime security.

Relations with the Americas

In 2014, the Ministry continued to work towards improving the bilateral and strategic relationship with the **United States of America**. A major political achievement is undoubtedly the ongoing assistance that is being provided by the United States under the Programme for Resettlement of Refugees. This program, which began in 2007, led to more than 1946 refugees to start a new life in the United States.

The Ministry for Foreign Affairs was instrumental in the negotiations of Foreign Account Tax Compliance Act (FATCA), which was signed on 16 December 2013 and entered into force on 26 June 2014.

On 18 June 2014, the Institute of Justice and the Rule of Law was inaugurated in Malta to provide rule of law-based training to lawmakers, police, prosecutors, judges, corrections officials, and other justice sector stakeholders on how to address terrorism and related transnational criminal activities within a rule of law framework. The Institute continues to raise Malta's profile in international politics particularly in the Mediterranean Region.

On 20 September 2014, Dr Angelo Farrugia, the Speaker of the House of Representatives, conducted a visit to Washington where he participated in a Parliamentary Forum on Security in Washington. The Speaker participated in discussions on: ISIS threat against the West; espionage; transatlantic policy; and, the threat of terrorism. During the Forum, Dr Farrugia also discussed the role of Malta in the Libya crisis.

On 9 October 2014, Minister George Vella met with Deputy Assistant Secretary of State Ms Julieta Van Noes to discuss bilateral and multilateral cooperation, as well as the danger of ISIS, Ebola and latest developments in Libya and Ukraine.

Contacts with **Canada** are ongoing as regards preparations for the Commonwealth Summit that will be hosted by Malta in November 2015.

Mexico is a country with which Malta also wishes to deepen its bilateral relationship. In August 2014 the Agreement on the Avoidance of Double Taxation and the Prevention of Fiscal Evasion with respect to Taxes on Income came into force. With the entry into force of this agreement business opportunities and mutual investment between the two countries are expected to grow.

Following federal elections in **Brazil** on 26 October 2014, a letter of congratulations was sent to the re-elected President of Brazil Dilma Rousseff by the Prime Minister of Malta.

During a meeting between the Minister for Foreign Affairs and the Ambassador of **Argentina** held in Malta in 12 December 2014, a Memorandum of Understanding on Conducting Bilateral Consultations was signed. This Memorandum of Understanding is effective immediately and is intended to provide a framework for closer bilateral relations between the two countries.

Relations with the Russian Federation, Central Asia and South Caucasus

The Agreement for the Avoidance of Double Taxation that was signed with the **Russian Federation** on 23 April 2013 effectively entered into force on 22 April 2014. A positive outcome of this agreement is the removal of Malta from the Russian list of 'offshore' countries. The visit of Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs Alexey Meshkov in December 2014 served to further strengthen bilateral relations between Malta and Russia.

Even though relations with Russia were affected by the crisis in Ukraine, the Embassy of Malta in Moscow is still working hard to raise the profile of Malta in Russia through various events. On 18 September 2014, a business event was organized by the Embassy and was attended by several Maltese and Russian entrepreneurs from various fields.

In 2014, talks continued with Russian authorities to resolve outstanding issues between the two governments, such as the Intergovernmental Agreement on Diplomatic Property and the debt owed to Malta by the Russian Federation. Following a visit by Russian Deputy Finance Minister Sergei Storchak on 1 August and various exchanges thereafter, an intergovernmental agreement was agreed upon for the settlement of the pending debt.

Before the crisis, the Ministry increased diplomatic contacts with **Ukraine** in order to demonstrate the Maltese Government's support for the signing of the Association Agreement with the European Union that was due to be signed at the Eastern Partnership Summit in Vilnius in November 2014.

Despite the crisis, Ukraine managed to sign the Association Agreement on 27 June 2014. With a view to accelerate the process for the entry into force of the agreement so that Ukraine starts to benefit from the political and economic provisions of the Association Agreement, the Maltese Government expedited the internal process of ratification that was finally concluded by the end of August 2014.

In 2014, the Ministry participated in frequent EU high-level discussions to discuss the situation in Ukraine. The main objective of such meetings was to discuss the framework that would lead to a diplomatic agreement between Ukraine, Russia and the

Ukrainian separatists with a view to stop the violence in East Ukraine with immediate effect. To achieve this goal, Malta continues to maintain that any attempt to solve the crisis should be based on the principles of international law and should fully respect the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Ukraine. Malta will continue to support the inclusive process of reforms in Ukraine and hopes that the new Ukrainian government, elected on 26 October 2014, will initiate a process that would lead to the desirable political and economic results. In order to avoid a looming humanitarian crisis in Ukraine, Malta gave Euro 50,000 to the UNHCR in order to assist the internal population that was displaced due to the conflict. The Ministry also pledged political as well as technical support to Ukraine in its reform process.

On 11 April 2014, during a visit of the Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs and European Integration of **Moldova**, Natalia Gherman, a Joint Declaration on the assistance that Malta could give to Moldova in its path towards European Integration was signed. An Agreement on the Avoidance of Double Taxation and the Prevention of Fiscal Evasion with respect to Income Tax was also signed.

On 2 July 2014, Moldova ratified its Association Agreement with the European Union. The Maltese Government expedited the internal process of ratification of the Association Agreement with Moldova, Georgia and Ukraine so that the Eastern Partners start to benefit from the political and economic provisions of the agreement right away.

On 2 September, Minister for Foreign Affairs George Vella, participated at a meeting with European Foreign Ministers to discuss the efforts of Moldova to meet the criteria laid down by the Association Agreement. During this visit, the Minister met with the Prime Minister of Moldova, the Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs and the Speaker of the House of Representatives of Moldova. Various aspects of Moldova's relations with the European Union in the framework of the Association Agreement were discussed during these meetings.

One of the sectors in which Malta intends to increase cooperation with Moldova is that of Information Technology. In fact, Malta signed a Memorandum of Understanding with Moldova in September 2014 on Cooperation in the field of Digital Government.

During a visit to **Georgia** on 25 April 2014, Minister for Foreign Affairs George Vella inaugurated a Centre for training of diplomats in Tbilisi. Minister Vella had bilateral meetings with Prime Minister of Georgia, Irakli Gharibashvili, Minister for Foreign Affairs Maia Panjikidze as well as with the Speaker of the House of Representatives David Usupashvili.

In 2014, bilateral cooperation between Malta and **Azerbaijan** increased in various fields. Constant contacts were maintained with the authorities of Azerbaijan to conclude several agreements between the two sides in preparation for a visit of Minister George Vella to Baku. These include: a Double Taxation Agreement; a Memorandum of Understanding on Cooperation between the respective Foreign Ministries; and, the launch of a Parliamentary Friendship Group. Unfortunately, the visit by Minister George Vella to Baku that was scheduled to take place in April 2014 was postponed.

Malta fully supports strategic cooperation between the European Union and Azerbaijan. At the Eastern Partnership Summit in Vilnius on 28 November 2013, the European Union signed a Visa Facilitation and Readmissions Agreement with Azerbaijan. These entered into force on 1 September 2014. Malta will support the conclusion of a

comprehensive agreement between the European Union and Azerbaijan that would outline strategic cooperation with Azerbaijan.

The Eastern Partnership

This Ministry continues to strengthen in various ways the policy of the European Union in the Eastern Partnership. After the outbreak of the crisis in Ukraine last August, this Ministry has strengthened bilateral cooperation with Eastern partners that show a genuine desire to move closer, both politically as well as economically with the European Union.

1.4 Agreements signed with European States during 2014

COUNTRY	AGREEMENT	DATE OF SIGNATURE
Portugal	Memorandum of Understanding on cooperation in the field of Social Policy	13 th January 2014
Slovakia	Protocol of Cooperation on Inter-Country Adoptions	23 rd January 2014
Slovakia	Memorandum of Understanding of cooperation between the Ministry for Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Malta and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Slovakia	23 rd January 2014
Holy See	Third Additional protocol	27 th January 2014
Italy	Joint Declaration on Cooperation in the field of Health and the Medical Sciences	31 st January 2014
Italy	14 th Cultural and Educational Agreement	1 st July 2014
Vatican Radio and PBS	Memorandum of Understanding	12 th March 2014
Netherlands	Memorandum of Understanding between the Ministry for Home Affairs and National Security of the Republic of Malta and the Ministry of Defence of the Kingdom of the Netherlands concerning the Deployment of a Maltese Special Duties Enhanced Boarding Team on board HNLMS De Zeven Provinciën in support of EU NAVFOR ATALANTA	11 th May 2014
Slovenia	Memorandum of Cooperation between the Civil Aviation Directorate of the Republic of Malta and the Acting Director of the Civil Aviation Agency of Slovenia	18 th August 2014 in Ljubljana
Netherlands	Memorandum of Understanding between Ministry for Home Affairs and National Security and the Minister of Defence of the Kingdom of the Netherlands concerning AFM support to Vessel Protection Detachments of the Kingdom of the Netherlands.	27 th August 2014, Valletta

Spain	Exchange of Notes for visa representation by the Spanish authorities to represent Malta in Kiev, Ukraine and Muscat, Oman.	With effect from 1 st September 2014
Switzerland	Memorandum of Understanding for Cooperation between the Ministry for Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Malta and Federal Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Swiss Confederation	4 th November 2014, Bern

1.5 Agreements signed with third countries during 2014

COUNTRY	AGREEMENT	DATE OF SIGNATURE
Argentina	Memorandum of Understanding on Conducting Bilateral Consultations	12 December 2014
Azerbaijan	Memorandum of Understanding on Strategic Cooperation in the field of Energy	15 December 2014
China	Program of Cultural Exchanges for the period 2014-18	8 January 2014
China	Memorandum of Understanding on Medium Term Cooperation	9 July 2014
China	Memorandum of Understanding between the Ministry of Transport and Infrastructure and China Overseas Engineering Group Co.Ltd	22 July 2014
China	Memorandum of Understanding between the Aeronautical Authorities of Malta and China	12 December 2014
China	Agreement between Enemalta and Shanghai Power Electric	12 December 2014
China	Agreement between the Public Broadcasting Services (PBS) and China Central Television (CCTV)	25 December 2014
Fiji	Joint Communiqué on the establishment of Diplomatic Relations	11 December 2014
Gambia	Agreement on Cooperation in Repatriation of irregular immigrants in Malta	24 September 2014
Ghana	Memorandum of Understanding establishing a Permanent Joint Commission between Malta and Ghana	27 September 2014
Jordan	Agreement on the exemption of Visa requirement for holders of Diplomatic passports; Memorandum of Understanding on Bilateral Consultations; Cooperation Agreement on the fight against Illicit Trafficking in Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances and against Organised Crime	26 October 2014
Libya	Memorandum of Understanding between the Ministry for Home Affairs and National Security and the Libyan Ministry of Interior	5 July 2014

Mauritius	Agreement on the Avoidance of Double Taxation and the Prevention of Fiscal Evasion with respect to Taxes on Income	15 October 2014
Moldova	Joint Declaration on assistance by Malta in European integration	11 April 2014
Moldova	Agreement on the Avoidance of Double Taxation and the Prevention of Fiscal Evasion with respect to Taxes on Income	11 April 2014
Moldova	Memorandum of Understanding on cooperation in the field of 'Digital Government'	2 September 2014
Nigeria	Agreement on cooperation in the field of Repatriation of Irregular Immigrants in Malta	3 April 2014
Oman	Memorandum of Understanding on Political Cooperation	30 May 2014
Oman	Memorandum of Understanding on Visa Waiver for holders of Diplomatic Passports	30 May 2014
Palestine	Joint Declaration on the establishment of an Intergovernmental Committee between Malta and Palestine	30 October 2014
Singapore	Air Services Agreement	18 November 2014
Somalia	Joint Declaration on the establishment of diplomatic relations	11 June 2014
United Arab Emirates	Memorandum of Understanding on Political cooperation	28 May 2014
Parliamentary Assembly of the Mediterranean	Protocol to Extend the Agreement on the Judicial Status of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Mediterranean in Malta	10 December 2014

2. Directorate General, Global Issues, International Development and Economic Affairs

2.1 Global Issues Directorate

During 2014, the Global Issues Directorate continued to develop relations with International Organisations, such as the United Nations and its agencies, the Commonwealth, the International Atomic Energy Agency and the International Organisation for Migration. Exchanges with the Commonwealth were particularly intense in 2014, in preparation for Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting to be held in Malta in 2015. The Directorate also pursued Malta's foreign policy objectives in the following thematic areas under its responsibility: migration, EU election observation, environment and climate change, human rights, non proliferation and disarmament, terrorism, candidatures and sanctions.

