

**TOAST DELIVERED BY HE MARIE-LOUISE COLEIRO PRECA, PRESIDENT OF
MALTA ON THE OCCASION OF THE INDEPENDENCE DAY OF THE UNITED
STATES OF AMERICA**

1 JULY 2015

Honourable Prime Minister

Honourable Minister

Presidents Emeriti

Excellencies

Distinguished guests

Ladies and gentlemen

Thank you, Your Excellency Ambassador Gina Abercrombie-Winstanley, for your warm welcome and the vibrant words we just heard portraying your country so beautifully.

I take this opportunity to ask you, on behalf of my husband, in my name and on behalf of the Government and the People of Malta, to convey to His Excellency President Barack Obama and the People of the United States of America, our sincere best wishes on the celebration of America's Independence.

Ambassador, you have touched on two particular human rights that are very close to my heart, those of accessibility and inclusivity for all.

It is with pleasure that I hear you elaborate on the opportunities afforded by America for people with disabilities, to be able to live full, satisfying lives, even during their quest for leisure.

Yet, I believe, we have still a long way to go before every person can truly feel included in all aspects of life.

We all need to play a role, no matter how small, or insignificant we may think it is, if we are to strive to create a world where every person feels included, respected and loved with all the dignity they deserve.

I believe that both our countries have laid the foundation stones for accessibility and inclusivity to become a reality for all. Let us now ensure that this happens through changing people's attitudes and mindset through education, and through our fine examples of good practise.

Excellency,

Recent developments in our neighbourhoods and beyond have shown that the quest for peace is still more relevant than ever.

As a country geographically situated in the midst of the Mediterranean Sea, and at the core of three continents, Malta remains committed to serve as a hub for dialogue and peace in the region, and indeed for world peace.

I am sure all people of good will agree that we share the common values of solidarity, peace and unity among people. These values constitute the very identity of the Maltese and Gozitan people.

In fact, Malta is, more than ever before, committed to promote peace and understanding, and is vociferous in its quest for dialogue among nations.

With this in mind, I too have a dream; that of establishing a Centre for Peace in Malta, that will serve as a hub for dialogue, negotiations and action for peace.

Yes, Your Excellency, let us all discover America's beauty; but beyond that, let us all discover its diversity; how people can live together side by side; how different cultures can and do interact in their daily lives; how people with different abilities can contribute to the wider good; and how everyone is made to feel included, no matter their creed, colour, sexual orientation, ethnicity or nationality.

That, I believe, is true democracy.

Ladies and gentlemen,

Let us now drink to the health of H.E. President Barack Obama and H.E. Gina Abercrombie-Winstanley, as well as to the excellent relations and friendship between Malta and the United States of America.

