

**TOAST BY H.E. MARIE LOUISE COLEIRO PRECA,
PRESIDENT OF MALTA AT A LUNCHEON HELD
IN HONOUR OF THE NEWLY APPOINTED HIGH
COMMISSIONER OF THE ISLAMIC REPUBLIC OF
PAKISTAN - 12 JUNE 2014**

Excellency,

Honourable Mr Justice Joseph Zammit

McKeon,

Members of Parliament,

Ladies and gentlemen,

I am very pleased to host this lunch in honour of His Excellency Javed Zia, High Commissioner of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan, who this morning presented me with his letters of commission.

Having had the occasion to discuss with him Malta's bilateral relations, I feel confident that,

in collaboration with the Maltese authorities, His Excellency will be striving to continue strengthening the socio-political, economic and cultural exchanges between our respective countries.

Although not taking up residence in Malta, I am sure that Your Excellency will do your utmost to visit Malta on regular basis to explore the Island's opportunities in the fields of trade, services and investment and to look into ways how to enhance commercial and people-to-people cooperation.

As I congratulate you on your appointment as High Commissioner to Malta, I take the opportunity to wish you every success in your

endeavours. In the meantime on this special occasion, I would like to kindly request you to convey our best wishes to your Head of State, expressing our true sentiment of friendship to the people of Pakistan.

Excellency,

Malta and the **Islamic Republic of Pakistan** have a long-standing bilateral relationship that goes back to 1966. Since then cooperation between the two sides continued to flourish and to establish itself in one of mutual respect. Our national airline owes a lot to Pakistan as during its initial years of operation in the early seventies, pilots from Pakistan used to train Maltese pilots as well as fly Air Malta's Boeing aircrafts.

Although geographically distant from one another, Malta and Pakistan share similar global concerns and are both active members of important institutions as the United Nations and the Commonwealth – two good reasons to maintain and intensify our excellent relations in areas of common interest.

It suffices to say that during the height of the Libyan crisis in 2011, Malta played an important role in the evacuation of Pakistani nationals from the country. I am informed that there were around 160 Pakistani nationals who were evacuated from Libya through Malta.

Indeed, while relations continue to develop smoothly on the political front, we all agree

that there is ample space for the stepping up of commercial relations between our respective countries. In fact, the bilateral trade flow between the two sides is very modest, and ways should be found for boosting Malta-Pakistan trade relations to a higher level. As we have already discussed, this could take place through greater interaction between the respective Chambers of Commerce as well as with Malta Enterprise and its counterpart in Pakistan.

As I strongly believe in people-to-people contact, one way, how such an impetus could evolve is through organising trade delegations to both countries.

Such is my government's believe in people-to-people contact, that Malta continues to firmly identify itself with the Asia-Europe Meeting's (ASEM) overarching goal, of encouraging connectivity between peoples through business, trade and the social dimension, in its widest possible sense. Such a platform is crucial to further developing our relations and understanding of both regions in the best interest of both.

As member of the European Union, Malta looks at EU-Pakistan relations with particular interest. In the course of the past years it has been evident that both sides have come to face common challenges and concerns, and I look forward to a positive outcome in the best

interest of our respective regions. Indeed, EU-Pakistan relations have become broader in perspective, going beyond aid and trade, and focusing on issues of security, foreign policy, human rights, democracy and good governance.

As Malta hosts the Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting next year, we look forward to fruitful discussions relating to the revitalisation of the organisation as a modern and globally relevant institution, capable to bring about the necessary changes in particular on issues related to sustainable development and the post-2015 agenda. Pakistan's active participation in the Commonwealth continues to sustain its positive mandate towards

development and an overarching commitment to peaceful coexistence between member states.

Excellency,

I take this opportunity to ask you to convey to the Government and the People of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan my deepest sympathy and total solidarity in the wake of the horrific terrorist attack on Karachi Airport and its subsequent siege which were successfully repulsed by the Pakistani Armed Forces. We mourn with you the 18 innocent victims of terrorism.

Excellency,

Malta remains committed to peace and dialogue, not only due to its geostrategic position, but also because of its European credentials, based on the values of democracy, the rule of law and human rights.

Such credentials constitute the basis upon which my country, continues to prompt a sense of confidence-building and enhanced cooperation in all spheres of influence, it happens to engage in, at regional and international levels.

It is with pleasure that I note the progress made by Young Malala Yousafzai, not only in her recovery but also in her undeterred

mission to speak out and bring about change in the world.

I would like to extend an invitation to Malala to come to Malta and confer with Maltese children, as I am sure she can be a beacon of inspiration and, in her own words, together, they can raise their voice for the rights of every woman, every boy and every girl.

Really, Malta's commitment and vocation towards peace, stability and socio-economic co-operation should be emulated by countries of goodwill, and be a way forward towards achieving success in an aggressive globalised environment, where each country has to

achieve its very utmost in the best interest of
its peoples.