Another important aspect of the work of this Directorate is the contribution of necessary documentation and briefs in respect of its areas of responsibility for various meetings throughout the year involving the Minister for Foreign Affairs as well as the Prime Minister and other line Ministries. In particular, briefing material was prepared for Foreign Affairs Council meetings, European Council meetings and the United Nations General Assembly Ministerial week.

Migration

The work of this Directorate in the area of irregular migration builds on the efforts and initiatives pursued over the last years. From 1998 to December 2014, the figure of illegal immigrants arriving by sea was over 19,700. The arrival of these people puts pressure on the Maltese infrastructures. Consequently, one of the main objectives of the Government, and therefore the Ministry for Foreign Affairs, is to ensure that the problem of irregular migration is more adequately addressed. During 2014, this Directorate worked in tandem with the Ministry for Home Affairs and National Security to strengthen the implementation of the agreed objectives in the European Union as well as to strengthen Malta's contribution to the dialogue between Europe and Africa. The challenge of irregular migration continued to be raised in the EU meetings as well as in bilateral meetings and other international fora where Malta was being represented, particularly in the United Nations General Assembly. At the European Council, Malta called for the implementation of the measures of the Task Force for the Mediterranean, with a view to working towards feasible solutions to the immigration crisis.

The Fourth Joint EU-Africa Summit was held on 2-3 April 2014 in Brussels with the theme: "*Investing in People, Prosperity and Peace*". The Prime Minister of Malta Joseph Muscat and the Minister for Foreign Affairs George Vella participated. The Heads of State and Government endorsed the Roadmap with 5 priorities for the period 2014-2017: Peace and Security; Democracy, Good Governance and Human Rights; Human Development; Sustainable and Inclusive Development and Growth and Continental Integration; Global and Emerging Issues. They also adopted a Declaration on Migration and Mobility. The Summit agreed on an Action Plan on priorities for future cooperation in the areas of Migration and Mobility. It covers six areas: i) Trafficking in Human Beings (THB); ii) irregular migration; iii) remittances; iv) Diaspora; iv) mobility and labour migration; and vi) international protection. The fifth EU-Africa Summit will be held in Africa in 2017.

Malta and Nigeria signed a Memorandum of Understanding on Migration Matters in the margins of the 2014 EU-Africa Summit. As in previous years Malta will continue to work intensively to address the sources of illegal immigration, with the help of the international community.

A priority for Malta is also the enforcement and effective implementation of the obligations contained in Article readmission 13 of the Cotonou Agreement. Following Malta's insistence, this concept was accepted and is currently given much more prominence in the EU's political dialogue with Africa, as testified in the Global Approach to Migration and Mobility an overarching tool at the disposal of the EU which encompasses various facets of the migration issue.

Together with the Ambassador for Migration this Directorate continued to actively lobby Malta's position within the EU and also with International Organizations. An IOM-UNHCR Joint Technical Mission to Malta took place end of April 2014 at the request of the office of the President of Malta. Issues discussed during this joint technical mission touched upon various aspects of migration including the issue of unaccompanied minors.

The Director-General himself Mr William Lacy Swing made a second visit to Malta (first visit was in November 2013) in October 2014. The main purpose of his last visit being to participate in the inauguration of the IOM-UNHCR Joint Report entitled

'Unaccompanied and Refugee Minors – Alternatives to Detention'. The said report was the outcome of the joint IOM-UNHCR technical visit in April 2014.

Fully aware that the key to reducing migration pressures is to engage Libya in securing its sea and land borders, this Directorate is therefore undertaking every effort to push forward this agenda. Given the current situation in Libya, it was not possible to engage Libya as much as one would have desired. Malta's case on migration is emphasized in all relevant fora, during high level bilateral meetings and followed up through the necessary demarches relayed through the Maltese Missions abroad. During 2014, 578 persons in receipt of protection were resettled in the United States.

This Directorate continued to carry out ongoing consultations with other Government entities and Non-Governmental organizations to draw up EU funded projects targeted to alleviate pressure on immigration on Malta. In addition a joint programme with the Ministry for Home Affairs and National Security was submitted to develop relationships with immigration and consular authorities of countries of origin of migrants under the EU Asylum and Migration Fund.

In October 2014, the Ministry and the International Organisation for Migration (IOM) agreed on the COMAM III programme on '*Cooperation between Malta and African countries to enhance migration dialogue and development*'. COMAM III is the successor to COMAM and COMAM II, which were led and implemented by IOM, and sought to enhance diplomatic and administrative relations between Maltese Migration authorities and their counterparts in countries of origin from the Sub Saharan African region. COMAM III will run from the end of October 2014 until May/June 2015, with the Ministry for Foreign Affairs being partner to the project along with the Ministry for Home Affairs and National Security, and with the IOM responsible for its implementation. The countries involved in COMAM III will be The Gambia, Nigeria, Mali and The Netherlands (the inclusion of an EU MS in the project is a recent development in view of revised operating procedures for IOM).

In May 2014, Malta hosted the second EUROMED Migration III peer-to-peer meeting on Irregular Migration between EU Member States and European Neighbourhood Instrument (ENI) South Partner Countries. The theme was 'Challenges and opportunities; rights and responsibilities: A balanced approach'. The meeting was jointly hosted by the Ministry for Foreign Affairs and the Ministry for Home Affairs and National Security. The main priorities discussed, included prevention, combating smuggling and trafficking criminal networks, border control and return and readmission. The meeting looked at latest developments and policies of participating states and assessed potential areas of agreement for enhanced cooperation.

During her visit to Malta in September 2014, the EU Commissioner responsible for Home Affairs Cecilia Malmström held a meeting with the Minister George Vella. The migration related topics discussed during this meeting were FRONTEX and Mare Nostrum; Absorption capacity; Intra-EU relocation and Dublin Regulation; Detention; Readmission; and also the Ebola virus.

UN High Commissioner for Refugees, António Guterres, visited Malta on 15 September 2014 to continue talks with the Maltese entities on how to continue to take work forward. He held separate meetings with the Prime Minister Joseph Muscat, Minister for Foreign Affairs, George Vella and the Minister for Social Dialogue, Civil Liberties and Consumer Affairs, Helena Dalli. He also visited the *Fal Far* Reception

Centres. The UN High Commissioner for Refugees and Special Envoy Angelina Jolie together visited the naval rescue headquarters in Malta.

This Directorate was highly involved in the organisation of the visit by the UN Special Rapporteur on the Human Rights of Migrants in December 2014. The focus of the mission was 'border management'. During his visit the UN Special Rapporteur had one-to-one meetings with the relevant Government officials. Mr Crépeau also met 3 Ministers, including George Vella, Minister for Foreign Affairs. Mr Crépeau visited open and closed centres, and held meetings with Civil Society Organisations (CSO) and International Organisations. The preliminary report issued by Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) following Mr Crépeau's visit contains both positive and negative observations on the local migration policy. Malta is recognised as a key entry point into Europe and the report calls for support from European states to assist Malta in its efforts to develop a comprehensive rights-based migration policy. The report criticises the Dublin Regulation, highlighting that this has placed disproportional pressure on frontline countries. The policy for mandatory detention is criticised in the report which calls for the quick implementation of ongoing projects, namely a new reception centre. Other recommendations were also made in relation to the asylum process and other judicial processes. Criticism related to open centres addressed the provision of accommodation for families within the same compound for single males.

The Directorate also continued working on the negotiations leading to the signature of Memoranda of Understanding on Migration Matters with countries of origin of irregular migrants. Memorandums of Understanding were signed with Nigeria and The Gambia. Their negotiation was initiated in 2013 under the framework of the MAREMCA II¹ project. The Memorandums of Understanding cover areas of cooperation between Malta and Nigeria, Malta and The Gambia on migration matters, in particular forced returns of illegal migrants. The French translation of a similar Memorandum of Understanding was sent to both Niger and Ivory Coast in the summer of 2014 for their consideration and comments. Such Memoranda of Understanding are vital as they are providing Malta a framework by which repatriation of migrants can be carried out with these countries of origin. The Ministry is also maintaining close cooperation programmes with the International Organization for Migration on the repatriation of migrants.

Commonwealth

During 2014, the Global Issues Directorate and in particular the Commonwealth Unit continued to focus on a number of Commonwealth issues. The main thrust of the work focused on preparations for the Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting (CHOGM) 2015.

In February 2014, a delegation from the Commonwealth Secretariat visited Malta whereby a number of preliminary discussions were held in view of the preparations for CHOGM 2015. On 10 March 2014, the Commonwealth Day was celebrated and the Global Issues Directorate in collaboration with the Ministry for Education and Employment organised an art competition and exhibition that was held at the Ministry for Foreign Affairs. About one hundred children visited this Ministry and were then accompanied to the Office of the Prime Minister for an address by the Prime Minister and other distinguished guests. A reception in collaboration with the British and Australian High Commissions was held in the evening to commemorate that day.

¹ MAREMCA - Malta's Long-term Return Management Capacities

In June, this Directorate was actively involved in the preparation of the visit by the Commonwealth Deputy Secretary General Deodat Maharaj. The visit culminated in the conclusion of a Memorandum of Understanding in respect of the Debt Management programme for the benefit of the Members of the Commonwealth. The meeting also coincided with the discussions among interested parties on the setting up of the Commonwealth Trade Finance Facility.

The Directorate was also heavily involved in the preparations for the visit by the Prime Minister to London and Scotland for the Commonwealth Games in July 2014. On the margins, a number of meetings were held, including exchanges with the Commonwealth Secretary General. The Prime Minister further participated in a meeting on Small States under the aegis of His Royal Highness Prince Charles. A number of speeches were also delivered, including one at the London School of Economics, on the Commonwealth at 65.

The Directorate was actively involved in preparing the necessary documentation in respect of the Commonwealth Foreign Ministers Meeting which was held on the margins of the United Nations General Assembly in New York in September 2014. Work was also undertaken in the preparation of briefs for Prime Minister ahead of his meeting with Commonwealth Secretary General Kamallesh Sharma, his participation at the Open Ended High Level Meeting on CHOGM Reform as well as for Ministry for Foreign Affairs' participation in the Commonwealth open-ended meetings on the post 2015 Development agenda and the open ended Ministerial meeting of the Small States group in New York in September.

The Commonwealth Unit was also actively involved in the preparations for the visit by Commonwealth Secretary General Kamallesh Sharma to Malta, between 19 and 21 November, during which Prime Minister Joseph Muscat together with Secretary General Sharma officially launched Malta as the venue for CHOGM 2015.

The Unit also participated in CHOGM Task Force meetings on the preparations for CHOGM 2015 as well as elaborated Malta's proposal for the Small States Centre of Excellence and engaged with interested parties on the future of COMNET. The Directorate also met with a number of organisations that are accredited to the Commonwealth.

Malta – Commonwealth Third Country Training Programmes

This Directorate continued to work with the Commonwealth Secretariat on the Malta – Commonwealth Third Country Training Programme that was established in 1995 following a signing of the Memorandum of Understanding between Malta and the Commonwealth. During 2014, three training courses were held under the Malta/Commonwealth Third Country Programmes namely in the areas of Modern Diplomacy for Small States, Legal Framework for ICTs and Public Administration and Management.

EU Election Observation

During 2014, Maltese Election Observers participated in five Electoral Observation Missions organised by the European Union. The Missions were held in the following countries: Egypt, Malawi, Kosovo, Afghanistan and Tunisia.

Environment and Climate Change

This Directorate continued to act as a liaison between a number of International Institutions and the Line Ministry, Ministry for Sustainable Development, the Environment and Climate Change with a view to ensure adequate representation during a number of high-level and technical working groups.

On Climate Change, this Directorate's efforts continued unabatedly to secure the further enhancement of Malta's role on the international arena. Apart from facilitating Malta's representative participation at a number of meetings, including the Lima Meeting, in December 2014 in preparation for the December Paris Summit in 2015, this Directorate was also actively involved in the preparation and participation of the Prime Minister at the Climate Change Summit under the aegis of the UN in New York in September 2014. As a major follow up to this Summit, this Directorate was also actively involved in the discussions with the Ministry for Sustainable Development, the Environment and Climate Change on the start up phase of the implementation pledge of scholarships on Climate Action, as announced by the Prime Minister in New York.

Human Rights

This Directorate continued to be instrumental in safeguarding Malta's position on Sexual Reproductive Health Rights (SRHR), both in the EU, as well as, at the UN level. This has been achieved through internal consultations with the line Ministries and negotiations with EU and UN Member States. On such occasions, Malta has opposed language relating to SRHR and at times delivered National Statements to explain its position. This year, Malta registered a National Statement to safeguard its position on the matter vis-à-vis the Council Conclusions on 'A Transformative Post-2015 Agenda', which were adopted on 16 December 2014.

