



**Media Release**

**25<sup>th</sup> February, 2015**

**GTA Annual General Meeting**

The Gozo Tourism Association held its 16<sup>th</sup> Annual General Meeting on Wednesday, 25<sup>st</sup> February 2015 at the Ta' Frenc Restaurant, Marsalforn, Gozo. The first part of the Annual General Meeting, also included a discussion with the participation of six Gozitan tourism establishment operators and animated by TVM journalist Ms. Ruth Amaira

In his opening address the GTA Chairman Mr, Paul Scicluna said that during 2014, Gozo experienced an increase on the tourist arrivals on 2013. Mr Scicluna stressed the fact that the authorities concerned need to address the particular challenges faced by the Gozitan tourism sector particularly in strengthening tourism niches and specialised niches that can attract more tourists in the lean and shoulder months as well as opening horizons to other markets. In his welcome speech, Mr Scicluna mentioned accessibility to the Island and he stated that GTA is in favour of more accessibility especially by an airlink, as well as the upkeep of the Tourism Product. The GTA chairman of the Association stated that the regionality and rurality of Gozo should be taken into consideration when schemes for touristic improvements are launched.

The GTA's Chief Executive Officer, Mr Joe Muscat delivered a presentation on the administration of the Association during 2014. He gave an overview of the Gozitan touristic performance during last year. During his presentation Mr Muscat gave a detailed report of the work and initiatives undertaken by the Association during the course of the past year 2014.

Nationalist Party Spokesman for Tourism Mr. Antoine Borg M.P. also addressed the AGM and said that this is the first opportunity for him to address the Annual General Meeting of the Gozo Tourism Association. Hon. Antoine Borg whilst commending the increases in tourist arrivals to Gozo stressed the need to keep abreast with the social media and maintain the upgrading of the touristic accommodation. The Gozitan stakeholders have a challenge to entice local students to pursue course at ITS in Gozo. The opposition spokesperson concluded that Gozo is a distinct destination, yet it has to keep on improving in the touristic offer, without laying aside its characteristics.

The Annual General Meeting was also addressed by the CEO of the Malta Tourism Authority Mr. Paul Bugeja. MTA CEO Stated that the touristic sector on Gozo is one of the main economic generators of the Island. Even destination Gozo has an important role in the promotion of the Maltese Islands. MTA is giving a lot of focus to promote Gozo as the Island has a lot of potential in tourism. Mr. Bugeja also announced a revision and update of the tourism legislation. Finally MTA CEO mentioned the co-operation between MTA, the Ministry for Gozo and the GTA which is offering a synergized effort to keep on sustaining this dynamic industry.

The Minister for Gozo, Dr. Anton Refalo, stated that, once again Gozo registered an increase in tourist arrivals in 2014 when compared with 2013, underlining an increase in the average length of stay of the Domestic market which reached, 2.3 nights. The Minister stated that these increases were also the result of several initiatives taken by the Ministry for Gozo during 2014, such as the programme of events for the Holy week and the Christmas month, including Bethalem f'Ghajnsielem. Dr. Anton Refalo also confirmed that increases were also registered from the foreign tourists, mainly the results of more marketing efforts during 2014 including participation in international tourism fairs updating of the web site [www.islandofgozo.org](http://www.islandofgozo.org) and a number of promotional publications.

Minister Refalo said that the above initiatives were carried out through a synergized approach with the tourism stakeholders, namely the Malta Tourism Authority and the Gozo Tourism Association. The Gozitan tourism product was also enhanced through several interventions in the upgrading of various tourist attractions, embellishment of central strips and roundabouts and the re-opening of one of the main cinemas on Gozo.

Dr. Refalo stressed the need of more discipline in our human resources, stemming both from schools and from the parents, while changing the mindset to seek career opportunities in the Gozitan Touristic Sector.

The Minister for Gozo made reference to the Film Production BY THE SEA, which was a golden promotional opportunity to showcase Gozo globally. The positive feedback from celebrities like Angelina Jolie and Brad Pitt during their stay on Gozo, is ample proof that the island has the potential to host high end clients.

Finally Dr. Anton Refalo stated that although 2014 was a positive year for tourism on Gozo, yet there are still challenges that need to be tackled during this current year as well as during the immediate future. The Minister for Gozo concluded that destination Gozo needs to sustain its present tourist arrivals both foreign and domestic, while improving the islands infrastructure in order to offer a better touristic product to meet the tourists expectations.

During this AGM the GTA council for 2015 was formed and is made up of the following members: Azzopardi Karl (St. Patricks Hotel) Borg Monica (Hotel ta' Cenc), Busuttil Mark (St. Andrews Divers Cove), Cassar Chris (Porto Vecchio Restaurant), Gatt Ludgard (Tamarisk Properties), Loporto Mario (Gozo Village Holidays), Meilak Brian (Baron Group), Mercieca Joseph (Country Terrace Restaurant) Muscat Sammut Joseph (Down Town Hotel), Rapa Joe (Ta Salvina Restaurant), Scicluna Konrad (Links Travel) Scicluna Paul (Gozo Farmhouses), Spiteri Pauline (Mario's Rent a car) Spiteri Philip (Il-kartell Restaurant), Veranneman Amand (Chez Amand), and Zammit Jamie (Gozo Garage)

Other distinguished guests present for the Annual General Meeting, included, Ms. Esther Bajada, Director Tourism and Economic Development MGO, Ms. Christine Vella Head MTA Gozo Office, Ms. Maryanne Portanier Head Gozo Segment, Ministry for Gozo and Malta Tourism Authority officials, other guests and GTA members from the various sectors of the Gozitan Tourism Industry.

**Joe Muscat**  
**CEO**  
**Gozo Tourism Association**