

Press Statement by HE Marie Louise Coleiro Preca, President of Malta following the Plenary talks with H.E. Borut Pahor President of the Republic of Slovenia, Wednesday, 25th February 2015

Introduction

First of all I would like to thank his Excellency President Pahor, and the People of Slovenia for a most, warm welcome in your beautiful country.

Although Slovenia is much bigger in size than Malta, there are a number of outstanding similarities between our two countries and people.

Similarities such as:

We are both relatively small member states of the European Union. We are both Mediterranean countries and hence we are both faced by similar challenges that our region poses to us from time to time. We are two peoples who in their majority still uphold Christianity. Our peoples still form societies which guard dearly our children and family life.

Bilateral

It is worth noting that during our bilateral talks between His Excellency and myself and later with both of our delegations, we have expressed our satisfaction about our ongoing bilateral cooperation, between our two countries.

Basically, I am referring to the expertise which is being shared by Slovenia with Malta on matters concerning Education and Sports. I must note that sports is given high prominence in Slovenian schools.

Hence, it comes as no surprise that Slovenian athletes are achieving high results on an international level. I would like to take the opportunity to convey my heartfelt wishes for further successes to all Slovenian athletes.

Undoubtedly, Sports play a very important role in the holistic development of our children who are the present of our societies and our leaders of tomorrow.

Sports is key to a healthy society, physically and mentally and hence an important means to a society's wellbeing.

This importance given to Sports in Slovenia, reflects a prosperous vision for all Slovenians today and in the future.

I augur the People of Slovenia success in this positive endeavour towards their own well being.

Today, His Excellency President Pahor, and myself, also discussed the readiness of our respective experts to consolidate relations on matters concerning social solidarity and the family, by for example sharing of best practices.

I look forward to tomorrow, when I will have the opportunity to visit a number of social entities, mainly: Centre Draga, Slovene Philanthropy [Association for the promotion of Voluntary Work], Kljuc [Centre for fight against THB] and Sloga [Platform for development cooperation and humanitarian aid].

I truly look forward to the potential conversation with the management of these social entities. I am convinced that there is much scope for sharing of best practices and experience in the social field.

On the other hand, His Excellency President Pahor and myself, have also taken note of ongoing negotiations for the conclusion of an agreement between our Ministries for Home affairs on mutual protection of the exchange of classified information.

Today too, I am eagerly looking forward to the conclusion of an agreement on cooperation between the respective academies of diplomatic training, of our two countries.

Regional

On a regional level, Malta and Slovenia today, notwithstanding their size, sit together with other important European states within the EU framework where they give a most important contribution.

Both our countries bring to the European Union, an important and an outstanding dimension and experience, to continue to enhance, our region's endeavours in promoting economic advancement, social and political values.

Both our countries, have made a success of their EU membership and in this regard, we recall Slovenia's successful Presidency of the European Council.

Indeed, Slovenia has showed that small States do have an important role within the European family and can be successful.

Today, Malta and Slovenia stand side by side to push forward the further enlargement of the EU so that the dream of our forefathers for a truly united Europe materialises sooner rather than later.

Malta look forward too, to further enhance our participation in the organisations of the region, such as the Union of the Mediterranean, as surely the input of our two countries is very important, for the further development of regional co-operation.

In the meantime, both our countries, look forward for all Western Balkan states to become fully fledged members of the Europe Union.

In this regard both Slovenia and Malta, believe that it is urgent that sustainable peace, prosperity and stability are attained and secured in the whole of Europe.

We want to make sure that future generations do not have to bear the tragic consequences of war. It is sad to note that although this year we commemorated the 100th anniversary of the Great War, World War I, and the 25th anniversary of the fall of the Berlin Wall, there are still leaders around us that believe in divisions and warfare.

Unfortunately there are still some who believe that war is a means to an end.

Unfortunately it seems that there are some who has not learnt the lesson that war brings only loss of lives; that war displaces innocent people; that war causes thousands of children to become orphans, and steals their future; that war makes so many families flee from their homes and in the process, risk their lives in search of safety and a better chance to life.

This is the unfortunate operation of a few extremists that have egoistic ambitions and which forget completely human dignity.

This is another reason why I feel welcomed in Slovenia, not only because of the warm welcome given to me and my delegation by your President, but also because, we have come to a country which is not only beautiful in its physical sense, but also because Slovenia is a country, which can

boast of a People that thrive for peace, stability and prosperity, like my own country and the Maltese people.

On another note, Malta will be assuming the Presidency of the Council of the EU in the first half of 2017. We are looking forward to share with Slovenia, the successful experience of your own Presidency. I feel sure that advice and assistance in sharing of best practices, will be more than forthcoming.

It is an important moment where we can collaborate effectively, so as Malta will ensure a successful Presidency of the European Council, in the best interest of all European Peoples.

International

His Excellency President Pahor and myself have discussed the situation in North Africa pursuant to the Arab Spring.

Developments in countries such as Libya are of considerable concern not only for Malta but for all Mediterranean states, for Europe and for the whole world.

We look forward, for diplomacy to prevail.

We look forward for dialogue becomes a continuous process and a natural way of bringing all peoples together.

We look forward to the time hopefully very soon, where our Libyan friends can start rebuilding their country and their institutions.

President Pahor and myself, have also discussed migration and in particular the tragedies occurring in countries hit by internal strife and also the tragedies occurring in the Mediterranean Sea which is fast becoming a cemetery.

Smuggling and trafficking of humans has to be stopped once and for all. Human dignity should prevail.

Slovenia and Malta have to continue giving a voice to the urge of these people, who are today's voiceless people.

We also discussed the situation in Ukraine where we are hoping that the recent agreement reached, will bear the desired benefits and that peace can prevail once again in this troubled region, whilst we also discussed the tragic situation in the Middle East, Syria and Iraq.

Conclusion:

On concluding, I have come to Slovenia, to continue to strengthen our sound diplomatic and political relationship and to seek ways to expand our bilateral co-operation on other sectors, such as trade and tourism to mention some.

Slovenia and Malta can already boast of about 10 important agreements. I came to Slovenia with my delegation to ensure that these important agreements are put in practice and not left on paper.

After today's bilateral talks with His Excellency President Pahor, I have every reason to believe that there is the same commitment from both sides to make the best of our friendship and relationship.

I look ahead, to when our technical people will take up the necessary opportunities to collaborate and explore the possibilities, so as to ensure that the positive potential that exist between our two countries is completely developed.