The Global Issues Directorate was also responsible for the preparation and coordination of the second periodic report on Malta's implementation record of the provisions of the International Convention on Civil and Political Rights, which was considered by the Human Rights Committee in Geneva on 13 and 14 October 2014. During the hearing, Malta provided an account of recent developments in its national legislation and the measures taken to strengthen civil and political rights. The Committee experts asked several questions about Malta's position on several issues including abortion, irregular migrants, the process of applications for asylum, alternatives to detention and the conditions of detention centres, the use of force by officials in detention centres, measures to promote the participation of women in public life, initiatives to tackle human trafficking and the system of juvenile justice.

During its interventions, Malta defended its national positions and reaffirmed its commitment to the promotion and protection of human rights.

This Directorate also coordinated Malta's position during the twenty-fifth, twenty-sixth and twenty-seventh sessions of the Human Rights Council which were held in Geneva. Malta was represented by its Permanent Representation to the United Nations. Malta also participated in the twenty-first special session of the Human Rights Council in Geneva in July 2014. During this special session the violations of international humanitarian law and international law of human rights in the Occupied Palestinian Territories, including East Jerusalem, and particularly the occupied Gaza Strip were discussed. The discussion on the Occupied Palestinian Authority was held in the context of the military operations that took place from 13 June 2014. Malta also

participated, through its Mission, in the twenty-third special session of the Human Rights Council on Iraq.

Non-Proliferation and Disarmament

The Global Issues Directorate continued to promote Malta's policy to strongly oppose the spread of weapons of mass destruction and their means of delivery. In this context, Malta maintained its support for the establishment of Nuclear-Weapon Free Zones and the implementation of confidence-building measures worldwide, in particular in the Mediterranean region. Malta persisted in its support for concrete and practical measures for the implementation of the Resolution on the Middle East adopted at the 1995 NPT Review Conference, which calls for the establishment of a Middle East Nuclear Weapon Free Zone. Malta remains ready to support the process leading up to the planned Conference for the establishment of a zone free of weapons of mass destruction in the Middle East, including support to the work of the Finnish Facilitator.

Malta was proud to co-sponsor 20 resolutions at this year's Disarmament sessions during UNGA. Five of these resolutions were sponsored for the first time and these were: Treaty on a Nuclear-Weapon-Free Zone in Central Asia; Decreasing the operational readiness of nuclear weapons systems; Arms Trade Treaty; Women, disarmament, non-proliferation and arms control; and UN disarmament and non-proliferation education.

Malta also participated at the EU Working Group of CONOP at the various discussions on the Draft Council Decision regarding the review process for the Non-Proliferation Treaty which will be held in April 2015. The result of the work accomplished at the Brussels working group was then fine tuned by the Missions in Vienna and Geneva. The exercise will be continued during the first months of 2015 so as to agree on the EU's statement to be delivered at the NPT Review Conference and in organizing working groups for like minded partners and strategies to overcome possible difficulties from other partners.

This Directorate coordinated with the Embassy in The Hague in following developments on the chemical weapons situation in Syria. Malta called on the Syrian Arab Republic to take the necessary measures to ensure that its chemical weapons programme is completely and irreversibly eliminated, as well as for continuous and prolific cooperation with the Technical Secretariat, the Declaration Assessment Team and the Fact Finding Mission that have been undertaken by the Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) aimed at the destruction of chemical weapons currently in Syria. Through this effort Malta displayed its firm commitment to the implementation of the Chemical Weapons Convention and its strong belief in effective disarmament together with its stated goal of reaching a solution to the Syrian conflict. On the European level this Directorate continued to work closely with EU partners in the respective EU CFSP working groups to address, in a comprehensive manner, the threat of proliferation of WMD and their means of delivery through participation in the respective CFSP EU working groups. UN Resolution 61/89, adopted in 2006, initiated the process for developing a Treaty to regulate the international trade in conventional weapons, i.e. the Arms Trade Treaty. The objective was to achieve a legally binding Treaty making the legal trade in conventional arms more responsible, by setting high common international standards on imports, exports and transfers of arms. The Arms Trade Treaty was adopted by qualified majority on 2 April 2013 by the United Nations General Assembly in New York. The majority of UN Members agreed to open the signature of the Treaty on 3 June 2013. Malta signed the Arms Trade Treaty in New York on 3 June 2013 and ratified it on 2 April, 2014, along with most EU Member States. The Treaty entered into force on 24 December 2014.

Terrorism

The fight against terrorism has once again become a major global security concern and dominated high-level discussions at the UN and other international organizations. The emergence of the terrorist group, the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) in Syria and Iraq, which has committed numerous atrocities and human rights violations, gained worldwide attention. Another major development was the increase of Foreign Terrorist Fighters travelling to Syria and Iraq to join the ISIL front. These developments urged the international community to take action to halt the spread of ISIL in Syria and Iraq and stem the flow of Foreign Terrorist Fighters.

In this regard, the Directorate continued its participation within various working groups at the European Union which were created to combat international terrorist threats outside the EU and to list individuals and entities involved in terrorist activities. Malta participates actively within these groups in coordination with other local departments. One of the aims of these activities is to strengthen its reputation as a stable commercial and financial centre; this will be done by taking measure to eliminate attempts of financial transfers, services and products from Malta which could fall in the hands of terrorist groups.

On 18 June 2014, an International Institute for Justice and the Rule of Law was established in Malta. This institute was founded to provide rule of law-based training to professional and key stakeholders in the justice system on how to address terrorism and related transnational criminal activities within a rule of law framework. This institute is already running and is providing training through workshops and seminars to lawmakers, police, prosecutors, judges, corrections officials, and other justice sector stakeholders, on how to address terrorism and related transnational criminal activities within a rule of law framework. Given the geographic location, the institute is paying particular attention to supporting countries in transition in North, West, and East Africa, and the Middle East. Sixteen states, the European Union and a number of Institutes focused on security and counter-terrorism are supporting this institute.

In the beginning of October 2014, this Directorate coordinated a visit to Malta by the United Nations Counter-Terrorism Committee Executive Directorate (CTED). The scope of the visit was to observe Malta's efforts to combat terrorism and the implementation of UN Security Council resolutions dealing with counter-terrorism. The UN Delegation held a number of meetings with various other Ministries and departments dealing with counter-terrorism efforts as well as a high-level meeting with the Minister for Foreign Affairs. Following this visit, CTED will this year submit a report to the UN Counter-Terrorism Committee assessing the counter-terrorism measures adopted by Malta and giving suggestions on how to improve assistance and collaboration in this field.

Candidatures

In the past year the Directorate was involved in lobbying efforts for the candidature of Dr Ray Busuttil for membership of the Executive Board of the World Health Organization. Dr Ray Busuttil acquired the formal support of other European states during a meeting of the Regional Committee of Europe of the WHO, and thus will be presented as a European candidate for election at the 68th World Health Assembly in May 2015 in Geneva.

The Directorate is also engaging in lobbying efforts for the candidature of Malta to the United Nations Security Council for the term 2023-2024 at the election that will be held during the 77th Session of the United Nations General Assembly in 2022. Although the

election is still way ahead, lobbying efforts have already been initiated and will intensify in the coming years.

Sanctions

International sanctions encompass a series of predominantly diplomatic, economic and, to a lesser extent, military measures which states employ vis-à-vis third states' regimes with the aim of achieving a variety of policy objectives. Sanctions, have become more targeted in recent years, are aimed at identified persons, entities and industries, and are carefully tailored to specific policy objectives.

Implementation of Sanctions in Malta

Malta's sanctions policy is aligned with UN and EU sanctions policy. Currently over 30 sanctions regimes are imposed on states and terrorist organisations. Whilst EU Regulations are directly applicable to Malta as an EU Member State, UN Resolutions are transposed into Maltese law as subsidiary legislation under Chapter 365 of the Laws of Malta. The Ministry for Foreign Affairs, as Chair to the Sanctions Monitoring Board of Malta, is responsible for ensuring the implementation of sanctions into Maltese Law

In all sanctions-related matters, the Ministry works alongside all ministries and entities composing the Sanctions Monitoring Board which is the national authority responsible for sanctions implementation and monitoring. The Board, as chaired by the Director-General for Global Issues, International Development and Economic Affairs at this Ministry, has continued to provide rulings to applications concerning restrictive measures on a constant basis, together with internal policy feedback on Malta's position thereto in EU meetings. The Board provides technical expertise required in Malta's contribution to the formulation of EU sanctions legislation, and responds to sanctions-related queries from the general public, which often have queries regarding the application of these measures and are entitled, at law, to a ruling by the Board. A generic sanctions e-mail address (sanctions.mfa@gov.mt) is available for members of the public to refer their sanctions related queries.

The Board is also the competent national authority under UN and EU Regulations for requesting authorizations to be granted under legal exemptions and derogations at EU and UN levels whenever these are applicable to certain requests under the relevant UN and EU legal instruments.

Current Sanctions Regimes

Although Malta applies more than 30 sanctions regimes, the work of MFA and the Sanctions Monitoring Board is more active with regard to certain specific regimes, as a result of the economic and political relationship between Maltese individuals/entities with the sanctioned State.

The following is an overview of the Sanctions regimes of prime importance to Malta in 2014:

Sanctions on Russia

On 5 March 2014, the Council of the European Union adopted restrictive measures on Russia as a result of its actions destabilizing the situation in Ukraine. Since then, EU

restrictive measures have been expanded and strengthened. The Ministry for Foreign Affairs has participated in EU discussions in Brussels on the elaboration of restrictive measures on Russia and continues to follow developments.

EU restrictive measures include the freezing of funds and economic resources, and travel bans of persons responsible or that supported actions that effected the territorial integrity, sovereignty and independence of Ukraine. Additional sanctions also included an import/export ban of military and certain dual use products and related services and restrictions on access to the capital market by listed Russian financial entities.

In response to the illegal annexation of Crimea and Sevastopol further EU restrictive measures included a ban on the importation of products that originate in Crimea or Sevastopol, and most recently a ban on all foreign investments in Crimea and Sevastopol, and includes a prohibition for any ship providing cruise services to call at any port situated in the Crimean Peninsula.

The Sanctions Monitoring Board was particularly active on this dossier during 2014, ensuring the effective implementation of EU regulations and addressing numerous sanctions queries from the public.

Sanctions on Libya

The UN introduced sanctions against the Ghaddafi regime in Libya in February 2011 through U.N. Security Council Resolution 1970 (2011) and through subsequent Resolutions, the Security Council established and strengthened the sanctions regime which included an arms embargo, a travel ban and financial sanctions imposed on a number of persons and entities associated with the Ghaddafi regime.

In September and October 2011, the process of lifting and easing some sanctions against certain entities in Libya was started and a mechanism for the release of certain previously frozen funds was put into place. On the other hand, assets belonging to the Ghaddafi family and to other persons still listed are to be retained frozen under UN and EU sanctions. Only the United National Sanctions Committee can currently order their release on the basis of applicable legal derogations.

Following developments on the ground, on 27 August 2014, the UN Security Council unanimously adopted Resolution 2174 (2014) on Libya, which made the arms embargo on Libya more stringent, in particular in respect of exceptions made for arms transfers to the Libyan government. The supply, sale or transfer of arms and related material must now be approved in advance by the UN Sanctions Committee. In addition to reinforcing the arms embargo in relation to Libya, the resolution also introduced additional criteria for designation of individuals and entities as subject to the travel ban and or assets freeze. On its part the EU stands ready to implement UNSC Resolution 2174 in order to address threats to Libya's peace and stability, including violations of the arms embargo. Those responsible for violence and those who obstruct or undermine Libya's democratic transition must be held accountable. Over 2014, the Board received a number of queries related to the Libya sanctions regime.

Sanctions on Iran

Sanctions on the Islamic Republic of Iran are part of a dual-track process which comprises diplomatic negotiations and pressure aimed at encouraging Iran to re-

engage in discussions on its nuclear programme and ensure that its nuclear activity is limited to its legitimate peaceful use of nuclear energy. Sanctions were first imposed by the UNSC in 2006 and by the EU in 2007.

In 2014, following talks by the EU3+3 (China, France, Germany, Russia, the UK and the United States) and Iran, the EU suspended certain restrictive measures against Iran, following a commitment by Iran to address the most pressing concerns about its nuclear activities, in accordance with a joint plan of action. The action plan lays down a series of measures to address global concerns about Iran's nuclear programme. The restrictive measures were initially suspended for a period of six months; however, this period has been extended and following talks that took place on November 2014, has been further extended until 30 June 2015.

Over 2014, the Board received a number of queries related to the Iran sanctions regime.

