

**Speech by the Hon. Tonio Fenech, Parliamentary Secretary in the Ministry of Finance, on the occasion of the Open-Day held for the recruitment of personnel in the i-gaming industry.**

*Friday 14<sup>th</sup> July 2006*

I am delighted to be opening this career opportunities event for the i-gaming industry. My virtual presence works out with an industry that is entirely based on means of distance communications!

It gives me great satisfaction to see such an event being organized by the private industry for this business sector. It demonstrates that our government's long term strategy has been successful and now its bearing fruit, Eight years ago we felt that Malta should become a centre of excellence for Information Technology and embarked on a project to identify which industries would best suit our economy, size and infrastructure. It was not an easy task remembering that this was in the time of the so called 'dot-com boom' crash. However as international markets continued to fall it became clear that e-commerce was a realistic economy that could develop into global proportions. Malta chose to take up Remote gaming as it fledgling on-line market, but with strong players who had experience of the same business in the real world.

Government's objectives to attract such operators to Malta were not simply to generate direct revenues from taxation. As part of its ICT strategy, government wanted Malta's IT infrastructure to grow bringing job opportunities for young Maltese people who were being encouraged to take up high-value careers. For this we invested more in our education system at post secondary level to include specialty ICT courses at MCAST and University, whilst at the same time embarking on a strategy introduce IT at all levels of our education system. Combined with other initiatives, our aim is to make Malta a center of excellence in ICT which in itself will helps to attract international operators who are either directly user of ICT, or require support services as part of their business function.

The Remote Gaming industry in Malta is a prime example of ICT direct users. This industry requires leading edge e-commerce technologies and resources. The fact that operators continue to invest in Malta as part of their growth strategy demonstrated that the island has scaled well with the exigencies of the industry both in terms of availability of infrastructure and skilled human resources.

The key success factors for Malta's remote gaming industry can be summed up in three words: **Responsible**, **Responsive** and **Reliable**. Malta took a bold step from the out-set to introduce remote gaming regulations that were far superior than any other jurisdiction in terms of strict licensing procedures, strong monitoring controls and player protection mechanism. We did not want Malta to become a nation of convenience for unscrupulous operators. In the long term this decision paid well since as the industry grew, operators realized that their success was dependent on their regulatory jurisdiction's reputation a serious regulator.

Having good regulations is not good enough unless you have somebody to enforce it. This is why the lotteries and gaming authorities invested in human resources and technologies to be able to carry out its duties as the regulatory body on remote gaming. Being receptive to the exigencies of the operators and players is demonstrates a high level of commitment from the Regulator and which is expected in such a high-risk industry.

With over 160 applications for a remote gaming license of which 90 having already established their business, its clear that this industry is here to stay. Today there already over 600 people working locally with remote gaming operators and many more in the supporting services industry. As more operators establish here, more human resources will be required and this is why we regarding this event as important. It gives an opportunity to the public to see what i-gaming can offer as a career in its diverse functions.