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Minister Emanuel Mallia and European Commissioner Karmenu Vella presented the Valletta Declaration during the Informal Ministerial Meeting on the Blue Growth and Ocean Governance

"As an island-state, Malta's destiny has been closely linked to the sea that surrounds us. Thanks to our strategic geographical position in the centre of the Mediterranean, as well as our natural harbours and established ports, Malta has steadily demonstrated its resilience to strengthen our maritime economic activities and to thrive as a maritime nation."

Honorable Emanuel Mallia, Minister for Competitiveness and Digital, Maritime and Services Economy, in collaboration with Karmenu Vella, European Commissioner responsible for Environment, Maritime Affairs and Fisheries, presented the Valletta Declaration during the Informal Ministerial Meeting on the Blue Growth and Ocean Governance in the EU and the Mediterranean, Innovation, and Nautical Tourism in Valletta Malta, on 20th April 2017.

Minister Mallia stated, "As an island-state, Malta's destiny has been closely linked to the sea that surrounds us. Thanks to our strategic geographical position in the centre of the Mediterranean, as well as our natural harbours and established ports, Malta has steadily demonstrated its resilience to strengthen our maritime economic activities and to thrive as a maritime nation. Furthermore, Malta offers a well-developed economic structure, boasting an advanced communications setup, a highly skilled workforce and well-connected business climate. Needless to say, that the Government promises a risk-free business environment to private stakeholders operating in Malta."

The need for continuous support by the EU and its Member States for the sustainable development of the European marine and maritime economy was highlighted throughout the discussions. Significant importance was given to International Ocean Governance to ensure that oceans are safe, secure and sustainably managed as well as to research and innovation which can provide solutions to challenges and inefficiencies. The importance of research and innovation in this sector was emphasised by Parliamentary Secretary for Research, Innovation, Youth and Sports Chris Agius, who chaired the session together with Minister Mallia. Minister Mallia affirmed, "The seas and oceans have been increasingly regarded as the drivers for the European economy, offering the potential for innovation and growth." In this respect, a call to strengthen cooperation between education and the industry was deemed as vital in order to reduce the skills gap. Supporting the blue economy workforce with relevant skills and qualification, will result in high productivity and sustained competitiveness and growth.

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Remarkably, the endorsement of this Declaration played a substantial role on the European Union's priorities for Jobs, Growth and Investment and the forthcoming Presidencies, in close cooperation with other EU Institutions, to take appropriate initiatives and set milestones, taking this declaration as a basis, to further develop and implement the 2012 EU Blue Growth Strategy.

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