Sanctions on Syria

With the exception of sanctions imposed against certain individuals associated with certain terrorist groups in Iraq and Syria (UNSC Resolution 2170 (2014)), the UNSC has, been precluded from adopting sanctions against Syria following opposition from China and Russia. At an international level, a concerted approach to Syria is being sought through the Friends of the Syrian People group which brings together over 90 countries. In the area of Sanctions, Malta will continue to participate at the Friends of the Syrian People International Working Group on Sanctions.

Restrictive measures against Syria were imposed by the EU in 2001 through Decision 2011/273/CFSP and Regulation 442/2011. The measures include a number of export and import bans, e.g. an oil and arms embargo, equipment used for internal repression, equipment for monitoring telecommunications, restrictions on investments, financial activity and the transport sector. In addition, 211 persons, associated with the Assad Regime or involved in internal repression in Syria, are targeted with an asset freeze and a travel ban. 63 entities linked to the repressive policies, including the Central Bank of Syria, have their assets frozen within the EU. In 2013, the Sanctions Monitoring Board received a query related to the Syria sanctions regime.

This Directorate has continued to follow developments in Syria closely particularly in view of efforts at the EU level to amend current legislation concerning restrictive measures against Syria which include the listing of additional persons and entities subject to restrictive measures, and exemptions relating to the activities of the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) in terms of the destruction of Syrian chemical weapons.

Sanctions on Egypt and Tunisia

During the 2011, conflicts in Egypt and Tunisia, EU sanctions imposed a fund and asset freeze on persons and entities responsible for the misappropriation of Egyptian/Tunisian State funds respectively. In 2012, the EU declared that the return of State funds to Tunisia and Egypt was a priority and a legislative mechanism was put in place whereby EU Member States could release frozen funds on the basis of judicial decisions recognised in EU Member States. The amended legislation also facilitates

the exchange of information between EU member states and the relevant authorities in Tunisia and Egypt so as to assist in the recovery of misappropriated funds.

In 2014, amendments were made to the legislation, in particular extending the validity of these restrictive measures for another year.

Sanctions regarding terrorism

In 2014, the UN and the EU have continuously updated sanctions against persons connected to the Taliban regime in Afghanistan and those connected to Al-Qaeda.

Reform of the United Nations Security Council

The debate about reforming the UN Security Council has accompanied the Council since its inception. Malta continued to take part in the intergovernmental negotiations for the reform of the UN Security Council and from the beginning, it has always been committed to a comprehensive Security Council reform, that has as its objective the establishment of a more equitably representative, more transparent, more effective Council, one that reflects the current international community and one that is owned by all UN Member States.

During the UN Security Council reform debate three main groupings emerged: the Group of Four Countries (the G4 bloc – Germany, Japan, India and Brazil); the African Group and the Uniting for Consensus Group, which Malta is part of.

The Uniting for Consensus Group proposes a simple increase in non-permanent membership and stresses that the exact number of seats will depend on the total size of the expansion and the distribution of those seats among various regions, taking into account equitable geographical distribution. As a small State, Malta is strongly in favour of a more transparent and open Security Council through an enhanced access and participation of all UN Member States.

The Uniting for Consensus Group also proposes that the voting method is made in accordance with Article 27 of the Charter of the United Nations whereby a majority is required for the adoption of substantive decisions in an enlarged Security Council. On the question of the veto, the Group proposal is to either abolish it or limit its scope which will make the Council more democratic, transparent and accountable. For Malta the veto is directly linked to the issue of categories, in that by adding new permanent members with veto powers the risk is that it would continue to make the Council less democratic, less representative, less transparent, less effective and less accountable.

On 23 September 2014, the Uniting for Consensus Group held a ministerial meeting in New York to assess the situation of the Inter-Governmental Negotiations on the UN Security Council reform. During the meeting, the Group reiterated its endorsement of the principle that negotiations should be comprehensive and based on all five pillars of the reform and that all UN Member States should be ready to engage in a more flexible and constructive way in the negotiating process. The Uniting for Consensus countries reconfirmed their belief that a reform of the Security Council is both necessary and urgent and that it requires the consensus of an overwhelming majority of the UN Member States. The Group reaffirmed its commitment to work and cooperate openly and constructively with all UN Member States and other negotiating Groups, in order to enhance mutual understanding and promoting a positive outcome to the reform process of the Security Council.

Meeting Participation

Officials from the Directorate regularly attended a number of CFSP Working Groups meetings held in Brussels, apart from participating in various international meetings. The Working Groups attended by this Directorate are the following: CONUN (United Nations), CODUN (Disarmament), CONOP (Non- Proliferation), COMAR (Law of the Sea), COHOM (Human Rights), COARM (Arms Control), Joint Meeting of the WPIEI (Global)/CODEV/CONUN, (Preparation for the post 2015 framework), CORLX, COTER (Terrorism), RELEX (Sanctions) and the High Level Working Group on Asylum and Migration (not a CFSP Working Group).

2.2 International Development, Economic Affairs and European Institutions Directorate

The Directorate continues to follow closely developments on Official Development Assistance policies and to coordinate Malta's response in this regard. The Directorate also oversees Malta's relations with other non-EU European Institutions such as the OSCE and the Council of Europe, and likewise devotes attention to commercial and cultural diplomacy as part of the Ministry's strategic objectives.

Official Development and Humanitarian Assistance

The Ministry for Foreign Affairs is responsible for Malta's actions in the field of Humanitarian Aid and Development Assistance, with a view that Malta, together with the European Union (EU), plays its part in reducing global inequalities, suffering and extreme poverty. Malta's Official Development Assistance (ODA) policy aims to identify a framework for these objectives to be carried out in various ways and through working with various entities. Malta also allocates a substantial sum to the EU budget, which is then channelled to recipient countries through the financial instruments of EU development cooperation.

Malta actively participates within and allocates funds to agencies of the **United Nations**, and many other international multilateral institutions engaging in international development cooperation, particularly within the EU, the Council of Europe, the Commonwealth and the Organization for European Security and Cooperation (OSCE). The Government carries out its work not only through multilateral cooperation, but also via bilateral cooperation with Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs) which are engaged in the fields of development and the private sector. Against this background, in 2013 Malta contribution to ODA amounted to 0.20% of its GNI. The statistics concerning 2014 are in the compilation process.

The Ministry for Foreign Affairs, through the work of the Development Unit within this Directorate, also participates in **EU bodies** shaping the policies, programmes and instruments of EU development assistance and humanitarian aid. At the operational level, it contributes and participates in EU Council Working Groups for Development Cooperation (CODEV); the Working Party on Africa, Caribbean and the Pacific (ACP); the Working Party on Humanitarian Aid and Food Aid (COHAFA), the Humanitarian Aid Committee (HAC), the European Development Fund Working Party (EDF), the Instrument contributing for Stability and Peace Working Party (IcSP), the Member State Experts meetings on Development, meetings for the Directors General responsible for Development, informal meetings of Development Ministers and the meetings of the

Foreign Affairs Council (FAC). Malta also pursues the negotiations of the Economic Partnership Agreements (EPAs).

The European Development Fund (EDF)

The European Development Fund (EDF) is the main instrument for providing Community aid for development cooperation in the ACP States. It works in the background of the implementation of the Cotonou Agreement as set by the European Union (EU). Malta signed the 11th EDF Internal Agreement on 24 June 2013 for the amount of €11,595,331 covering from 2014 to 2020. The 11th EDF Internal Agreement has reached an advanced stage of ratification. Malta ratified this agreement on 5th May, 2014.

Although operated by the European Commission, the EDF is not included in the EU budget and it is classified as an intergovernmental fund where a final decision is taken exclusively by the Member States. Each Member State contributes a set amount of money as agreed at the beginning of each funding period. Since the beginning of January 2014, Malta contributed €943,292 to the EDF, which sum was paid in three tranches.

The European Year for Development

The European Year for Development (EYD) 2015 will be the first ever thematic year dedicated to European External Action. Its motto is '*Our world, our future, our dignity*'. The aim of EYD is to raise awareness among EU citizens about EU development cooperation, also in the light of the EU being the world's largest development aid donor. EYD will demonstrate to EU citizens how money spent on development benefits people in the world's poorest countries and EU citizens themselves.

The Ministry for Foreign Affairs (MFA), as the Ministry responsible for development, was actively involved in meetings leading to EYD 2015, both abroad and also in relation to Malta's EYD National Coordinator, MEUSAC. EU Member State presented their individual National Work Programmes (NWP) to the European Commission. MFA and MEUSAC jointly submitted Malta's NWP to the European Commission. This work programme is expected to bring together governmental, non-governmental and civil-society stakeholders together on twelve thematic projects. The EYD opening ceremony will be held in Riga, Latvia on 9th January, 2015. EYD will be launched in Malta on 15th January, 2015 through a high-level press conference with the participation of government ministers, representatives of civil society and other stakeholders.

MFA's co-funding projects with NGOs

In line with Malta's development policy, the Ministry for Foreign Affairs seeks to provide support to local Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs) dedicated to humanitarian and development assistance. In this regard, the Development Unit coordinated the co-financing of 20 projects for sustainable development in developing countries around the world. The total amount disbursed was €247,775.

The co-financing projects for 2014 were as follows:

- **Living Waters Mission Team - 'Water Supply Project Ganchore Town'**
A water supply project which will provide clean and drinkable water to an impoverished community in Ganchore, Ethiopia.

- **Signum Fidei Malta - 'Improving living and learning conditions for boys attending the St. Joseph's Technical School Hostel located in Kelo, Chad '**
This project consists of the extension of a boys' school together with the restructuring of a hostel at the St. Joseph Technical School in Chad. The project aims to improve the living and learning conditions of these boys.
- **Mission Fund - 'Equal Opportunities and Gender Equality through Education'**
The project consists of the construction of an additional floor of a hostel to accommodate tribal girls attending the St. Xavier College in India.
- **St. Jeanne Antide Foundation - 'A home for abandoned elderly women in the Amazon Rainforest'**
The project involves the setting up of a residential care for homeless elderly women who can no longer look after themselves. The home will accommodate these elderly women and will provide them with basic health and care facilities.
- **KOPIN - 'Access to quality education and early childcare in the Akaki Kality sub-city, Addis Ababa'**
This project consists of the construction and refurbishment of classrooms and the purchasing of educational material for children attending the Early Child Care Education centre in Addis Ababa.
- **Kull Bniedem Hija - 'Giving Secondary Education and Empowering Children to Raise Chicken and Goats to 20 Orphans and Vulnerable (Disabled) Children'**
The aim of this project is to continue to provide educational and financial support for orphans and disabled children by letting them attend their last year of secondary education.
- **Integra Foundation - 'Emergency Health Care for the Disabled Extreme Poor in Rural Guatemala (Phase 3)'**
The project will continue to provide assistance to disabled people by giving them access to emergency health care. It will ease medical costs and improve the quality of their health care.
- **The Moroccan Community in Malta - 'SEW – Sewing Equipment for Women (Victims of Rape)'**
This project addresses women empowerment, targeting single mothers and rape victims who live in the Association Solidarité Féminine Centre in Casablanca, Morocco. The funding is for the purchasing of sewing equipment that can help them to sustain their accommodation.
- **Keralaid Trust - 'Construction and Renovation of Houses for the Marginalised Families of Kerala, India'**
The project involves providing housing for marginalised families in Kerala, India.
- **YMCA Valletta - 'Provide a library/IT room for CAFAP, the youth Training Centre in rural education and human capacity building in Togo'**
This project aims to construct a library and computer room for youths attending the agricultural education and human capacity building training centre in Togo. This will enable the students to engage in further research and strengthen their capacities.

