

**SPEECH BY HER EXCELLENCY MARIE-LOUISE COLEIRO  
PRECA, PRESIDENT OF MALTA AT THE OPENING OF A  
ROUNDTABLE *SIDE BY SIDE: A NEWSPAPER PROMOTING  
INTEGRATION AND DIVERSITY* ORGANISED BY SOS  
MALTA**

**MONDAY 23 JUNE 2014**

Honourable Ian Borg,

Distinguished guests,

Ladies and gentlemen,

It is with pleasure that I host this roundtable and welcome you all to San Anton Palace. I find your work an inspiring tangible response to the needs of our contemporary society.

Within my present role as the President of Malta, I am committed to work for the well-being of all people living in Malta and Gozo.

As I have mentioned in various other fora, I believe that the well-being of society stems from unity and inclusion, from having an unequivocal sense of solidarity with each other.

Any form of exclusion, be it physical, psychological, emotional or spiritual is a form of violence. We need to commit towards building a society that values non-violence over the fascination with what is brutal, violent and dehumanizing.

Your particular project gives me hope and encouragement.

*Side by Side* is a tool that will bring about further integration and is definitely an example of good practice.

Witnessing civil society collaborating with professionals working in the media sector for integration, is truly a model of good practice.

The media has a strong role to play with regards to both education and integration. You are already playing that role in our society.

Your work, your courage; the risks you take for the sake of your own work are commendable.

Great responsibility lies on your shoulders. Your tool is the power of the word, be it the written word, the spoken word or the use of the word in the form of sign language.

The invaluable tool of the word can educate on cultural diversity, it can sow understanding of other cultures and the importance of multiculturalism in the context of the globalised world we live in today.

Migration, be it voluntary or forced, regular or irregular is always such a highly debated topic.

Most of the time, this debate happens through the various forms of the media, including the social media.

I am so inspired by your project in providing a platform for the voice of those who are living here with us.

Often the debate is about migrants but not inclusive of them; your role is to make their own voice heard, and allow for that word to be part of the dialogue, at whatever level it happens.

As a Maltese nation, we pride ourselves of our identity and our achievements.

These are the result of firmly held beliefs in self-determination and respect for the human person. It is also a struggle for dignity and against all forms of oppression.

It is on these values that we should carry on building the identity of our country, an identity that rejects

oppression and exploitation and welcomes diversity and promotes dialogue. Identity is formed within inter-individual relationships and not in isolation.

The more we encounter in friendship, those who we perceive as different from us, the more we learn and get to know who we really are. This is genuine identity formation.

The title of the newspaper you publish, says it all. Side by side is how we are meant to live, to grow, to learn and to accomplish. It is only if we are truly side by side that we can live in peace, overcome all challenges and unite as one.

May your voices emerge to remind society of the beauty of all of humanity and all of creation.

I augur you all a successful and fruitful seminar.