

**SPEECH BY HER EXCELLENCY  
MARIE-LOUISE COLEIRO PRECA,  
PRESIDENT OF MALTA ON THE  
OCCASION OF THE NATIONAL DAY  
OF THE ITALIAN REPUBLIC.  
MONDAY 2 JUNE 2014**

Honourable Ministers and Parliamentary  
Secretaries,  
President Emeriti,  
Excellencies,  
Members of Parliament,  
Ladies and gentlemen,

I express my gratitude, to Ambassador  
Giovanni Umberto De Vito for the timely  
reflections he has just shared with us.  
May I take this opportunity, on this  
special occasion, when we are united, to  
celebrate Italy's Unification, to kindly ask  
you, Your Excellency, in my name, and on  
behalf of the Maltese Government, and  
the People of Malta, to convey my best

wishes, to His Excellency, President Giorgio Napolitano.

National days, are, a moment when we come together, not only to celebrate our respective national achievements, but also, to celebrate, what these political milestones, mean to us today. It suffices to note, the complicity that conjures between past and present, since, what we are today, is mostly the result of what, our ancestors managed to achieve.

Indeed, the unification of Italy is an eminent example in this regard, as it represents the vivid embodiment, of a whole generation, that stood up to unite, and to move forward as one people. Today, Italy's Unification, has its reverberations, rooted in our shared citizenship, of the European Union.

A Union, which is based, on the will to bring all European peoples together, to strive for peace, stability and security in the region.

Your Excellency, while preparing for this important occasion, and thinking about the significance of Italy's unification in the context, of what the European Union means to us; His Excellency President Napolitano's book '*Europe and Italy's role in the world – La Via Maestra*', come to my mind. In this book His Excellency President Napolitano, speaks among other things, of the importance of unity through the various experiences he had throughout his long journey in public office. Indeed, when writing on the importance of Europe in the context of the world order, President Napolitano states that:

“We agree on the decisive role of integration and unification and of our continent's potential contribution to positive developments in global affairs, starting with the search for a peaceful solution to the conflict in the Middle East.”

Malta and Italy boast of a long history of friendship, characterised predominantly, by their geographical vicinity, as well as by their shared vocation, towards peace and stability in the Mediterranean region.

It strikes me how often we stand side by side to cooperate on issues, of mutual concern, and how far we went, to establish sound institutional relations, which one can say, are an excellent example of long-lasting bilateral cooperation worth following.

Indeed, the historic 17th century *Risorgimento* or the 'Resurgence', resolved to bring together, different social and political forces from all over Italy, to push forward the concept of unity, based on *diversity*. This ideal paved the way for Italy, and also for its neighbouring countries, to look at the world, and themselves, in a different perspective. One can say that, the *Risorgimento* needed the start of a new political order, meaning that, the only

way forward to freedom, was to embrace modernism, in the form of a democracy.

At that time Malta, was still a British colony, however the effects of the Italian '*Risorgimento*' reached us, in the form of Italian nationals, seeking political refuge after being expelled from Italy.

Most of the political refugees, arriving in Malta, were journalists and intellectuals, who resumed with their political activity, using Maltese newspapers to publish their articles. Such a wave of new ideas about freedom and nationhood, affected the Maltese, who in their own way, started to push for more political rights and autonomy, from their colonisers. Hence, one aspect of this *Risorgimento*, was its contagious effect, which ignited, even the Maltese, to move in the direction of self-determination, and Independence fifty years ago.

Today, relations between our two countries, are based on the inherent values of democracy, human rights, the

rule of law and a firm commitment, towards peace and security in our region. We are both active members of the United Nations, as well as the European Union.

However, our region remains, unfortunately scourged by instability, in neighbouring Libya and the conflict in Syria. We have reason to feel concerned, about how things, are developing in both countries. We have also reason for concern, about the humanitarian plight of irregular immigrants, who reach our shores in droves.

Malta fully commends and supports the humanitarian mission “Mare Nostrum”, due to its prime concern to ensure the safety and the well being of these people, seeking a better life. However we must continue to look forward to and call for more tangible solidarity from our European partners. We certainly cannot abandon such people, who are escaping from war-torn countries, persecution and economic delapidation and

deprivation. One must note that most of these migrants are women and in particular children. We cannot leave them to their own devices, by refusing to give them all the humanitarian assistance needed. The European Union and the International Community at large, must do more to save lives, and help stop the scourge of conflict, war and persecution. Together, we all must help and assist in stopping the depletion of the African continent.

On the other hand we continue to unreservedly condemn the vile and inhuman activities related to the trafficking of human beings. I am convinced, that Malta and Italy together, with the international community, will continue to join in their firm acclamation of fundamental human rights, and the dignity and worth of the human person, as laid out in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

Excellency,

I am elated, that Malta and Italy have come a long way to build a bond, that is set to continue to be strengthened furthermore in the future. Our shared vision of a stable Mediterranean, and active participation, in a more integrated Europe, are only two important landmarks in a long list of issues that bring us together, and make us, true companions on a journey, that has a well-defined arrival – that of mutual cooperation, for the mutual benefit of our respective peoples.

Ladies and gentlemen,

May I now invite you all to raise your glasses and drink to the excellent relations between Malta and Italy, and to the health and prosperity of our two peoples.