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KAMRA TAL-PERITI

To support members of the profession in achieving excellence in their practice of architecture and engineering in the interest of the community

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MEPA Demerger

Reference is made to the press conference held on the 4th April 2016, wherein the Hon Dr Deborah Schembri announced the official demerger of MEPA into two separate Authorities, namely the Environment and Resources Authority which was established earlier this year, and the newly established Planning Authority.

As it has stated on various occasions, the *Kamra tal-Periti* is of the opinion that the success of any reform of the Authority responsible for land use planning and development permitting goes beyond the detail of legalisms, and will depend primarily on the accountability, professional conduct, competence, experience and qualification of the officials charged with these matters, and on the overall intention of the legislator to truly achieve sustainable development through a holistic approach rather than one which panders to the self-serving interests of the various players in the sector. The *Kamra tal-Periti* therefore looks forward to the coming months which will reveal whether, in practice, the demerger of the MEPA will effectively result in a better quality of the planning process and ultimately, an improved quality of our built environment. In this regard, the *Kamra tal-Periti* reiterates its availability to continue to discuss with the newly established Planning Authority, the Environment and Resources Authority and the legislator towards ensuring a smooth transition and an improved quality of service.

The *Kamra tal-Periti* notes with satisfaction that a number of its recommendations over the past months have been taken on board, in particular its strong advice that the building regulation function, which primarily concerns the regulation of the construction process and detailing of buildings, should not be merged with the planning function which primarily concerns issues of land use, building volume and public amenity. In this regard, the *Kamra tal-Periti* notes that the provisions of the Act which will establish the proposed Building Regulation Committee within the new Planning Authority will not be brought into force immediately, and that the current Building Regulation Board and Building Regulation Office will continue to function for the time being in their current format. This is a welcome interim approach, and the *Kamra tal-Periti* looks forward to continue to discuss this matter with the legislator in the coming months.

On the other hand, the *Kamra tal-Periti* notes with grave disappointment that its strong disagreement, as expressed in various meetings with the legislator and in correspondence in this regard, regarding the establishment

The Kamra tal-Periti is affiliated to the International Union of Architects (UIA), the Architects' Council of Europe (ACE), the Commonwealth Architects' Association (CAA), the Union of Mediterranean Architects (UMAR), the European Council of Civil Engineers (ECCE) and European Forum for Architectural Policies (EFAP).

of the Design Advisory Committee has been ignored. The Committee as established in the Act goes completely against the concept which had been proposed by the *Kamra* in recent years, and which had received support from both main political parties. The *Kamra's* proposal contemplated the introduction of Design Review Panels, which would be independent of the planning process and of the Authority, which would constitute a system of peer review, which would be obligatory for public projects and voluntary for other projects, and which would take a holistic approach towards reviewing the quality of projects brought before the Panels, in the interest of society at large. It is the *Kamra's* opinion that the Design Advisory Committee as contemplated in the Act will not achieve any of the aims that the *Kamra* and its members hold dear, and will rather end up being yet another bureaucratic process, which has no real impact on the quality of the built environment.

Perit Christopher Mintoff

President