- **ĈAM Youths (Philippines) - ‘The Construction and Setting up of a Multi-Purpose Hall’**
 The project involves the construction and setting up of a multi-purpose hall, which will provide facilities for students attending the music and trade school of Jose Depiro Formation Centre (JDFC) in Bataan, Philippines.
- **Inizjamed - ‘The expansion of the Uwezo Girls Centre’**
 The project aims to provide support and empower young women and single mothers to develop professional skills in order to become self-reliant and independent at the Uwezo Girls Centre in Kibera, Kenya.
- **Rotary Club Malta - ‘SSESE Island Kids School’**
 The project will seek to construct a primary school on Lake Victoria, Uganda.
- **SOS Malta - ‘Youth Engage: Building Skills and Creating Opportunities for Young People in Njeru, Buikwe District, Uganda’**
 The project targets capacity building and training of skills for young people living in squalid conditions. This training will help them to improve their quality of life and in finding better opportunities. The training programme will focus on agriculture and crafts skills.
- **The Arnaud Guesry Foundation - ‘Building of a centre to act as a residential facility and community centre’**
 The project consists of the building of a residential facility to accommodate children from impoverished families by providing them with suitable accommodation, food, medical care and education, in the Diana region of Madagascar.
- **GuateMalta Foundation - ‘Completion of a recreational facility in Guatemala’**
 This project targets the youth and sports with the construction of recreational facilities in an impoverished locality in Guatemala.
- **Inservi Foundation (Maltese Jesuit Foundation) - ‘Construction of a recreational facility at the newly established St. Xavier’s University College, Maharo, Dumka, India in the Santal Mission of the Maltese Jesuits’**
 A construction of a recreational facility at the St. Xavier’s University College in India.
- **ĈAM Youths (Pakistan) - ‘Installation of a Solar Power back-up System at Joseph de Piro Middle School for Girls in Asif Town II, Lahore, Pakistan’**
 The project entails the installation of a solar power array that will ensure constant and regular power supply at the Joseph De Piro Middle School for Girls in Asif Town II, Lahore.
- **FACES - ‘FACES and Cardinal Rugambwa Hospital collaborative capacity-building project (Phase 2)’**
 This project aims to improve the medical standards of the “Cardinal Rugambwa Hospital” in Tanzania. The funding will be allocated for the purchase of medical equipment, a generator and medical training.
- **KIDS – Kids Initiative for Development Sustainability - ‘Greener Child Care in the Slums of Kibera, Kenya’**

The aim of the project is to provide good quality day care services to small children. This will allow their mothers to have time to continue their studies and work.

Humanitarian Aid

Malta's Development Policy recognises the importance of humanitarian assistance and provides assistance in the event of natural disasters, armed conflict and other events on a scale that the affected area or country cannot cope with. The exclusive purpose of humanitarian aid is to prevent or alleviate human suffering in a totally non-discriminatory manner.

The Ministry allocated financial assistance to target the various crises around the world. It addressed the needs of the population of Serbia and Bosnia afflicted by the floods through its contribution to UNICEF, as well as addressed the needs of the internally displaced persons in Ukraine through the UNHCR. A contribution was allocated to the International Organisation for Migration to assist them in their operations in Central African Republic and South Sudan. The Ministry for Foreign Affairs also played its part in combating the Ebola crisis by contributing to the specifically set up UN Multi-Partner Trust Fund on Ebola.

Furthermore, the Ministry contributed to the following pledging conferences, namely:

- The '*Kuwait II Pledging Conference for Syria*', whereby Malta pledged and channelled its funds through UNRWA to assist the Palestinian refugees in Syria.
- The '*International High-Level Meeting on Humanitarian Action in the Central African Republic*', where Malta channelled its funds through the UNICEF to meet the humanitarian needs of children in the Central African Republic.
- The '*New Deal pledging Conference for Somalia*' which was held in September 2013. Funds were channelled through the UN Trust Fund (for security) and the UN Development Programme (for economic growth). This is a three year commitment for the years 2014-2016.

This year, the Ministry also disbursed a Humanitarian Fund of €101,000 dedicated specifically to Palestine. In addition €50,000 were disbursed to the UNRWA Gaza Flash Appeal. Following the visit made by the Minister to Palestine, an additional amount was provided by the Ministry for Finance to be disbursed to UNRWA to respond to the growing needs of the Palestinian population. This Ministry has also assisted two Palestinian children in the medical procedure of a bone marrow transplant.

The Development Unit also disbursed the amount of €30,000 allocated towards the funding of the DiploFoundation Scholarship 2014.

The Millennium Development Goals (MDGs)

Malta remains fully committed to achieving the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and continues to work towards the elimination of poverty and hunger in developing countries by providing financial assistance to local NGOs. This policy seeks to gain more support and to help raise awareness on development.

Following the United Nations High Level Special Event on 25 September 2013 on MDGs which was held in New York, an Open Working Group (OWG) was set up to formulate proposals for Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The OWG looked at development in a post-2015 world. SDGs are applicable to all nations.

On 4th December, 2014 the UN Secretary-General issued a synthesis report entitled 'The Road to Dignity by 2030'. This report channels the results of an unprecedented open and transparent global conversation and intergovernmental process that considered a broad range of recommendations, key reports, peoples' voices and viewpoints. The report puts forward six essential elements for delivering on the SDGs. The six essential elements for delivering on the (SDGs) mentioned in the UN Synthesis Report of the Secretary General (SG) on the Post-2015 Agenda are:

1. 'Dignity: to end poverty and fight inequalities'.
2. 'People: to ensure healthy lives, knowledge, and the inclusion of women and children'
3. 'Prosperity: to grow a strong, inclusive, and transformative economy'
4. 'Planet: to protect our ecosystems for all societies and our children.'
5. 'Justice: to promote safe and peaceful societies, and strong institutions'.
6. 'Partnership: to catalyse global solidarity for sustainable development'

Malta actively participates in the MDGs Experts meetings to develop a post-2015 policy which takes into consideration the international political and economic climate which has changed significantly over the last years. The Directorate through the Development Unit continued to follow discussions and policy formulation on the MDGs, particularly as the target date of 2015 approached.

ODA Software

Malta calculates its Official Development Assistance (ODA) in accordance with the directives and guidelines on statistical reporting of the OECD/DAC (statistical reporting). It is worth pointing out that according to the directives of the OECD, the cost of the public sector to support refugees^[1] in the first twelve months stay in the country is eligible to be included as ODA (this includes the cost of food, shelter and training). Malta follows the rules of the OECD, despite the fact that it is not a member of this organisation.

In 2014, the Ministry for Foreign Affairs has also successfully acquired the EU DEVFIN Reporting and Transparency Software (the aim of which is to assist Member States in compiling their ODA Statistical Reporting).

Cultural Diplomacy

^[1] DAC Statistical Reporting Directives define a refugee as 'a person who is outside his home country because of a well-founded fear of persecution on account of his race, religion, nationality, social group or political opinion. Assistance to persons who for similar reasons are internally displaced within their own countries, or who have fled from their homes because of civil war or severe unrest, may also be counted under this item.'

The Ministry for Foreign Affairs continued with its cultural commitment by assisting in the promotion of art and culture abroad. This was done through direct initiatives by Maltese Embassies/High Commissions and General Consuls in coordination with the Directorate. Among the organised initiatives were art exhibitions, literary recitals, projections of short Maltese film productions, and the participation of Maltese musicians in foreign festivals.

The aim behind this movement was to foster Maltese creative and artistic awareness abroad. In a globalised world, networking and hegemony in all that takes place in Malta and abroad are translated into an interesting language that, while making it a point to retain creative identity, at the same time push towards exporting such endeavours towards different places simultaneously. On an economic level, such activity is very important as both culture and the arts are effective showcases of their country of origin. The Ministry for Foreign Affairs is committed to continue working and improving on the work that has already taken place so far.

Valletta European Capital of Culture 2018

Valletta and the City of Leeuwarden will be European Capitals of Culture in 2018. Now that Valletta won the title, the role of the commission is to assist, as required, the Valletta 2018 Foundation in its task to bring to fruition the preparations that are underway. During the year, this Directorate, through the Cultural Diplomacy Unit continued to collaborate closely with the Foundation for V18 in creating a programme for this event that will be holistic and should also provide a firm platform from which all missions overseas can then work in addressing intercultural dialogue and collaboration. To this end, the unit coordinated the Malta Showcase project together with the Arts Council Malta and the Ministry of Justice, Culture and Local Councils (MJCL) which should assist in providing an effective directory of the highlights from some of the island's best talent and art that can be exported and presented to audiences in various countries, even with the assistance of the Missions abroad.

Strengthening of Malta's Cultural Diplomacy

The Ministry resumed work to strengthen its internal cultural arm as highlighted in the National Cultural Policy document launched in July 2011. The unit continued in its role to develop a cultural diplomacy policy that is aimed at promoting Maltese culture and identity abroad. This is taking place with an eye on national priorities that include the strengthening of economic activity from other sources such as creative industries as well as the creation of more quality induced employment. The unit is also committed to work closer with both local and international cultural operators to make sure that Maltese culture receives the highest possible visibility worldwide. The unit also administers a cultural diplomacy fund of €75,000 annually. The main purpose of the fund is to assist Maltese Embassies abroad with the implementation of selected cultural diplomacy projects. Between September 2013 and September 2014, 23 projects in different cities around the world were selected for implementation.

Other Initiatives

In June 2014, the Directorate was instrumental in finalizing the XIV Italo-Maltese Executive Programme on Cultural Cooperation between Malta and Italy for the term 2014-2016.

The Cultural Diplomacy Unit participated in an Informal Meeting in Athens also in June 2014, to mark the end of the Greek Presidency of the EU Council and establish some clear directions for the promotion of Cultural Diplomacy as a useful and effective way of addressing intercultural dialogue.

The Cultural Diplomacy Unit was instrumental in providing support for the Ministerial visit in November 2014 to Leichtenstein and Switzerland by proposing areas of collaboration between the three countries focussing on Education and Culture.

In December 2014, the Unit also facilitated the commencement of discussions between the District of Beyoglu (Istanbul, Turkey) and the four local councils of Cottonera (Birgu, Bormla, Senglea and Kalkara).

The Unit also facilitated two twinning agreements and discussions between Pacchino (Sicily) and Xewkija (Gozo) and Vico Equense and Zejtun. During 2014 the CDU also facilitated the discussions leading to agreements on Culture and Education between Malta and Montenegro as well as the entry into force of the agreement between Kosovo and Malta signed on 30 December 2012.

Meanwhile, the Unit maintained close contact with local and foreign cultural entities and assisted in disseminating culture-related information when requested. Some of these included collaboration with Poland in providing information and facilitating a project to locate a World War II Polish vessel sunk off Malta.

The Unit is also developing a long-term strategy and policy so as to achieve its scope and objectives effectively and efficiently. This strategy should also include the organization of activities and programmes that will bring the diplomatic community accredited to Malta closer to the Ministry for Foreign Affairs and provide the basis for an effective inter cultural dialogue.

EU Presidency

In its capacity as the Ministry's focal point on the EU Presidency, the Directorate continues to engage, throughout the year, in discussions with the Ministry for Europe and Implementation of the Electoral Manifesto on the envisaged roles the Ministry and its officials will be required to uphold in the run-up to and throughout the Presidency itself. The Directorate continued to follow developments on the year's Greek and Italian EU Council Presidencies. The Directorate will continue to remain engaged on this issue and to coordinate with relevant stakeholders.

The Hellenic Presidency (1 January – 30 June 2014)

This was the fifth Presidency of the European Council that has been led by Greece. The priorities of the Presidency were enhancing civic and society engagement in the EU; promoting policies and actions to remedy and restore initial deficiencies in the Euro area architecture; and reinforcing EU democratic legitimacy and accountability along with building up the collectivity and solidarity links among Member States, as well as incrementally constructing European democracy and expanding civil rights.

Growth, Jobs and Cohesion

In a period when unemployment had reached unacceptably high rates in several EU member-states, affecting especially the youth, and when recession is a constant threat to European economies, growth becomes a matter of overriding importance for the Hellenic Presidency. The main objective was to return to sustainable public finances while promoting jobs-creating growth policies. The Hellenic Presidency welcomed the European Investment Bank (EIB)'s new mandate to the European Investment Fund (EIF) of up to EUR 4 billion and supported the Commission and the EIB in their efforts to further enhance the EIF capacity through an increase in its capital with a view to reaching final agreement by May 2014.

Further Integration of the EU and the Eurozone

Deepening the new EMU architecture, restoring financial liquidity and returning to growth were key priorities for the EU rotating presidencies of the coming years, including the Hellenic one. In this framework, progress on the following building blocks will be emphasized as follows:

- a. The promotion of the banking union, by the adoption of its cornerstone legislative piece, the Single Resolution Mechanism Regulation, before the end to the European Parliament's current legislature.
- b. Further progress concerning the effective implementation and further integration of the new EU/Eurozone economic governance mechanisms, so as to enhance synergies between member-states in a growth and jobs-friendly way, including by facilitating discussions on the establishment of the Partnerships for Growth, Jobs and Competitiveness.
- c. We will strive to lay the foundations of an ever-prosperous, well-coordinated EMU, with the right balance between solidity and solidarity. This new Eurozone would put a definite end to the instability and uncertainty observed, in particular in the "periphery".
- d. Special emphasis will be attached to the social dimension of the EMU, as one of the pillars for its further deepening. For the first time, the social dimension of the EMU will be integrated in the 2014 European Semester cycle.

