

Keynote Speech of Hon Chris Agius at the 9th Space Policy Conference – 24th January 2017

Esteemed colleagues,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Good morning,

It is a pleasure to be here with you today to address such an important event, about such an important topic, at such an important time. Indeed, the recent publication of the Space Strategy for Europe, followed by ESA's Space 4.0, the ongoing work on the mid-term review of the Horizon 2020 and the Multiannual Financial Framework, as well as, the approaching initiation of discussions on their eventual successors, make this a very opportune time to discuss European Space policy and the future of the sector.

Space is, without doubt, a very strategic sector which is supporting jobs and economic growth in Europe. It is a driver of innovation and research, has significant political ramifications and affects the daily lives of all our citizens. As a result, Space is becoming increasingly important for Europe, and correspondingly, the Maltese Presidency of the Council of the EU will ensure that during its tenure, the sector is given the attention and importance it deserves. Our Presidency will be based on six key priorities, namely: Migration, the Single Market, Security, Social Inclusion, Europe's Neighbourhood and the Maritime sector. Space is a key enabler in many policy areas and I am convinced that it has the potential to provide a horizontal dimension that supports all our priorities. From the fight against the illegal trafficking of human beings, to climate change and transport, Space-based technologies already are, and must continue, to provide new and improved solutions to our Earthly challenges. This is exactly the reason why I believe that Europe should continue to strive to be at the global forefront of Space activities.

During our Presidency, we plan to lead discussions in the Council with the aim of reaching a wide-ranging agreement, in the form of Council Conclusions, giving political guidance for the future of Europe in Space. Personally, I believe that one important focus of our discussions must be the emphasis on the need for capacity building in order to have the right framework conditions for all Member States to make the best of the opportunities provided by Space. It will also be important to look at ways of bringing Space technologies closer to more European citizens, companies and non-Space actors. I strongly believe that citizens' benefits must be kept at the forefront of any activity we undertake and in parallel we should continue to work on boosting awareness raising measures, and achieve wider participation in the sector. Specifically, we must focus on better communicating to our citizens the importance of Space and the need to continue investing in the sector. We also need to look into ways of engaging more SMEs. In line with this, the potential of Space solutions will be highlighted during a Conference on "Resilience in the Mediterranean", which we will be organising in Malta in June, in cooperation with the European Space Agency.

Europe has implemented numerous successful Space projects; GALILEO, EGNOS and COPERNICUS naturally come to mind. However, our past successes should not alienate us from our future challenges. On the contrary, our achievements should be the bow which propel our collective ambitions, be it the EU, the Member States, ESA, and industry, as far forward as possible. Looking

ahead, it must be acknowledged that the challenges for the European Space sector are many: increased competition and more demanding operational requirements are just a few. In the face of these challenges, we need to keep in mind that by acting collectively, by pooling resources and combining efforts, we can achieve more than we could ever achieve individually. In unity, there is strength - strength to provide support to our companies to face present and future challenges, strength to achieve our dreams of Space autonomy and security and strength to retain Europe's role as a global Space leader.

This Conference provides an important platform for Europe's key players in Space to discuss emerging challenges, the opportunities they offer and how to face them, together. While on Earth many things have finite measurable quantities, in Space we make use of the term 'infinite'. And Space has indeed provided humanity with an infinite number of opportunities. It is only through our imagination, investment and hard work that Space can become a concrete reality, and Space applications a tool to achieve our objectives in Space and beyond.

Ladies and Gentlemen, thank you very much for your attention and I wish you a very fruitful Conference.