

**ADDRESS BY HER EXCELLENCY MARIE  
LOUISE COLEIRO PRECA, PRESIDENT OF  
MALTA ON THE OCCASION OF THE  
NATIONAL DAY OF AZERBAIJAN, FRIDAY  
30 MAY 2014. HOTEL HILTON**

Your Honour Silvio Camilleri,

Honourable Minister and Parliamentary  
Secretary,

President Emeritus,

Excellencies,

Ladies and gentlemen,

Thank you very much Your Excellency for the  
kind thoughts you have just shared with us.

Allow me to kindly request you to convey to  
His Excellency President Ilham Aliyev, in my  
name and on behalf of the Government and

People of Malta, heartfelt wishes on the occasion of the National Day of Azerbaijan, and to the esteemed people of Azerbaijan the warmest sentiments of friendship of the Maltese People.

Azerbaijan is a land of contrasts which is most visible in its vibrant ethnicity that characterises its population. Indeed, although geographically distant from one another, our two countries had their fair share of colonisation and both strived to gain their Independence, thanks to the determination of our respective people who never gave up on their aspiration to manage their own affairs as they deemed rightfully fit. Common features between the two countries are also

prevalent in the rich millenarian history that we both possess. Such features have, and should continue to play an important role in bringing our countries closer together, paving the way to enhanced bilateral cooperation in areas of mutual interest.

Your Excellency,

The 96<sup>th</sup> anniversary since Azerbaijan became a Republican State in 1918, as well as the first Parliamentary Republic in a Muslim State ever, comes at a time when the world is facing a number of challenges which require our urgent attention. This is so in particular in the Eastern part of our shared European continent, as well as the Mediterranean region. At the same time, it is most admirable

that amid the unfolding turmoil, Azerbaijan continued to ensure that its growing relationship with the European Union, through the routes established by the Eastern Partnership Programme proceeds unaffected.

Hence the need to forge ahead with our commitment towards a more united Europe based on the inherent values of democracy, human rights, the rule of law and solidarity.

Institutional relations between Malta and Azerbaijan were consolidated in 1995 when Azerbaijan declared its Independence from the then Soviet Union. Since then, our respective countries strived to render their mutual relations most effective. This was

carried out mainly through a number of initiatives which, it is hoped, will serve as a solid platform for both countries to bring to fruition the renditions of the tenets of democracy directly in the lives of our respective people. I am glad to note also that over the years our two countries developed a reasonable commercial cooperation, which at the same time has ample room for further development. I firmly believe that it is only through direct people-to-people dialogue and the sharing of expertise in several areas of mutual competencies that we can look forward to the future of our relations with optimism.

On a regional level, Malta supports Azerbaijan's intentions to develop strategic relations with the European Union. We believe that in doing so, both sides stand to gain from an enhanced cooperation in sectoral areas such as energy. Furthermore we look forward to further economic integration that would pave the way to a Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Agreement between the two sides. Such a significant step in the evolution of relations with the European Union would facilitate trade flows to both sides as well as enhance mutual understanding that will lead to other forms of cooperation in the future.

This should take place through active participation within the EU's Neighbourhood Policy Programme.

Indeed, one way to facilitate mobility between Azerbaijan and the European Union is through the Visa Facilitation Agreement which enhances exchanges between our respective countries and particularly in the field of research and education. I am confident that during your Chairmanship of the Council of Europe Committee of Ministers, we will find ways of mutual support and cooperation on issues of peace and prosperity in the region and beyond.

Excellency,

Today we have good reason to celebrate Azerbaijan's Sovereignty and political opulence towards further integration. I am sure that as the way forward in a globalised world is for people to come closer together and build synergies of cooperation, our respective countries will use every opportunity that comes their way to forge enhanced cooperation to further broaden our understanding of each other.

Ladies and gentlemen,

I would like to invite you now to raise your glasses and drink to the health of His



Excellency President Ilham Aliyev and Ambassador Vaqif Sadiqov, as well as to the excellent relations between Malta and Azerbaijan.