

**SPEECH BY H.E. MARIE-LOUISE COLEIRO PRECA,
PRESIDENT OF MALTA, ON THE OCCASION OF THE
FEAST OF THE PATRON SAINT OF THE SOVEREIGN
MILITARY ORDER OF MALTA. SUNDAY, 22 JUNE 2014.
ST JOHN CAVALIER**

Honourable Ministers,
Parliamentary Secretaries,
Honourable Leader of the Opposition,
Presidenti Emeriti,
Excellencies,
Members of Parliament,
Distinguished guests,
Ladies and gentlemen,

Your Excellency Ambassador Umberto Di Capua, I appreciate the timely reflections you have just delivered.

My husband and I, kindly ask you to convey our best wishes on the occasion of the feast of the Patron Saint of the Sovereign Order, St. John the Baptist, to His Most Eminent Highness the Prince and Grandmaster Frà Matthew Festing.

When it comes to the relations between Malta and the Order of St. John, I agree that we share an affinity that overwhelms us with a grand sense of participation in bringing forward the common values of solidarity, peace and everlasting brotherhood. Such values constitute the backbone of our nation and are intrinsic to the identity of the Maltese people.

I have the privilege to address you this evening, knowing very well that the future of our two states boasts with enhanced cooperation in areas of mutual interest.

I look forward to receiving His Most Eminent Highness Grandmaster Festing on a State Visit to Malta.

Such timely visit should continue to seal the centuries old history that binds us together as well as serve as an impetus to continue forging new alliances towards the well-being of humanity.

I am sure that such a visit will pave the way to enhanced cooperation which will bring our common past and present together.

Notwithstanding the passing of time, we both stand firm in our commitment to recognise one another as vessels of peace and humanitarian assistance in our region, and in the world.

I would like to recall the first State Visit to Malta by a Grand Master of the Order in 1968. During his address to Grandmaster Frà Angelo de Mojana di Cologna, the

then Prime Minister, Dr Gorg Borg Olivier, had indicated that Malta will call again upon the Order in the making of the history of its future *“to participate in close and not less glorious episodes in peaceful collaboration towards noble humanitarian aims.”*

Since then, these prophetic words never ceased to reverberate in our respective encounters and historic achievements to the extent that today, Malta can boast with its credentials as a hub for dialogue and intercultural connectivity in the midst of the Mediterranean and beyond.

Excellency,

Next year is an important year for both Malta and the Order as we commemorate the 485th anniversary since the arrival to Malta of the Knights Hospitallers and the 450th anniversary of the Great Siege of Malta.

These are two significant dates that mark a relationship spearheaded by mutual respect and a shared vision of perseverance, which stretched all through the 260 years of the Order's stay in Malta.

These anniversaries come at a time when Valletta, our Capital city and a legacy inherited from the Order of St. John, is undergoing major infrastructural regeneration and restoration works, especially in the entry way to our city a few meters away from here.

Valletta is the hallmark of Maltese vibrancy and creativity. While it represents the past and the present, its impeccable stature makes it a gateway to the future.

Connecting with Valletta is like connecting with the world, as it comes forward as a melting pot of the

cultural and political movements that constructed Europe as we know it today.

The same could be said of the inner harbour area, which possesses many of the historic treasures from the time of the Order of St John in Malta.

I am pleased to say that restoration works are underway on St Angelo - a titan project which requires the joint collaboration of the Order to complete.

I am sure that the Order recognises the importance attached to this ambitious project and will assist in bringing it back to its former glory.

A word of thanks goes to the Malta Association of the Sovereign Military Order for the philanthropic work carried out throughout the years.

In particular, I would like to mention the funds donated to Boffa Hospital in 2005 to train medical staff in palliative care. Your untiring commitment towards improving the lives of less fortunate people is evidence of the importance the Order attaches to helping people in need.

My Presidency remains committed to champion these milestones, and other initiatives, with a view to ensure that no person is left behind.

To this effect, my open invitation to the Order is to propose ideas for the restoration of the three Presidential Palaces, so that they may retain their former glory while rendering Palaces self-sufficient.

My Presidency is keen to engage further with the Order to explore ways to enhance cooperation in social areas

such as poverty, family well-being, children and young people's needs as well as addictions.

I am sure that with the Order's support, many of the Presidency's initiatives in this regard will render the desired results.

Excellency,

It is evident that Malta and the Sovereign Military Order of Malta have reason to continue with their collaboration on several socio-cultural issues of mutual interest.

Although institutional bilateral relations between the two sides started in 1966, we all know that in real fact; our excellent and friendly relations are much older.

We firmly believe that today more than ever, our shared commitment towards peace and solidarity remain crucial for the preservation of all that we managed to painstakingly achieve in the past.

Our common resolve towards inclusiveness through dialogue and people-to-people contact should remain a beacon of light that continue to show the way for others to follow in the path of making our world a better place to live.

Ladies and gentlemen,

Let us now raise our glasses and drink in celebration of the Feast Day of St. John the Baptist, the Patron Saint of the Sovereign Military Order of Malta, for the excellent relations between Malta and the Order and

to peace and prosperity among all peoples of the world.