



This letter is a translation of the Maltese original.

6 January 2026

The Hon. Dr Robert Abela
Prime Minister

By email to robert.abela@gov.mt

Hon. Prime Minister,

Declarations of assets by ministers for the year 2024

On the 2nd of January last year, I wrote to you to express my concern about the fact that your declaration of assets and those of other ministers for the year 2023 had not been tabled in the House of Representatives in keeping with longstanding practice.

In your reply dated 27 January 2025, you proposed that ministers and members of Parliament should no longer draw up separate declarations of assets. You proposed that there should be a new system in which:

- the same declaration form would be used by all members of Parliament including ministers; and
- this declaration would be tabled in the House of Representatives (thereby in effect being published) within a timeframe to be established by law.

You requested my views on these proposals.

I set out my reactions in a letter to you dated 30 January 2025. I expressed the view that the introduction of a common declaration form for ministers and MPs should not lead to a reduction in the information which ministers were required to include in their declarations. This letter was published by my office.¹

In the same letter, I urged you to table ministers' declarations for the year 2023 in the House as soon as possible. This was not done, but in March 2025 the

¹ See <https://standardscommissioner.mt/wp-content/uploads/letter-to-pm-2025-01-30-en.pdf>.



Secretary to Cabinet provided me with copies of the declarations so that I could begin verifying them as required by the Standards in Public Life Act.

In September and October 2025, I wrote to the Cabinet Secretary to obtain copies of ministers' declarations of assets for the year 2024. I received no reply, so on 3 December I made the same request directly to you. As a result, the Cabinet Secretary wrote to me on 18 December 2025 informing me that:

- Cabinet had decided that there should be a single declaration form for all members of Parliament;
- all ministers and parliamentary secretaries had declared their assets to the Speaker earlier that year; and
- the Code of Ethics for Members of the House of Representatives was to be amended with a view to being strengthened in the light of the recommendations made by my office in July 2020² and on 15 December 2025 with regard to complaint 201.

I understand the Cabinet Secretary's letter to mean that you and other ministers have not prepared ministerial asset declarations for 2024, and you have only done so using the declaration form for MPs. I understand also that in future only this form will be used, and the declaration form for ministers has been eliminated.

In effect, this means that ministers will no longer declare their income, and neither will they declare financial investments and bank accounts held by their spouses. This information is required by the ministerial declaration form, but not the form for MPs. This is a setback for transparency in public life, and it sends a very negative message.

Transparency has undergone a further setback because it used to be the practice for ministerial asset declarations to be tabled in the House of Representatives, whereas declarations by MPs are not published. I note that in his letter, the Cabinet Secretary made no reference to your proposal that declarations by MPs should be tabled in the House within a timeframe to be established by law.

Furthermore, the Code of Ethics for Ministers and Parliamentary Secretaries, which appears as the second schedule of the Standards in Public Life Act, very clearly requires ministers to provide a statement of their assets and interests to the Cabinet Secretary on the relevant form every year. The elimination of this form means that all ministers are in breach of their obligations in terms of

² See <https://standardscommissioner.mt/wp-content/uploads/report-revised-codes-of-ethics.pdf>.



the code, even if no action can be taken against this breach since Cabinet decisions are not subject to investigation under the Act.

I have also taken note of the statement by the Cabinet Secretary that the code of ethics for MPs is to be strengthened. In this context I should draw your attention not only to this Office's report of July 2020, but also to the report issued in October 2023 by the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD).³ Both reports include recommendations to strengthen the ministerial code of ethics, but this code is not mentioned in the Cabinet Secretary's letter. It is particularly important for ministers to be governed by a solid ethical framework, given their powers and the resources they control.

The reports by this Office and the OECD also include recommendations to make asset declarations more robust. I wrote to you on 3 November 2023 to bring these recommendations to your attention. These should be addressed as part of any changes to the ethical framework, even though the changes to the asset declaration system outlined to me by the Cabinet Secretary have been in a contrary direction.

I should inform you that, in the light of the foregoing, it is my intention to publish this letter in the near future.

Regards,

Chief Justice Emeritus Joseph Azzopardi
Commissioner for Standards in Public Life

³ See https://www.oecd.org/en/publications/public-integrity-in-malta_0ecc469e-en.html.