Secretary General’s Report
For the Year 2012

Good Morning members, friends, volunteers and members of the press, the honour falls once again to me this year to bring you the Secretary General’s report for 2012. This has been a year of unprecedented growth and challenge for Din l-Art Ħelwa. In addition to the management of 15 heritage sites in our care, we have a new workload with the management of the restoration of Our Lady of Victory Church and there are many new responsibilities that fall on NGOs who are increasingly asked to be present at government and EU consultation meetings.

PEOPLE
Simone has already opened the meeting inviting us to remember Edward Xuereb, a dear friend and mentor, who did so much for DLĦ as Secretary General and even before. His commitment will remain an example to us all.

DLĦ continues to attract first-rate people who bring our organisation new skills and renewed energy. We hope these will soon take their place on the 2013-2015 council. We welcome Martin Scicluna, a Non Executive Director, for asset management and insurance companies licensed in Malta, with a previous career in HSBC Bank Malta plc spanning 36 years. Martin has offered to contribute his experience towards streamlining our financial affairs and investigating new funding streams, including EU possibilities. Albert Calleja, who occupied a top administrative post at Parson, has brought us additional administrative expertise. Besides his volunteer duties at the Msida Historic Garden, Albert is updating numerous submissions for each of the nine properties we hold in guardianship – a laborious but necessary task if we are to renew the deeds with the Government for which we thank him. Philip Mericcia, also a HSBC retiree and ex-CEO at Forestals, will be putting his great energy towards organising events, fund raising and volunteers.

Judge Joe Galea Debono also joined the DLĦ council and gives invaluable advice when it comes to the many legal matters we are increasingly encountering and this without hindering his volunteer work at the Red Tower and on the Xlendi Tower Management Committee. John Sare, who was absent for a while for personal reasons, will continue to help us with lectures and DLĦ is glad to have him back. Joanna Spiteri Staines was appointed as the DLĦ representative on the Rehabilitation Projects Board and Maria Grazia Cassar and Cathy Farrugia will present DLĦ initiatives for Valletta’s Capital of Culture 2018 programme.

George Camilleri was nominated by the Ministry for Resources and Rural Affairs as DLĦ’s representative on the Climate Change Consultative Council and also represents DLĦ on Fish4Tomorrow, a group of five NGOs who promote sustainable fishing and responsible consumption of fish. Victor Rizzo, our Treasurer, sits on the Agriculture Sub-committee on Rural Affairs, and the Monitoring Committee for Operational Programme I.

Martin Galea continues on the Heritage Parks Board that manages the Majjistral National Park, where great difficulties still are being encountered in the prevention of vehicular access and illegal hunting. Simone Mizzi represents DLĦ on the Cultural Heritage’s Committee of Guarantee and now has been appointed by the government to the board of Guardians for Future Generations on which Council Member, Michael Bonello, also sits. As you can see DLĦ is well placed to influence decision makers and will strive to ensure this continues during the next administration.

Amy Sciberras, a qualified conservator, has been employed as Project Manager/Custodian and resident conservator at Our Lady of Victory Church. She took up her appointment on 4th June 2012 and as a consequence the church has been opened to the public regularly.

DLĦ is making increasing use of foreign interns to support its work in the office, at our properties and the Majjistral Park. Our thanks go to Vice-President Luciano Mule Stagno for his work in this respect and his contacts with the university and Mcast are invaluable. Volunteers from HSBC and PwC’s social responsibility programmes have also been helping us to manage Our Lady of Victory Church on weekends, organise guided tours, do maintenance work at the Msida Bastion Garden and assist at special events.

In June 2012, Simone Mizzi replaced Vice President, Martin Scicluna as Council Member of Europa Nostra. This organisation will be celebrating its Golden Jubilee in Athens this June. Luciano Mule Stagno represents DLĦ on the Committee of the International National Trusts Organisation that holds conference calls monthly. DLĦ has also become a member of the Future for Religious Heritage Network, a European organisation whose mission is to protect religious heritage. With the five churches and chapels we look after, this is a network worth supporting.

SPONSORS
Our sponsors remain invaluable. At last year’s AGM, we announced that we had embarked on the ambitious task of raising €1 million for Our Lady of Victory Church. Our team, led by Simone, worked assiduously to establish the main sponsors, who, between them, have now pledged almost that amount. We are grateful to our Principal Valued Partners, PwC Malta and HSBC Malta Foundation for their extraordinary generosity to this project. We also thank our Valued Sponsors and Supporters, the Alfred Mizzi Foundation, The Strickland Foundation, The Vodafone Malta Foundation, The Farsons Foundation, P. Cutajar & Co., MEPA, Corinthia Group, Atlas Insurance, Computime Ltd and the Tanner Trust who together make up our Victory Team. It was definitely the project of the year as far as sponsorship goes in Malta and progress is being made at a steady pace. The Courtaud conservators have spent many months up in the vault where you can admire new segments of Erardi’s painting emerging from the grime. GasanMamo Insurance Ltd continues to sponsor the painstaking restoration of the Delimara lighthouse mechanism and its housing. The Magljo Gardens ‘9 Monuments’ restoration funded by Fimbank Plc. was successfully concluded last October. MIA Plc funded the spectacular restoration of Mattia Preti’s St Sebastian at the departure lounge. We are grateful to Stanley Farrugia Randon and Maria Grazia Cassar for looking after the restoration projects.

We were fortunate to win a €25,000 grant through the Good Causes Fund for Wignacourt Tower and a further €30,000 towards Victory Church while MTA supported the flooding costs of Comino Tower. MTA will also be funding the restoration of Wignacourt Tower’s exterior in a €100,000 project funded through the European Regional Development Fund. We are grateful for a legacy of €10,000 from the estate of the late Anne Crosswattie, a loyal member of DLĦ.

EVENTS
2012 was a year peppered with numerous high-profile events. The year began with several private presentations at the Church of Our Lady of Victory to our main sponsors. These proved very successful and culminated in a visit to the church to meet the sponsors by Prime Minister Dr Lawrence Gonzi and the Minister of Culture Dr Mario de Marco which was followed by a reception and concert in the sponsors’ honour hosted by the Prime Minister at the Auberge de Castille. We were honoured by a visit from His Royal