PRESENTATION NOTE:

PROPOSALS FOR AN IMPROVED MALTA ELECTORAL SYSTEM

Considering the Malta Electoral System as a major mathematical exercise governed by laws and regulations helps one to understand more the dynamics of the system. This in turn helps one to identify the required revisions to the current Malta Electoral System and propose revisions to make it fairer and to make the final result of the general elections truly reflect the choices of the electorate. Such an analysis and proposals are contained in the following Study Papers where all 24 general election held between 1921 and 2017 were studied and analysed, namely:

"Proposals for an Improved Malta Electoral System" (Paper A); "Interrelated Regions and Districts for Malta and Gozo" (Paper B); "Local Government White Paper and Interrelated Regions and Districts" (Paper C); and "Fixed Regions of Malta and the Malta Electoral System" (Paper D). This presentation document makes specific references to these mentioned Study Papers.

Proposed Revisions to the Malta Electoral System

1. Reducing the Wasted Votes

The method used to calculate the quota for each electoral division is the main cause of the system ending up with almost one (1) quota worth of wasted votes in each electoral division which eventually add up to over 15% at national level. Presently the Droop Quota method is adopted. If instead the Hare Quota method were to be adopted, the number of wasted votes would be reduced to a quarter (¼) of a quota at electoral division level equivalent to around 4% at national level. Section 3 in Paper A discusses this proposal in detail.

2. Making Casual Elections part of the Counting Process

Casual Elections, held to elect members of parliament to take up the second seat won by some of the already elected members, are held as a sort of addendum to a general election. There are times when the results of casual elections do not reflect the exact choice made by the electorate that is clearly indicated in the counting sheets. A new method for holding these casual elections is proposed. The identification of which seats are to be vacated and which candidates that are to be elected are decided relative to the data already inherent in the counting sheets. This process involves the compiling up of neutral lists at national level of runner-up candidates indicating the highest votes attained by each such candidate translated into parts of a quota. The final result obtained in these casual elections would always reflect the choice of the electorate. The names of the elected members through the casual elections would also be included in the officially published list of the elected members of parliament that is published at the end of the electoral process. This proposed method is explained in detail in section 4 of Paper A.

PS. The created runner-up neutral lists at national level could also be adopted to elect the additional number of female candidates from the political parties respectively, should this amendment eventually be part of the electoral system.

3. Improving the Effectivity of the Electoral Corrective Mechanism

The current electoral mechanism does not cater for a number of potential scenarios that may arise in a general election. The proposed introduction of the "percentage seat gain" factor to identify the "advantaged political party" in the process to calculate the seat value that is used to determine the final number of seats to be allocated to each political party contesting a general election would make the electoral corrective mechanism applicable to all possible scenarios and to all political parties that have candidates elected to parliament. This proposed amendment to the existing method is discussed in detail in section 6 of Paper A.

4. Reducing the 'Donkey Voting' Effect

The 'donkey voting' effect could be reduced drastically by adopting the 'Robson Rotation' method in the printing of the Ballot Papers. The newly adopted method of including each candidate's photo against his/her name probably would not have the same effect. Such a proposal is discussed in section 7 of Paper A.

5. Defining the Electoral Divisions within the Fixed Regions of Malta

Section 2 of Paper A refers to the regulation of the registered voters within each electoral division where the current requirements being that they have to be within ± 5% of the electoral quota (or national mean). The effectivity of this type of control is discussed comparing the % difference between votes received and seats gained by a political party, and goes on to show that this % difference did not vary much over the years from the times when no regulation was applied to the present situation when rigid regulation is imposed.

Section 5 of Paper A mentions the fact that presently there are four types of oganisational structures in Malta, namley, Regions of Malta, Statistical Regions and Districts, Police Districts and Electoral Divisions. Section 5 also mentions that Gozo is presently defined as the only fixed electoral division and asks if this same status could be awarded to all electoral divisions in Malta and Gozo. Section 5 ends up by proposing a typical 13 fixed district system. Papers B & C discuss the proposal of introducing an organisational structure of Interrelated Regions and Districts for Malta and Gozo.

Paper D proposes a system that supersedes the proposal in section 5 of Paper A. Districts are to be defined within the fixed Regions of Malta and these Districts are then utilised as Electoral Divisions at general elections. The number of Districts in each Region and the number of Seats to be elected from each District are not pre-determined, but are decided through the process. All the Localities within each District always retain their boundaries at all times. The number of Seats to be elected from each District are proportional to the number of registered voters in each District and will always be from a minimum of 4 to a maximum of 8. Through a verification exercise it was shown that the system will stand the test of time and will produce the expected acceptable results.