**Fundación MAPFRE announces fifth edition of its successful ‘Caqlaq’ programme**

Fundación MAPFRE has announced the launch of the fifth edition of its educational programme entitled ‘Caqlaq’. This year, the focus will be on the awareness and enjoyment of physical exercise and related activities by children in local primary and secondary schools.

During a signing ceremony held in the presence of H.E. The President Marie-Louise Coleiro Preca at San Anton Palace, Mr Oscar Picazo of Fundación MAPFRE, stated that for this year’s edition of ‘Caqlaq’, Fundación MAPFRE will be teaming up with the Malta Volleyball Association (MVA), which will be implementing the programme on its behalf.

Mr Picazo said that both Fundación MAPFRE and the Malta Volleyball Association (MVA) share a concern for the increasing consequences related to the lack of physical exercise, particularly amongst children, and the certainty that in most cases, this is due to a lack of awareness of the positive effects of healthy lifestyle habits, in particular that of regular exercise. Mr Picazo confirmed that both parties “strongly believe that the situation can be greatly improved by encouraging children to participate in activities where they can enjoy physical exercise, including activities within a team sports environment, in a spirit of fun and teamwork.” Mr Picazo thanked President Coleiro Preca for once again agreeing to endorse the ‘Caqlaq’ campaign.

As part of the ‘Caqlaq’ programme, the MVA will be conducting a series of visits to primary and secondary schools, and organise events for schoolchildren. The focus of these activities will be to give children exposure to physical activity, within a fun environment, while enabling them to experience aspects of physical activity, such as basic motor skills, agility, movement coordination, and teamwork. Mr Jesmond Saliba, President of the Malta Volleyball Assocaition said that “The aim is to develop children’s interest in regular physical activity through participation in a sport, at least at a basic level. We also see this as a vehicle for social inclusion through sport, which is an underlying theme of the Maltese Presidency of the EU and something which we, as an Association, strongly believe in. Therefore the theme we will adopt for this year's ‘Caqlaq’ programme will be 'Let's all play!'.”

President Coleiro Preca, thanked Fundacion Mapfre, for their firm Corporate Social Responsibility beliefs which sees them sponsoring the Ċaqlaq programme for the fifth year running.

The President also thanked the Malta Volleyball Association, for partnering in this edition and in the way it embraced its commitment towards society in the field of sport, formation and social inclusion.

Her Excellency said that programmes such as Ċaqlaq are of extreme importance in Malta and Gozo, especially in light of the European Health Interview Survey, which states that Malta is the most obese nation in the European Union, outweighing Latvia by 5%. The same survey also states that more than one in 4 adults, (approximately 24%) are considered obese. Meanwhile, a study entitled ‘Prevalence of Obesity in Malta – 2014-2016), issued by the Faculty of Medicine and Surgery states that 7 in 10 adults are overweight or obese.

The President also said that, initiatives such as Ċaqlaq, are also an effort to creatively support the work of sports diplomacy, as a means of increasing dialogue and cultural understanding among the diverse communities.

Lastly, President Coleiro Preca stated that these activities continue to raise awareness about the importance of living a healthy lifestyle, thus maintaining the wellbeing of the individual, of the family, and of the community.