Migration, Borders and Mobility

Instability in the European periphery, together with the perseverance of the causes that lead to immigration flows into Europe, increased these flows and place an extra burden on EU member states, in a period of economic crisis, when all forces and efforts should be focused on reforms aiming at safeguarding stability and revitalizing growth. This burden falls mainly on the EU member-states that are at Europe's external borders, as well as on those heavily affected by recession and unemployment. In this context, the Hellenic Presidency aimed its efforts at highlighting the positive aspects of a comprehensive migration management to the benefit of boosting growth and will spare no efforts in promoting all dimensions of migration and mobility policies. At the same time, action was envisaged to tackle the problems arising from illegal migration in economy, social cohesion and political stability.

Maritime Policies

The Sea is an area of privilege in terms of knowledge and action for Greece and an inexhaustible source of growth and prosperity for the whole of Europe. Traditionally a

maritime country, Greece acknowledged the great potential and opportunity that marine and maritime activities hold for the EU economy as a whole, on the condition of sustainability. At the same time, Europe's obvious strategic interests that justify the urge to bring to the fore and deal with security problems of sea borders management were taken into account. In this context, Greece introduced an horizontal thematic through all three of the presidency's priorities, namely the EU Maritime Policies, to redefine and re-launch the EU Maritime Policy in all its aspects.

The Italian Presidency (1 July-31 December 2014)

This was Italy's eleventh Presidency of the Council of the European Union since the signing of the Treaties of Rome in 1957. The programme of the Italian Presidency focused on growth and employment; a space for freedom and security; full exercise of citizenship rights and a stronger role of Europe in the world.

Europe for employment and economic growth

Improving economic growth and employment prospects mostly depends on the future of the European integration process. The Italian Presidency placed growth and employment at the centre of European policies to define an economic framework capable of encouraging structural reforms within member states. Real economy, "industrial renaissance", with a particular focus on SMEs, as well as energy and climate policies for 2030 was the heart of growth initiatives. The Italian presidency worked to strengthen the European Economic and Monetary Union and reduce the serious social "spread" in European societies, to finance growth and support investments in sectors that are key for the future of our children, such as environmental protection, infrastructures and digital services. Italian Presidency focused on sustainable development issues also through the creation of positive synergies with Expo Milano 2015, whose central topic is "Feeding the planet. Energy for life".

Europe closer to citizens: a space for democracy, rights and freedom

Being European citizens, today, means removing obstacles and procedures which make active citizenship senseless and generate frustration. Accountability, digitalisation, transparency and less red tape are the answers to those who wish Europe to be closer to its citizens. It is crucial to ensure the good functioning and loyal cooperation between institutions so that these can operate rapidly and effectively. The Italian Presidency promoted a more active role of the European Union in areas where the European initiative adds value, such as protection of fundamental rights as well as migration and asylum policies. In this context, the Italian Presidency worked at developing a genuine solidarity at a European level and promoting a European migration policy.

A new impetus to the European Union's foreign policy

The Arab Springs and the Ukrainian crisis showed that Europe cannot ignore historic events happening at its borders. Italy strived for EU external action to be credible, consistent and equipped with the necessary tools to address global and regional challenges. The Mediterranean continues to be a vital space for Europe. The migration emergency forces Europe to adopt instruments and common policies to tackle this major phenomenon of our time. Enlargement was a strategic priority for the Italian Presidency. Accession negotiations with the Western Balkans were encouraged whilst

new impetus was given to the negotiations with Turkey. The Presidency supported bilateral trade negotiations and investments with strategic partners and emerging economies, such as the Asian ones which were the focus of the ASEM summit on 16-17 October 2014.

Commercial Promotion

The Ministry continued to forward trade and investment-related requests processed by Maltese Embassies abroad to the Malta Chamber of Commerce, Enterprise and Industry and Malta Enterprise.

Training was undertaken by Maltese diplomats in commercial-related matters, with the assistance of organisations such as Malta Enterprise and FinanceMalta. This training will assist them in promoting Malta in the international commercial field.

The Joint Stakeholders Working Council convened its regular meetings between January and December 2014. Discussions were held on numerous subjects related to promotion abroad. Foreign Ambassadors and other guest speakers were also invited to address the Council.

In January 2014, a business delegation accompanied the President of Malta, Dr George Abela, during a State Visit to Austria and Slovakia. Another business delegation accompanied the President during a State Visit to Germany in March 2014.

Between 15 and 17 January 2014, the Commercial Diplomacy Unit facilitated meetings for the High Commissioner of Canada accredited to Malta with officials from the Malta Chamber of Commerce, Enterprise and Industry, the Ministry for Transport and Infrastructure, the Lotteries and Gaming Authority, the Ministry for Foreign Affairs, the Gozo Business Chamber, FinanceMalta, the Malta Tourism Authority, Malta Enterprise and the Malta Film Commission.

The Ministry assisted in the organisation of an official business delegation which visited Qatar and the United Arab Emirates (UAE) between and 22 March. The delegation included, *inter alia*, representatives from Malta Enterprise, the Malta Chamber of Commerce, Enterprise and Industry, Finance Malta, Malta Freeport and private entities and held several meetings in both countries. Another business delegation visited Dubai (UAE), Oman and Kuwait between 22 and the 26 of September. Agreements were signed with the Dubai Chamber of Commerce and Industry as well as with the Oman Chamber of Commerce and Industry

On 10 April 2014, a Maltese delegation composed of officials from Malta Enterprise and the Ministry for the Economy, Investment and Small Business, held talks with Turkish officials in Ankara. The main topic discussed during the meeting was the formation of a 'Joint Economic and Trade Committee' (JETCO) between the two countries. The Commercial Unit assisted in the organisation of this meeting as well as with other work related to it.

A Vietnamese trade delegation led by that country's accredited Ambassador visited Malta between 4 and 7 May 2014, for meetings with a number of organisations and entities. A 'Vietnam-Malta Economic Roundtable' was organised with the assistance of the Malta Chamber of Commerce, Enterprise and Industry and involved the participation of the Ministry for Foreign Affairs, FinanceMalta, the Federation of English

Language Teaching Organisations of Malta (FELTOM), the Institute for Tourism Studies (ITS) and the Honorary Consul for Vietnam in Malta. The two sides discussed the strengthening of economic relations between the two countries.

On 23 July 2014, the Unit participated in a meeting related to the establishment of a Maltese-Turkish Business Council. The meeting was held at the Chamber of Commerce and was attended by several representatives of the private sector.

The Ministry assisted the Maltese Embassy in Moscow in organising a 'Malta Day' event on 18 September 2014 in conjunction with the Moscow Entrepreneurs Association. Representatives from Malta Enterprise, the Association of General Retailers and Traders (GRTU), the Gozo Business Chamber, the Malta Tourism Authority (MTA), Airmalta and Malta International Airport (MIA) were also present.

Throughout 2014, the Unit was involved in a number of meetings with the Swiss-Maltese Chamber of Commerce as well as with other entities interested in exploring business opportunities in that country. A number of initiatives to strengthen bilateral economic relations between Malta and Switzerland were discussed.

Other Activities

The Ministry continued to follow the free trade negotiations which the European Union launched with Japan and the United States during 2013. The establishment of free trade areas with these two economic powers is expected to have a positive impact on the EU's economy. The Ministry also monitored other trade negotiations in which the EU is involved, including the ones taking place within the World Trade Organisation (WTO).

The Agreement for the Avoidance of Double Taxation and the Prevention of Fiscal Evasion with Respect to Taxes on Income, which was signed with the Russian Federation on 22 April 2013, entered into force in April 2014. Likewise, the Agreement signed with the Principality of Liechtenstein on 27 September 2013, entered into force on 1 July 2014.

In 2014, Malta also signed similar Agreements with Moldova and Mauritius on 11 April and 15 October respectively.

The Unit remained engaged with various embassies, both resident and accredited from abroad, to seek further trade links between Malta and the countries concerned. It also acts as a channel of communication between Malta's Missions abroad and relevant stakeholders in Malta. Malta's diplomatic representations abroad continued to be involved in promotional events held in their countries of jurisdiction, namely events and fairs.

The Unit was also involved in organising meetings with several business-related entities for the benefit of Malta's Non Resident Ambassadors. The Unit is actively assisting Ambassadors in formulating relevant strategies with the aim of strengthening the commercial links between Malta and their countries of jurisdiction.

European Institutions

Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE)

Forum for Security Cooperation (FSC) Chairmanship

Malta assumed the Chairmanship of the FSC from 1 January 2014 till 9 April. Malta's overarching priority for its Chairmanship was the Mediterranean, focusing in particular on the Code of Conduct on Politico-Military aspects of Security: democratic control and parliamentary oversight of armed and security forces; and anti-trafficking measures related to arms. The Directorate assisted the Maltese Mission in Vienna, which maintained the chairmanship of regular meetings, in the run-up to the opening session, which was presided over by the Minister for Foreign Affairs.

OSCE/UNODC Mediterranean Regional Counterterrorism Expert Workshop on Terrorist Kidnapping and Hostage Taking

The OSCE and the UN Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) jointly organised a Mediterranean Regional Counterterrorism Expert Workshop on Terrorist Kidnapping and Hostage Taking: Enhancing the Implementation of the International Legal Framework against Terrorism. The workshop took place in Malta on 16-17 September 2014. It was organised under the auspices of the Government of Malta and with the support of the Principality of Liechtenstein, the Kingdom of Spain and Switzerland.

The workshop brought together around 70 participants, including senior counter-terrorism practitioners in the areas of law enforcement, the judiciary and prosecution, as well as officials from Foreign Ministries and crisis management units. The primary goal of the workshop was to exchange information and good practices, and to strengthen cooperation with the scope of enhancing prevention and thwarting kidnappings in the region, while simultaneously implementing relevant Universal Anti-Terrorism Instruments. The Directorate was actively involved in the logistical and organisational preparations for the workshop in conjunction with the OSCE/UNDOC representative.

21st OSCE Council of Ministers Meeting

The Minister for Foreign Affairs of Malta, participated in the 21st OSCE Ministerial Council Meeting held in Basel, Switzerland, on 4-5 December 2014. The Minister reaffirmed Malta's commitment to the OSCE and reiterated the importance of enhancing security and stability within the Organisation, particularly in relation to the Mediterranean region and in view of the current crisis in Ukraine.

The meeting focused on the achievements of the Swiss Chairmanship over the past year, and will seek consensus at the highest political level among the representatives of the 57 participating States, on decisions of particular concern within the areas of the Organisation's work. The crisis in Ukraine featured predominantly during the Ministerial Council meeting as representatives attempted to discuss every possible scenario for a way forward in terms of a peaceful resolution to this conflict.

The Ministerial Council meeting also addressed the crisis in European security as well as the fight against Terrorism. Another important issue for the Organisation which was discussed during this meeting was the Helsinki+40 Process. The Directorate collaborated significantly with the Embassy of Malta in Vienna with the scope of ensuring the Decisions and Declarations emerging from the meeting reflect Malta's foreign policy, particularly in terms of the Mediterranean dimension within the OSCE.

Council of Europe

The Directorate continued to actively participate in the discussions at the Council of Europe, in collaboration with relevant line Ministries and the Permanent Representation in Strasbourg. The Minister for Foreign Affairs attended the 124th Session of the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe which was held in Vienna on the 5-6 May 2014. A Report prepared by the Secretary General on the state of democracy, human rights and the rule of Law in Europe was one of the items discussed during this meeting. The crisis in Ukraine features predominantly throughout the meeting. The Directorate was extensively involved in the preparations required in advance of the Ministerial participation in Vienna.

Other activities

Participation in various meetings of the Council of Europe was coordinated by the Directorate with the relevant line Ministries. The Directorate also followed up on matters concerning pending ratifications of Council of Europe Conventions, alignment with statements at the Committee of Ministers and contributions to the budget of the Council. An official within the Directorate attended the High level Conference on “The policy of the Council of Europe towards neighbouring regions” which was held in Baku, Azerbaijan, on 7-8 November 2014.

Participation in Brussels based meetings

During this year, the Directorate maintained its role in participating in Brussels-held Capitals-based meetings where it continued to follow ongoing discussions on the OSCE and the Council of Europe.

3. Directorate for Corporate Services

Human Resources

In 2014, amongst its other priorities, the Ministry continued to strengthen and enhance the professional capabilities of the Maltese Diplomatic Corps.

The Human Resources Branch provided support to the Senior Management, Heads of Departments/Units/Missions and the employees in general. The senior management structure was strengthened through the appointments of Director (Protocol and Consular Services), Director (International Development, Economic affairs and European Institutions), Assistant Director (Human Resources and Support Services) and Assistant Director (Cultural Diplomacy). 12 Second Secretaries were appointed to First Secretaries. By means of a service-wide recruitment process, a Manager Missions Finance, an EU Security Coordinator and one ICT Support Officer were recruited. The selection process for the recruitment of 11 Second Secretaries, 1 Casual Substitute Clerk, 1 Senior Operative (Plasterer and Painter) and 2 Operative (Handyman) were at various stages of the engagement process. In addition it was heavily involved in the movement of officers pertaining to the General Service following appointments and promotions to clerical grades and upwards.

