



Press Release

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Speech by President Marie-Louise Coleiro Preca during the State Dinner in honour of the President of the Swiss Confederation Johann Schneider-Ammann

Your Excellency, President Schneider-Ammann,
Excellencies,
Distinguished Guests,
Dear Friends,

It is an honour to welcome Your Excellency, President Johann Schneider-Ammann, here in Malta for this historic State Visit, the first of its kind since diplomatic relations were established between Malta and Switzerland half a century ago.

During this time, relations between our two countries have become stronger than ever. They reflect our mutual commitment to democracy, the rule of law, prosperity, and the wellbeing of the peoples of our nations.

Switzerland has always been, and I am more than confident, that it shall continue to be, an important and cherished partner for Malta. Over the years, collaboration has flourished in a number of sectors and areas of mutual interest. These include: higher education, diplomacy, research, health services, tourism, large-scale investment, and bilateral trade.

These relations were further strengthened as a result of the recent visits to Malta by eminent dignitaries from the Swiss Confederation, including that of Her Excellency Simonetta Sommaruga, in November 2015, and that of His Excellency Didier Burkhalter, in March 2016. I must also underline here the visit to Bern in November 2014 of the Honourable George Vella, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Malta where a Memorandum of Understanding on Cooperation between the respective Foreign Ministries was concluded.

Notable and close collaboration between Malta and Switzerland is also registered in the human resource development. In this context, allow me to mention the important joint project, currently in force between Malta and Switzerland, namely the Mediterranean Academy of Diplomatic Studies (MEDAC), which forms part of the University of Malta. The Academy was set up in 1990 and, to date, includes over seven hundred alumni from some sixty different countries.

MEDAC facilitates a growing network of diplomats across Europe, and most importantly within the Southern Mediterranean, the Maghreb, and the Sahel. It is evidence of Malta's capacity as a bridge-builder between cultures and nations. MEDAC has created a unique community of learning and sharing.

Attachments: none

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Another important joint project between Malta and Switzerland is that of the DiploFoundation, which has formed a strong and enduring partnership, by building Diplo's role as a leading capacity development provider in the field of international policy and diplomacy. This project, established fifteen years ago, with an alumni community of over five thousand members coming from two hundred and eight countries and territories worldwide, specialises in e-diplomacy, internet governance, and training programmes for small and vulnerable developing states.

Our countries are also dynamic collaborators in the activities of several specialists and International Institutions based in Malta. These include the International Maritime Law Institute (IMLI), which focuses on the training of academics in international maritime law, and the International Institute for Justice and the Rule of Law (IJJ), which focuses on the dissemination of good practices and the implementation of counterterrorism-related training.

Furthermore, the fact that Switzerland has included Malta in the list of countries whose residents are eligible for Swiss Government scholarships, has meant that Maltese students have found an opportunity to pursue innovative postgraduate studies and research.

I am also reassured to note that Malta and Switzerland have continued their close collaboration and support of each other at the international level, on issues of mutual interest, particularly at the United Nations and the Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe.

As we celebrate fifty years of diplomatic relations between our two nations, let us also celebrate the future potential of our collaboration. In this context, at a time when Malta is preparing assiduously for the new and challenging period as the next European Union Presidency beginning in January 2017, Malta looks forward to working closely with Switzerland in making this venture a fruitful and successful one.

Let us remind ourselves, throughout our endeavours, to pursue the goals of peace and prosperity in all our work. Thanks to Swiss valid and critical partnerships with Malta on initiatives such as MEDAC, the DiploFoundation, IMLI and the IJJ, our focus on peace is being shared in countries facing humanitarian crises, vulnerability and precarity, sharing a message of hope and empowerment.

Therefore, our vision for the future is rooted in more than strategic interests.

We are united by a mutual vision of the world, which is rooted in our commitment to ensure the wellbeing of all.

We are united by the dedication of our financial sector and entrepreneurs, creating business opportunities and sowing the seeds of economic success.

We are united by the excitement of our students and researchers, enriching one another and sharing their enthusiasm with the global community.

We are united by the leadership of our countries, and by decision makers whose policies must, always and in all ways, be focused on the wellbeing and the dignity of each member of our societies.

In conclusion, I trust that this strong spirit of friendship, mutual purpose, and partnership shall continue to grow between our peoples.

I am confident that Malta and the Swiss Confederation shall keep firm in our united efforts to build sustainable peace, security and shared prosperity in our world, for the benefit of our peoples, and future generations.