

**SPEECH BY H.E. MARIE LOUISE COLEIRO PRECA, PRESIDENT OF
MALTA, ON THE OCCASION OF THE PRESENTATION OF
CREDENTIALS**

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Excellencies

Dear friends

I would like to welcome three distinguished diplomats:

His Excellency the Ambassador of the Portuguese Republic;

Her Excellency the Ambassador of the Republic of Kosovo; and

His Excellency the Ambassador of the Republic of Macedonia.

I would like to congratulate you all on your appointments, and wish you every success in your endeavours, in the best interest of our respective countries.

Your Excellencies, please convey my best wishes to your respective Heads of State, while also expressing sentiments of friendship towards the peoples of your nations.

I feel sure that your Excellencies will continue to strengthen the political, social, economic, and cultural collaborations among our countries.

Your Excellency,

Diplomatic relations between Malta and the Portuguese Republic were first established in 1968, however, the historical relationship between our peoples is much older.

The links between our two peoples stretch back to the presence of Portuguese knights of the Sovereign Military Order of Malta, who lived on our Maltese Islands for hundreds of years.

Furthermore, the strong legacy of our common Christian faith tradition in both our countries, also creates opportunities for mutual understanding.

Indeed, the special devotion that the Portuguese feel towards Saint George, is reflected here in Malta.

This is particularly evident in the village of my birth, Hal Qormi, which is also known as *Citta' Pinto* after the Portuguese Grandmaster who gave it his name.

In today's world, our closeness is immediately clear in the shared commitment we both feel towards the strengthening of our European Union.

Malta's ongoing Presidency of the Council of the Union is striving to ensure that the connections which unite us, as Member States, remain strong.

Such connections shall ensure shared social, economic, and cultural benefits for all our countries.

I take this opportunity to commend Portugal for the respectful way it tackles migration.

Indeed, Portugal should serve an example of good practice to all Member States of the European Union, in this regard.

Let me also say that I look forward to meeting, again, the President of Portugal at the upcoming Arraiolos Meeting, which I shall be hosting here in Malta.

The meeting shall be an excellent opportunity for us to continue promoting our shared ideals, namely, the pursuit of dialogue and the safeguarding of peace across our countries and our regions.

Your Excellency,

Diplomatic relations were only established between the Republic of Malta and the Republic of Kosovo six years ago, and yet we have built a strong friendship and mutual trust.

I was pleased to be in Kosovo on a State Visit last year, and to meet with former President of Kosovo, Her Excellency, Atifete Jahjaga, and with the Prime Minister of Kosovo, His Excellency, Mr Isa Mustafa.

Moreover, last year, HE Atifete Jahjaga visited Malta on a working visit, and in December of the same year, Malta was also proud to welcome the now current President of Kosovo, HE Hashim Thaci, on a State Visit.

Let me reiterate that Malta, as one of the first countries to recognise Kosovo as an independent state, is deeply committed to ensure that Kosovo perseveres on its journey towards meaningful inclusion within the European Union.

Furthermore, the Maltese Presidency of the Council of the EU shall continue to give particular focus to the Western Balkans region.

There is much scope to further develop mutually enriching relations between our two countries.

This is especially clear in the areas of trade, of cultural exchange, and of social development.

Let me also mention a seminar, organized during the visit of Her Excellency, Atifete Jahjaga and various women's organisations, entitled "Sexual Violence in Conflict and Beyond".

The seminar reminded us that we must continue to endeavour to bring a focus on sexual violence, as a terrible scourge against humanity, especially at this time of increasing uncertainty and conflict around the world.

Let us continue to work together, towards of the need for stability and security within Europe, the Western Balkans, and beyond.

Your Excellency,

Diplomatic relations were established between the Republic of Malta and the Republic of Macedonia last year, and this is the first time that the Republic of Macedonia has appointed an Ambassador to Malta.

Therefore, let me extend a special welcome to you, Ambassador Shambevski.

Malta welcomes the interest expressed by the Macedonian authorities in commencing discussions in the areas of economic cooperation and socio-cultural development.

Such an interest will undoubtedly, do much to nurture bilateral relations between our countries.

I feel certain that the desire for peace is felt very strongly by both our peoples, and therefore we must continue to encourage a spirit of solidarity in our respective regions. Good neighbourly relations should be valued and further encouraged, as a positive step forward.

Malta firmly believes in the importance of direct contact among the communities of our respective societies, particularly amongst businesses, students, academics, and professionals.

I would also like to take the opportunity to augur much success to Macedonian efforts, in countering the activity of terrorist fighters.

Malta is deeply concerned in this regard, and the International Institute on Justice and the Rule of Law, based in Malta, offers an ideal venue from which to develop good practice and to share knowledge in this sensitive and important area.

Let us continue working together, in all other sectors, in order to pursue proactive strategies, which will have practical outcomes for the benefit of our peoples.

Excellencies,

Let me encourage each and every one of us to continue collaborating, to create a positive change in our nations, in our regions, and in our world.

Let us take action together, to implement the full force of the United Nations' Agenda 2030, and its Sustainable Development Goals, which all the leaders of the world have agreed upon in 2015.

These goals offer us a practical roadmap for a sustainable future, which all of us want to make a reality for our nations.

Let us work in synergy, no matter the geographical distances or cultural differences between us, to ensure that solidarity and the ideals of social justice are at the heart of our global agenda.

Excellencies, dear guests, friends,

Please raise your glasses to drink to the good health of the new Ambassadors, and excellent relations between Malta and the nations they represent.