

Distinguished guests, ladies and gentlemen, good morning.

It is my pleasure, as the Minister responsible for Competitiveness and the Digital, Maritime and Services Economy for Malta, to welcome you all here today for this special conference being organised by the Malta Gaming Authority.

In particular, I am honoured to welcome the European Commission and would like to thank its representatives from the DG for Internal Market, Industry, Entrepreneurship and SMEs for being here with us today. I am sure that this event shall be a wonderful opportunity for all the stakeholders in the room, ranging from regulators to operators and service providers to share their experiences and guide each other on the best way forward in regard to the regulation of this dynamic and fast growing industry.

Malta has been offering regulation for the remote gaming industry since 2004 and since then, it has been committed to delivering a robust, efficient and relevant framework. We have been successful in our endeavours but as the Executive Chairman of the MGA shall soon elaborate, the regulator is currently engaged in an overhaul of the regulation which shall start seeing the light of day in the coming months. This industry is constantly subject to development in terms of ongoing convergence, technology and its increasing attractiveness, and as a result requires frequent reconsideration from a regulatory perspective.

All of us in this room are aware of the very particular nature of the industry we are working within. Not only is it one at the forefront of hi-tech and web-based development, requiring constant monitoring to ensure the approach to it remains relevant, but it also encompasses an added layer of complexity.

Gambling has always raised social, psychological and criminal concerns which demand a regulator to provide adequate controls in a number of areas from consumer protection to social well-being. In fact, entities charged with the regulation of the industry often find themselves in difficulty trying to achieve the right balance between setting the right environment for regulated business to thrive and promoting responsible and legal behaviour.

The quest for this balance is what continues to inspire Malta and jurisdictions all over Europe to do more in the name of clear and coherent regulation. I am aware that while there is no EU-wide regulation of the remote gaming industry, in spite of the fact that it is an industry which inevitably crosses borders, a number of more recent achievements signify the willingness of European governments to regulate the sector better, taking somewhat different approaches yet basing themselves upon similar policies and objectives.

I would like to commend the work of the Expert Group of Gambling Services which has been bringing together regulators from all over Europe on a quarterly basis for four years. The 2014 Commission Communication on consumer protection and the 2015 administrative cooperation

arrangement are perhaps two of the most notable achievements of this group and I am sure they will not be the only ones. The very fact that regulators are coming together to exchange practices and learn from each other is also an accomplishment in itself. It is only with communication and cooperation that real results can be attained and enjoyed.

I have no doubt that today's event is another excellent learning opportunity for the various stakeholders to continue to contribute to the proper regulation of this very demanding industry. I believe that the good turn-out before me demonstrates the willingness of all parties concerned to strive towards excellence.

Finally, I would like to thank all of you for being here, in particular if you have travelled to join us.

I wish you all a successful conference.