

## Opening speech by the Hon. Dr Joe Cassar, Maltese Minister of Health

14<sup>th</sup> October 2011

Prof Bernd Böttiger  
European Resuscitation Council  
Ladies and Gentlemen

Good morning

It gives me great pleasure to welcome you at the opening of this European Resuscitation Council conference. I am told that we have delegates from many countries and I therefore begin by extending a warm welcome to all and I hope you will have a very pleasant stay in Malta.

The theme for this Medical Conference is implementation of the new resuscitation guidelines which were launched worldwide last year. This is indeed a most relevant subject, given the high incidence of cardiac arrests and its still poor outcomes.

On the 29 September 2011, on the commemoration of World Heart Day, the WHO estimated that in 2008, 17.3 million people died from cardiovascular diseases, including heart disease. This represents 30% of all global deaths. The emphasis on this day was on healthy diet, regular physical activity and avoiding tobacco smoke. However despite all efforts we will have to accept that heart disease will still remain a prime cause of morbidity and mortality and when a victim suffers a cardiac arrest all best possible treatment should be offered to this person. And this optimal treatment can only be offered if there is good research, good training and good access to treatment possibilities. From what I am told these are the main topics which brought you all together to this meeting.

The challenge for the medical profession is to stay abreast of new developments, and to maintain competency and currency so that we may offer the most appropriate care for our patients.

I am encouraged to see so many experts and researchers coming here today to promote a learning environment for healthcare professionals in the field of resuscitation. I am even more encouraged, on a local scene, to see what Maltese professionals have achieved in this field too.

Resuscitation is a speciality on its own merits and the fact that guidelines are the result of a consensus of experts from all over the world augers for the best possible evidence based medicine. However all efforts should be made to spread this science outside the field of expertise and go to probably its prime users, that is, the general public. I very much support the principle of the chain of survival starting from educating the public on when and how to call for help and I support even more the principle that basic CPR should be a general, 'social' skill that all citizens should be taught. In Malta we are fortunate that a number of NGOs like the Malta Resuscitation Council are reaching out more and more to the general public with their training and I thank them for their efforts.

In December 2010 you heard about the new resuscitation guidelines in Porto and today you come together to discuss their implementation. This is the right step forward since in the next 2 days you will be able to evaluate the outcomes of your work and research.

To conclude, I believe that your work and interest in this field of medicine should be praised and supported. I wish you an enjoyable learning experience and a successful meeting.