The Human Resources Branch processed a number of progressions in the public service grades as well as implemented promotion and progression procedures in the diplomatic and departmental grades. In order to complete such promotions and progressions, the Human Resources Branch monitored the staff PMP reports and

requested the necessary Performance Reports from the respective Heads of Department/Unit/Mission.

The Ministry continued to attribute great importance to staff training both locally and abroad. During the period under review, one Diplomatic officer was granted study leave to read for a degree in Law and another officer to read for a Masters in Arts in Mediterranean Studies both in the University of Malta. Other officers benefitted from short-term courses in a number of areas including Information Management, language training, Managerial, Health and Safety, First Aid, Green Public Procurement, Tendering Procedures, Governance, EU Related and Continuous Development, Registry Procedure and Travel Regulations .

Human Resources maintained its level of support to other sections of the Directorate Financial Management in particular the Finance section. It also carried out constant monitoring of personal emoluments, particularly of allowances and overtime throughout the year.

Through Family Friendly measures more employees benefitted from Telework, Flexi hours, Reduced hours, Parental leave and Maternity Leave. In its wide-ranging responsibilities, the Human Resources provided unlimited administrative assistance to all officers who were posted overseas as well as all officers returning from overseas posting.

Finance

The Ministry for Foreign Affairs planned, organised and implemented various important events with the aim of achieving its set goals. Of particular mention is the concert named *Mixjietna* held on 17th May 2014 under the distinguished patronage of the President of Malta with the aim to celebrate the four National Anniversaries that Malta and its people celebrated in the year under review. Another important event was the hosting of the third *Kunsill tal-Maltin ta' Barra* meeting on the 1st and 2nd October 2014. Other main events hosted throughout the year were the New Year Exchange Greetings and meetings/luncheons with various foreign dignitaries. The level of participation and performance for these events was very satisfactory. This Directorate was also involved in the organisation of various initiatives amongst which was the *Notte Bianca* where the Ministry hosted an art exhibition by Mosaico Group of Artists and the performance by local group of students. The Ministry also held the Ambassadorial Meeting 2014 for its Ambassadors in order to deliver information about the direction to be taken by the said Ministry.

The Corporate Services Directorate made use of the Departmental Contracts Committee Board set up in 2010 to view the issuance of departmental tenders in the procurement of goods and services. This ensured that the Ministry (including Missions abroad) was compliant with the Procurement Regulations in force and transparent in the procurement of goods and services from various suppliers. Due to this new procedure (calls for quotes /tenders were issued where possible instead of Direct Orders), there were considerable financial savings made while at the same time, the Ministry benefitted from the best services available on the market.

The Corporate Services Directorate continued to work on strengthening the procurement strategy launched during 2013. This strategy was also audited by the

Internal Audit and Investigations Unit which recommendations submitted were taken on board to ensure further compliance with local regulations and policies in place.

The Corporate Services Directorate also managed effectively and responsibly the funds allocated in its 2014 Revised Budget and savings were still registered where possible, whilst ensuring in the process that the output was of the highest standard. Commitments have also been honoured.

The Ministry also contributed out of its yearly budget, funds to the International Institute of the Ageing and Mediterranean Academy of Diplomatic studies.

Mission Accounts Section

There are still some issues to be solved before Tripoli and Benghazi can join the Electronic Cash Management System (ECMS).

This electronic system connects the accounts system at Embassies with that of the Central Government in Malta so that efficiency in the use of allocated funds is increased. The system provides a real-time picture of the finances of MFA's Missions abroad and thus providing a thorough audit of all financial expenses. The system is still being refined and enhancements are being implemented in order to make it user friendly and efficient as much as possible.

The Consulate in Algiers was set up under the Malta Enterprise and MFA.

Once again in 2014 various maintenance were carried out across the Missions both at the residence and chancery which are government owned namely in Berlin, Canberra, Washington, Tripoli and London. A plan over a period of 3 years was made to carry out repairs.

During this year the official cars pertaining to the Missions in Canberra and Madrid were replaced while Cairo changed the second car.

Green Initiatives

In 2014, the MFA Green Leaders held a number of internal and external meetings to discuss green initiatives. These meetings have assisted us in drafting an Action Plan for the Ministry for Foreign Affairs entitled '*MFA Green Initiatives: Suggesting an all-encompassing approach for a more environmentally friendly Ministry*'. This was signed by the respective Green Leaders and endorsed by the MFA Permanent Secretary in May 2014. In July, the Ministry for Foreign Affairs Green Leaders have also provided their contributions to the 'Inter Ministerial Task Force on the Green Economy'.

Project Management and Maintenance Works

Regular maintenance and upkeep was carried out at the Ministry, Directorates and Outstations throughout 2014, and amongst other works there was the refurbishment of the back wall of the fountain opposite the main door, the pointing, plastering and painting works of the corridors around the courtyard of the ground floor and first floor, the redecoration of Main Hall adjacent to Sala Borg Oliver and the consolidation of five slabs at roof level at Palazzo Parisio.

Further regular maintenance and various upgrading works were carried on the new lift installed at Palazzo Parisio during 2014. Upgrading works were also carried out on the lifts at IMU and Allied House and they were also subsequently certified according to Health and Safety requirements.

The LED lighting fittings at the Permanent Secretary's office were replaced and moreover we are gradually changing the worn out lighting devices to LED technology at various sections within the Ministry and outstations, which is more efficient and cost effective.

There was regular maintenance, servicing and repairs throughout the year of various air conditioning units throughout the Ministry and the Outstations.

The application for the proposed project at intermediate level of Palazzo Parisio was approved by MEPA.

There were discussions vis-à-vis the various potential proposals with regard to the development of the basement level at Palazzo Parisio.

Maintenance and servicing of all the fire extinguishers at Palazzo Parisio and the Outstations were carried out according to Health and Safety requirements.

4. Protocol and Consular Services Directorate

Visits

During this period, the Directorate was responsible for assisting in the preparatory organisational work and in the implementation of visits to Malta by foreign dignitaries, notably: Ms Marie Geoghagen Quinn, EU Commissioner for Research Innovation & Science, Mr Martin Schulz, President of the EU Parliament Dr Karolos Papoulias, President of the Hellenic Republic, Princess Maha Chakri, Princess of Thailand, Mr Maris Sefcovic, Vice President of the EU Commission responsible for Inter-Institutional Relations & Administration, Mr Gunther Oettinger, Vice-President of the EU Commission responsible for Energy and Ms Cecilia Malstrom, Vice-President of the EU Commission responsible for Home Affairs.

Other Ministers who visited Malta were: Mr Matteo Fiorini, Secretary of State (Minister) for Communications of San Marino, Frederick Teeven, Minister for Migration of the Kingdom of Netherlands, Fabio Picardo, Chief Minister of Gibraltar, Pasquale Valentini, Secretary of State (Minister) for Political & Foreign Affairs.

Visits by high level officials included that of: Ms Natalia Ghuman, Deputy Prime Minister and Ministry for Foreign Affairs and EU Integration of the Republic of Moldova, Mr Deodat Maharay, Commonwealth Deputy Secretary General, Mr Abdel Razak Grady, Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation, Mr Wang Chao, Vice-Minister of Foreign Affairs of the People's Republic of China, Sandro Gozi, Italian Underscretary responsible for EU Affairs, Dr Taysir Farhat, Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs of Palestine.

In addition to the above, the Directorate set up a number of programmes for routine visits by non-resident Ambassadors (15). The directorate also co-ordinated the visit to

Malta by 34 non resident Ambassadors and Chargés d'Affaires in connection with the programme of the exchange of New Year's Greetings.

There were no outgoing or incoming State Visits during 2014.

Farewell Calls

During this period the term of duty ended for the Ambassadors of the following countries: French Republic, Republic of Poland, Russian Federation, People's Republic of China.

Accreditations

This Directorate sought and obtained the agréments and/or credentials of Maltese Ambassadors to: Albania, Andorra, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Bahamas, Belgium, Bosnia & Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Canada, Croatia, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Ethiopia, Finland, Georgia, Hungary, Japan, Korea (South), Kuwait, Latvia, Liechtenstein, Luxembourg, Moldova, Monaco, Mongolia, Morocco, Nepal, Netherlands, New Zealand, Norway, Oman, Philippines, Romania, Russia, Saudi Arabia, Serbia, Slovenia, Switzerland, Thailand, and Turkey.

Credentials

During 2014, Agréments approving the newly nominated foreign Ambassadors-Designate/ High Commissioners-Designate were issued to the following countries: Republic of Colombia, Republic of Latvia, Republic of Seychelles, Kingdom of Thailand, Republic of Kosovo, Burkina Faso, Kingdom of Spain, Republic of Namibia, Ireland, Republic of Estonia, Sultanate of Oman, Kingdom of Cambodia, Republic of Chile, Republic of the Philippines, Republic of Poland, Republic of India, Switzerland, Republic of France, Republic of Ghana, Japan, Republic of Tunisia, Hellenic Republic, Republic of Bulgaria, New Zealand, Republic of Cuba, Russian Federation.

Accreditations of Foreign Ambassadors or High Commissioners to the Republic of Malta.

Consequently, Ambassadors and High Commissioners of the following countries presented their credentials to the President of Malta up to December 2014:

State of Qatar (10/01/2014); United Arab Emirates, Mongolia and the Islamic Republic of Iran (30/01/2014); Kingdom of Sweden, Republic of Uganda (06/03/2014); Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela and the Democratic Socialist Republic of Sri Lanka (29/05/2014); the Islamic Republic of Pakistan (12/06/2014); the Republic of Armenia and the Republic of Moldova (26/06/2014); the Kingdom of Spain, and Ireland (25/09/2014); the Republic of Ghana, the Republic of Kosovo and the Republic of Chile (16/10/2014); Republic of Latvia, Republic of Estonia, Swiss Confederation (13/11/2014); the Hellenic Republic, the Republic of Seychelles and the Republic of India (27/11/2014); the Republic of Tunisia, the Republic of Colombia and the Republic of Namibia (04/12/2014).

Accreditation of Consuls

Letters of Commission were issued in favour of Malta's Consul-General in Shanghai and Consul in Algiers.

Accreditation of Honorary Consuls

During 2014 the Ministry continued with its effort to further strengthen its network of Honorary Consuls around the world. The main reasons remain twofold, the economic, that is to attract foreign investment to Malta, promote the country as a tourist destination and as a hub for learning the English language and also enhance Malta's reputation in the financial, maritime and aviation sectors and secondly to ensure that the necessary assistance is extended to Maltese nationals should they encounter problems during their travel abroad.

In the past twelve months we have finalised and appointed Honorary Consuls in the following cities: Antananarivo (Madagascar), Ashdod (Israel), Port of Spain (Trinidad and Tobago), Cape Town (South Africa), Veliky Novgorod (Russian Federation), Malmö (Sweden), Sibiu (Romania), Santa Cruz (Bolivia), Arequipa (Peru). The Honorary Consul in Manila (Philippines) has been promoted to Honorary Consul-General.

In the meantime seven other candidates are in the process of being appointed as Honorary Consuls.

Exequatur was issued to Honorary Consuls representing The Gambia, Azerbaijan and Ukraine in Malta, while the Honorary Consuls representing Slovakia and Slovenia were issued with an exequatur as Honorary Consuls General. *Agréments* were also issued to The Bahamas and Mozambique to appoint an Honorary Consul in Malta.

National Days

This Directorate also transmitted numerous national day messages from the President of Malta to various Heads of State and vice versa.

Diplomatic Clearances

Naval Vessels

During the period under review this Directorate processed 58 requests for visiting naval vessels from the United Kingdom, Italy, Germany, France, United States of America, The Netherlands, Russia, China, Portugal, Iceland, Republic of Korea and Oman.

Overflights

This Directorate processed 671 requests for diplomatic clearances for state/military aircrafts to overfly and/or land in Malta during the same period. The requests for diplomatic clearance were received from the following countries: Libya, Italy, Belgium, UAE, Nigeria, United Kingdom, Morocco, France, United States of America, Qatar, Spain, Algeria, Kuwait, Saudi Arabia, Chad, Netherlands, Czech Republic, Greece, Russia, Oman, Sudan, Hungary, Brazil, Azerbaijan, Turkey, Tunisia, United Nations, Turkmenistan, Angola, Ukraine, Cameroon, Sweden, Portugal, Germany, Iran, Pakistan, Bahrain, Egypt, Jordan, Mexico, Canada, Switzerland, Poland, India, Venezuela, Philippines, Republic of Korea, Estonia, Indonesia, Gabon, Mali, Israel, Ecuador, China and Ghana.

