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## KTP CALLS FOR NATIONAL UNITY AROUND DEEP AND MEANINGFUL PLANNING REFORMS

For decades the Council of the Kamra tal-Periti has been advocating for the need to reform Malta's planning regime. The gradual, yet inexorable, decay of our built environment and quality of life over the past four decades has seen inevitably ever-increasing dissatisfaction and anger from the general public about the planning system and the construction industry in general. This, coupled with the several major construction incidents in recent years, makes the need for deep and meaningful reform not only more pressing, but inescapable.

The Kamra has been having several discussions with various Ministers, public entities, and NGOs on the need for reform over recent months. Indeed, it was recently entrusted to embark on a three-year project of completely overhauling Malta's building and construction regulation framework through an agreement it signed with the Building and Construction Authority.

In the past weeks, it has also been engaged in regular and fruitful discussions with the Planning Authority about the need to collaborate on developing a National Architecture Policy which would analyse and address the strategic issues facing the practice of architecture in Malta. These discussions are at an advanced stage, and it trusted a detailed announcement on this matter will be made in the weeks ahead.

The Council of the Kamra was also concurrently engaged in discussions with the PA through the National Building Council on reforms to the planning appeal process – a reform that was long overdue. The inability to suspend planning permits during the appeal phase was a preposterous situation that needed to be addressed with urgency.

The Kamra's position has been clear from the start: all permits should be suspended during the appeal phase which, however, should be shortened and made more efficient thereby striking a balance between the opposing interests in this debate. Indeed, the

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Kamra's position that the appeal timeframes should not exceed three months before the EPRT, and a further three months before the Court of Appeal, to which the standard statutory timelines for filing and responses were to be added.

In recent weeks, Council representatives were presented with draft text related to the EPRT Act to which it gave its feedback. The Council is satisfied that most of its recommendations were included [in the final Bill](#). Nevertheless, a number of provisions found therein were not previously discussed.

A second Bill, however, was also concurrently published with the one governing the planning appeal process. This second Bill, [Bill 143](#), proposes amendments to the Development Planning Act. It must be stated that the Kamra was never presented with this text and was only able to review it over the past three days.

Given the nature of the proposals in both Bills and the impact they may have on people's lives, the Council felt it was prudent to review them thoroughly and dispassionately. An analysis report about each of the Bills has been drawn up outlining the Council's detailed technical review, together with its comments and recommendations.

The reports seek to present a balanced, objective, and constructive assessment of what is actually being proposed. The reports include proposals for amendment or outright deletion of some of the articles in the Bills. They also, however, address incorrect misinterpretations of the content of the Bills that are being reported in the media.

Indeed, it is incorrect to state that only objections filed within the 30-day representation window will be considered. The actual text is exceedingly clear that objections can be changed and extended until the two-week deadline to respond to the case officer's report. Moreover, objectors are given the right to file further submissions if any plans are changed at the request of the Planning Board.

There are, however, aspects of Bill 143 which the Council finds objectionable. This is particularly in relation to the change in planning document hierarchy and the provisions to modify plans.

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While the Kamra recognises that Malta's planning documents are poorly crafted and grossly outdated, piecemeal revisions and the absence of broad public participation in decisions affecting the well-being of this country and its citizens is not the correct approach.

The Council of the Kamra tal-Periti calls, yet again, for the initiation of a formal process for deep and meaningful planning reform, looking at rebuilding the entire planning system from first principles, informed by contemporary and sustainable planning paradigms.

The Kamra tal-Periti is willing to step up and lead the process, as it has already been entrusted to do with other reforms. The Council believes it is in a privileged position to take on this role, given the broad confidence and trust of opposing and varying interests it enjoys.

Finally, the Council welcomes the Prime Minister's statements that the Government will be considering feedback about the Bills and trusts that the amendments put forward by the Kamra tal-Periti will be considered and adopted.

**END**