

**Speech by**  
**the Speaker of the House of Representatives**  
**Hon Anglu Farrugia**  
**for the 30th Anniversary Thematic Lecture of the Ombudsman Institution**  
**Theme:**  
**“Transparency, Fairness, Accountability: Cornerstones of Good**  
**Administration—The Mandate of the Ombudsman”**

**12<sup>th</sup> June 2025**

Distinguished Ombudsmen,

Esteemed Colleagues,

Honourable Guests,

Today we mark thirty years since the founding of Malta's Ombudsman Institution. But I rise not only to commemorate an anniversary—I rise to restate, with constitutional resolve, what this institution must always remain: a sentinel of the people, a bulwark of justice, and a mirror to the public administration it holds to account.

I warmly thank Judge Emeritus Joseph Zammit McKeon, Parliamentary Ombudsman of Malta, for his leadership in convening this thematic lecture and for steering the institution through this landmark anniversary. Under his tenure, the Office has not only upheld its core values, but has also taken significant steps to define and publish a renewed vision of good administration—placing Malta at the forefront of modern ombudsmanship.

At last year's Thematic Lecture, I reflected on the resilience of democratic oversight in turbulent times. That reflection must now evolve into expectation. The themes before us—*transparency, fairness, accountability*—are not aspirational slogans. They are binding obligations. They are pillars. They are also mirrors—reflecting what we choose to uphold, and revealing what we allow to corrode.

An Ombudsman Office is not simply a listening post for complaints. It is, at its core, an institutional conscience—its loyalty owed not to noise, not to factions, not to shadows, but to the people and the truth. Where that loyalty drifts, trust collapses.

As President of Parliament, I hold an elevated responsibility—neutral, vigilant, and unencumbered by convenience or political expediency. I speak today not as a participant in partisanship, but as a sentinel of integrity. Some may insinuate bias in my actions, but none—none—have had the standing, the evidence, or the courage to challenge my decisions before the appropriate fora. Why? Because I act in full faith, grounded in constitutional truth. And truth—let us remember—is the one thing no institution, no narrative, no political preference can overturn.

So too must be the mandate of the Ombudsman: fearless, impartial, and unshakably loyal to the public interest. An Ombudsman who walks too close to any political orbit—be it of government or opposition—risks becoming a tool of influence, not a force of scrutiny. That risk is never declared aloud. It is silent. It is subtle. But it is never invisible.

Let us not pretend impartiality is guaranteed by statute. It is guaranteed by conduct. Let us not mistake absence of criticism for presence of virtue. Integrity must be felt in every action, not claimed in every speech.

The origins of this office are noble—born in Sweden in 1809, expanded through Europe and beyond. Today, it exists in over 140 jurisdictions, but only thrives where independence is not only proclaimed but practiced.

It is with great honour that we welcome Advocate Kholeka Gcaleka, Public Protector of the Republic of South Africa—a woman of exceptional legal stature, with two decades of prosecutorial and executive experience. Her leadership in law, governance, and human rights has earned her international distinction, including as Chairperson of the African Ombudsman Research Centre and Regional President of the International Ombudsman Institute’s African Region.

Advocate Gcaleka's work reflects the institutional courage we must aspire to—not reactive, but embedded in the very reflexes of her office. It is not enough for Ombudsmen to speak truth when convenient—they must institutionalise the protection of truth, especially when it is unpopular.

Let us take note: this is the kind of courage we expect—not in rhetoric, but in institutional reflex.

As we mark thirty years of Malta's Ombudsman institution, let this not become a self-congratulatory ritual. Let it be an audit of principles. Let it stir reflection, not complacency. The role of Ombudsman cannot be co-opted, cannot be intimidated, and must never be orchestrated to suit political timelines or personal grudges.

In the silence between press releases and in the corridors where real power moves, the Ombudsman must be the still, strong voice of the citizen. Not of convenience. Not of calculation.

In closing: democratic trust is neither inherited nor permanent. It is earned. It is renewed. And it is easily broken. The Ombudsman is one of the few institutions that can repair that trust—or erode it entirely. The choice lies in its conduct. The scrutiny is constant. And history, whether we like it or not, remembers everything.

Thank you.