Military

During the same period the Directorate issued 22 clearances for the wearing of uniforms during military-related occasions by military personnel of the United States of America, the United Kingdom, *EU-BAM, Ireland, Greece and Canada.

Clearances were also issued for 25 visits to Malta by military personnel from the United Kingdom.

This Directorate also issued accreditation for 7 Defence/Naval/Police Attachés from Belgium, Switzerland, Germany, Spain, the United States of America and Greece.

Conferment of Foreign Decorations

The Directorate processed 15 requests from the Sovereign Military Order of Malta, Italy, Greece, the Netherlands, Austria, Belgium and Poland for the conferment of decorations on Maltese citizens.

Protocol Service to the Diplomatic Corps Accredited to Malta

Diplomatic ID Cards

This Directorate issued a total of 411 Identity Cards to diplomatic (182), administrative (81), and service staff (26) of resident missions as well as for the Consular Corps in Malta (8), the Consular Corps of Malta abroad (12) and the staff at international organizations (102).

Duty Free

The Directorate processed around 111 requests from various resident missions for duty free entitlements on the purchase of cigarettes, spirits, alcohol and other specific purchases.

VAT Refunds

The Directorate continued to administer the Vienna Convention on Diplomatic Relations of 1961 with respect to the diplomatic corps accredited to Malta by ensuring that the diplomatic privileges and immunities are being respected and implemented. In this context this Directorate processed 425 claims for VAT refund and referred them to the VAT Department for reimbursement.

Other Services

Between January and December 2014, we received and processed 1156 requests for use of the VIP and Ministerial Lounge at the airport.

This Directorate also extends assistance to Embassies and International Organisations in Malta as regards queries and requests concerning different Ministries and Government Departments, such as Driving licenses for Diplomats, Car Licenses, Importation of cars, VAT Exemption, Issuing of Car Plates (CD, DMS and TF); other Licenses such as Radio Transmission Licenses or other queries to different Ministries.

Consular Services

Visas

During the year, 681 visa applications of Maltese nationals were processed through Malta's missions in Rome (mainly) and Tripoli (Jan 2014 to Dec 2014).

On a regular basis, we received about 20 calls a day for information on visas, the majority of whom enquired about the list of requirements needed to obtain visas. This information was sent to them electronically, on the same day people made their demand. Many requests are answered or forwarded to the relevant departments respectively as they are received through the generic email (information and Protocol).

Customer Care

This section is the first point of contact with the Ministry for Foreign Affairs for the Embassies and for the general public, either for information, advice, or to fix an appointment. This section receives around 35 calls each day and around 6 people visit the office personally. We also receive around 55 emails each day on the info generic email address of the Ministry, which are either answered directly or else directed to the responsible sections.

Authentications

The total income for the period between January 2014 to December 2014 was € 377,472. Throughout this year 9083 customers called at this Directorate to legalise a total of 29,701 documents.

Scholarships

The Ministry for Foreign Affairs offered scholarships at Masters level in Legal, Economic, Political, Diplomatic or European studies. One application was received and was chosen. This student is currently studying at the University of Sussex in England. The following countries offered scholarships to Maltese students: Italy, Japan, Czech Republic, Germany, Greece, Switzerland, Turkey and Indonesia. MEDAC and IMLI also offered scholarships to Maltese students. Singapore offered 25 short term training courses to Government Civil Servants in various fields. Around 12 students have applied and 9 were chosen as follows: Singapore (6), Switzerland (1) and IMLI (2).

Illegal Migration

During the period from January to December 2014, the Protocol and Consular Services Directorate kept in continuous contact with the Maltese Embassies abroad, foreign Embassies accredited to Malta, and the Police Force in order to issue valid Emergency Travel Documents (ETDs) to third country nationals (TCNs) so that they could be repatriated and logistic arrangements could be made for these irregular migrants to be sent back to their country.

Several requests for ETDs were made for 551 travel documents to be issued. During this period, 39 travel documents were issued through which the process was initiated for holders to be repatriated back to their country. Requests were sent to 28 diplomatic representations accredited to Malta: Algeria, Bangladesh, Benin, Burkina Faso, Cameroon, Democratic Republic of Congo, Egypt, Eritrea, Ethiopia, the Gambia,

Ghana, Guinea Bissau, Republic of Guinea, Ivory Coast, Liberia, Mali, Mauritania, Morocco, Niger, Nigeria, Pakistan, the Palestinian Representation in Malta, Senegal, Sierra Leone, Sudan, Syria, Togo and Tunisia.

Rogatory Letters

During 2014, DPCS facilitated the correspondence of around 41 sets of letters rogatory between the Maltese and foreign judicial authorities.

Consular Services to Foreign Diplomatic Missions

DPCS is in continuous contact with foreign Diplomatic Missions accredited to Malta. In 2014, this Directorate processed documentation in relation to 2 accidents in which foreigners were involved and to the demise of 51 foreigners in Malta.

This Directorate deals with requests from International Organisations about notifications from the EFTA Court by sending copies of the report for various hearings, 4 in 2014, for information to the Attorney General.

This Directorate apart from dealing with cases of Maltese nationals detained abroad, deals also with cases of foreign nationals detained in Malta. In the latter case, foreign governments submit requests concerning their nationals who are detained in Malta. In 2014, there were 10 requests regarding foreign nationals who were arrested or detained in prison in Malta.

Adoptions

DPCS also handles cases of adoption of foreign children from some countries when cases prove more difficult. The Ministry receives requests to transmit documents to foreign Diplomatic Missions for verification or to issue documents relative to the adopting couple. In 2014, DPCS did not deal with any adoption cases.

Court Hearings

Additionally, officials from DPCS give evidence in Court regarding the implementation in Malta of the Vienna Convention on Diplomatic Relations and the Vienna Convention on Consular Relations, as well as evidence relating to other issues falling within the remit of this Directorate.

Maltese Nationals in Distress

From January to December 2014 there were 15 consular cases of certain importance. These can be categorised as follows:

- 5 cases of arrests abroad in connection with theft, smuggling, drug possession and there was one case of abduction and rape;
- 3 deaths of Maltese nationals abroad was registered, two were in tragic circumstances. All 3 nationals have been repatriated;
- 3 cases of repatriation of Maltese nationals, which cases varied from evacuation from warzones (such as Gaza), to others who found themselves destitute (without

means of subsistence), to another Maltese national who was repatriated after fleeing from physical abuse from her Libyan husband in Libya;

- 3 medical assistance cases were also registered during 2014;
- This Ministry also assisted a dual nationality citizen in the efforts to try to return her abducted son (by his Libyan father) from Libya. Unfortunately due to the unfolding of the events in Libya in the summer of 2014, the case is still pending as the child is still in Libya.

Other requests include:

- requests on whereabouts of Maltese nationals by the relatives in Malta
- transfer of funds to Maltese nationals in distress abroad.

Further Consular Assistance was also provided to:

- A Maltese person who applied to return to Australia and whose application was first refused was assisted through an Australian appeal process and successfully returned to his migrant family settled in Australia;
- A Maltese attempting to travel to Kuwait who was listed as having never left Kuwait, was subject to a hefty fine and risked being arrested. Following the submission of proof that he had in fact left Kuwait within the timeframe of a previously issued visa, his records were subsequently corrected;
- A Maltese person paying for a Nigerian visa online who paid an exorbitant amount. This case is still pending;
- A Maltese nun based in India who required assistance with her visa extension;
- A Maltese person living in the British Virgin Islands and a Maltese family living in Guam requiring assistance to be issued with travel documents;
- A Maltese person who wanted to set up a business in Senegal and a Maltese person submitting an offer for a public tender in Ghana;
- A Maltese married couple encountering difficulties with their court sittings as part of the Russian adoption process.

In every consular case, this Ministry could count on the invaluable assistance of the Maltese Embassies and Consulates abroad.

Libya Crisis 2014

It is also worth mentioning that this Directorate worked closely with the Crisis Unit of the Ministry in the assisted departures of Maltese nationals from Libya during the Libyan Crisis in the second half of 2014 (from July to December).

Travel Advice

This Directorate issued travel advices published on the Ministry's website for Algeria, Egypt, Ukraine, Saudi Arabia, Thailand, Libya, Kenya, Palestine, Iraq, Sierra Leone, Nigeria, Liberia, Guinea, Iceland, Israel, Hong Kong and Tunisia.

A travel advice is issued in order to highlight particular events and circumstances resulting from political turmoil, terrorist attacks, civilian unrest, natural disasters or other circumstances which would impinge on the safety of Maltese people living in such countries or intending to travel to such countries.

Working Groups

Consular Cooperation (COCON)

This Directorate participated in the ten meetings of the Consular Co-operation Working Group, which aims to facilitate consular co-operation between the member states for the benefit of European nationals. During this year, progress has been achieved in the negotiations on the Commission proposal for a Council Directive on consular protection for citizens of the Union abroad. Other topics that have been discussed were the Consular Cooperation Initiatives, the EU-US, and EU-Canada consular co-operation, and consular cooperation in crisis areas.

Chiefs of Protocol Informal Meetings (COPRO)

During 2014, the Director attended two Informal Meetings for Chiefs of Protocol (COPRO) organised in Athens (20-21 March 2014) and Rome (13-14 November 2014) by the respective Presidencies. During this meeting current consular and protocol issues were discussed between EU Member States with a view to establishing common practices where possible. The subjects discussed were:

Athens:

- a) Unofficial visits of Heads of States and Governments
- b) Employment of family members of EU diplomats
- c) Size of accredited Diplomatic Missions – requests for radical increase
- d) Appointment and status of Honorary Consuls
- e) VAT exemption for luxury goods

Rome

- a) Diplomatic immunities
 - (i) Working conditions of household staff/domestic employees
 - (ii) International Law and domestic jurisdiction: in case of the seizure of bank accounts belonging to Embassies vs. the 1961 Vienna Convention and 2004 New York Convention
- b) Current trends on Diplomatic Immunities
 - (i) Extension of airport courtesies
 - (ii) Visits by foreign armed security agents: practices and logic
- c) Fiscal privileges to the EU Diplomatic Corps: VAT exemption within EU countries; is it still justified?

5. Information Management Unit

International Connectivity

Internet connections linking Malta's missions and consular posts to the government MAGNET is the main hub of all activities carried out by the Information Management Unit as it provides all the essential services required to all offices abroad. In 2014, the Ministry opened two new offices, one in Kuwait and one in Algeria and both were connected accordingly. All links are constantly being monitored to ensure an uptime line of 98% overall.

Website

During 2014, the Ministry for Foreign Affairs launched a new website which includes a portal for the Ministry and sub-sites for each mission and consular post. The website has a fresh look and feel in line with government's corporate policy for websites. The website is in both Maltese and English languages.

External Border Funds

As part of the General Programme for Solidarity and Migration Flows, Annual Programme 2012, the Ministry for Foreign Affairs has benefitted from an allocation of €3.4 million which were used to finance, the initiation of a project which includes the refurbishment of our Consulate in Tripoli, the purchase of a property in Misurata to serve as a Consulate, and the setting up of a Consulate in Kuwait. This project was successfully completed in 2014. As a continuation to the 2012 Annual Programme, a similar project under the 2013 Annual Programme was also initiated. This includes the continuation of the refurbishment of the Consulate in Tripoli, the refurbishment of the Consulate in Misurata, Doha and Abu Dhabi and the purchase and refurbishment of a Consulate in Shanghai and Algeria. Under the 2013 Annual Programme the Ministry will be benefitting from €5.4 million which expire in June 2015.

National Visa System (VIS Mail)

Also under the umbrella of the General Programme for Solidarity and Migration Flows, Annual Programme 2012, the Ministry for Foreign Affairs has benefitted from EU funds related to the VIS Mail implementation. The amount of funds allocated for this project is €250,000 out of which 75% are EU funded. VIS Mail forms an integral part of the national Visa System and will be the medium whereby all Member States will communicate together on visa matter. This project has been successfully completed in June 2014.

Foreign.NET...a collaborative network

The Ministry for Foreign Affairs is investing heavily in the Ministry intranet system called Foreign.Net. The intranet is intended to improve the flow of information between Head Office and its missions. Apart from being a document management system, the intranet aims to include certain workflows such as booking of resources, vacation leave, etc. The aim is to increase efficiency and to reduce the amount of paper used by the Ministry overall. Furthermore, the intranet is being developed to serve as a document library, thus reducing the total cost of ownership where servers and data centres are concerned.