

**Address by Prime Minister Robert Abela during a press statement
with President of the European Commission Ursula von der Leyen
at Nadur Primary School**

President Von der Leyen, dear Ursula,

Distinguished guests, dear friends,

Welcome to this wonderful school on this beautiful island of villages. I can think of no more fitting occasion for the first ever visit to Gozo by a President of the European Commission. A few days ago, at the United Nations, I set out my mission to ‘Get the Future Right’. I spoke of how we need to take the right decisions to be on top of the challenges ahead. Answering those challenges. This new school is a concrete example of ‘owning the future’. Of turning challenges into opportunities, through leadership.

When the pandemic hit us, Malta and Gozo were hit harder than most. With tourism at a standstill, our islands, which usually welcome so many visitors, were particularly impacted. That’s why when President von der Leyen proposed the Recovery and Resilience facility, Malta was engaged from the start. Because Malta shares with the President the deep belief that only by committing to fully embrace the coming green and digital economic transformation, we will be able to truly build back better. So, I was delighted when the Commission agreed to Malta’s plans. And more delighted still when, on your last visit to our

country, you described Malta's recovery plan as "one of the greenest" any member state, submitted.

That delight continues today, here in Gozo, as we visit pupils and educators that have commenced this scholastic year in new classes, with new facilities. We are delivering a new school on which the previous one was situated. Because we believe that our land use policy is an integral part of our sustainability policy. Utilising the NextGen EU funds to deliver real, practical benefit to Gozitans. The figures are impressive. Overall Malta is benefiting from more than €300 million to speed up our economic growth. Over half of that is supporting our climate objectives, and a quarter our digital transformation. But these fine sounding aims only matter if they are translated into tangible projects. On the ground. Across our communities. Projects that equip local people with the skills of the future. That use the green technology of the future. And build our economic capacity for the future. Nadur School is just such a project.

Utilising over €6 million of NextGen EU investment, to deliver new facilities to enhance the education of the next generation of Gozitans. Only by providing the best education to our pupils can we promote social mobility, which in turn creates more peaceful and equal societies. This project will have a new dance studio, a music room, a literacy room and an art studio. All built sustainably. Using the latest energy efficient technology to deliver a carbon neutral building. A win for pupils. A win for the environment. A win for Gozo and Malta. I would

like to pay tribute to the roles of Education Minister Clifton Grima, Chris Bonett, Parliamentary Secretary for European Funds and Neville Young chief executive officer of the Foundation for Tomorrow's Schools in ensuring the delivery of such an amazing project.

President,

Dear Ursula,

I know you are aware of the dangers of isolation for the more remote parts of Europe. Like me, you agree that connectivity is key to ensuring that geography isn't a barrier to economic success. My government is determined that Gozo's location should be turned into a positive. Gozo will never be left behind and will never play second fiddle. That's why my government has already increased by a quarter Gozo's share of the long-term EU funds allocated to our nation. I say to all Gozitans, we shall ensure that Gozo will always get its fair share. To meet the green targets at the heart of our recovery plan. That's why we've committed to making Gozo the first carbon neutral zone in our islands.

Delivering visible benefits, improving everyday life. Like the green transport hub at Xewkija, a short distance away from where we are today. Designed to enhance connectivity for Gozitans by reducing congestion at the vital Mgarr harbour. With sustainability at its core, electric buses, free to use as is all our public transport, connecting passengers to the harbour. Transforming a site contaminated with illegally dumped material into a green roofed asset. Gozo proudly

showing the way. Gozo may be a small island, but its people are extremely hard working. With Clint Camilleri as Minister, Gozo enjoys an energetic champion in my government, focused on delivering where it matters to better people's wellbeing and prosperity.

Dear Ursula, Thank you for finding the time to visit Gozo, and I am proud to share with you these projects. Observing the impact of our shared commitment to building green growth. It is that agenda of green growth, alongside other vital issues such as migration, which will be central to the discussions and decisions at the MED9 meeting, which Malta is hosting later on today.

Malta and the EU.

Working together.

Delivering a difference.

Driving the change our islands need.

Addressing the challenges.

Getting our nation ready for tomorrow.

In short – getting the future right.