



THE MALTA CHAMBER

## PRESS RELEASE

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### **No Storm can Justify Excusing Illegal Operations and Illegal Structures**

#### ***The Malta Chamber calls for stricter eligibility criteria***

The Malta Chamber of Commerce, Enterprise and Industry has always advocated that laws and regulations must be respected and adhered to, and, has repeatedly called out for stricter monitoring and enforcement to ensure that violators do not get the upper hand over businesses that operate in full respect of laws and regulations. The Prime Minister's statement that businesses operating in illegal structures will still be eligible for the storm reconstruction fund is worrying. Supporting businesses that are in breach of planning regulations, building regulations, and conditions or contractual obligations tied to public property runs directly counter to the principles of good governance, the rule of law, and ethical public policy. Public funding must reward compliance, not breaches of the law.

The Malta Chamber has consistently argued that those who operate legally, pay their taxes on time, and comply with planning and safety regulations must be recognised, protected, and incentivised, not placed in the same basket as those who flout the law. By using public funds to support businesses operating with illegalities, the Government sends a clear message that non compliance can be financially rewarded – this risks encouraging further disregard towards the law and instigates more flouting of planning and environmental rules.

Businesses that invest time and resources to obtain the required permits, meet safety standards, and operate within the law are now effectively being treated on the same footing as those who do not. This creates an unlevel playing field and a clear governance anomaly. A level playing field starts with respect for the law. Emergency funds must not legitimize illegality. Extending the storm fund to businesses who are operating with illegalities contradicts this established eligibility logic and weakens public confidence in the integrity of public funding.

The Malta Chamber calls on Government to exclude from the storm reconstruction fund those businesses operating with illegalities, in line with the principle that public money should support lawful and responsible operators. Public money – taxpayer's money which workers and ethical businesses pay – cannot and must not be used to support, fund or reward illegal business operations.

The Malta Chamber keeps on reiterating that good governance cannot coexist with the rewarding of illegality. Upholding the rule of law and supporting ethical businesses is not only a matter of fairness; it is essential for Malta's long term economic credibility and sustainable development.

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