

**SPEECH BY HER EXCELLENCY MARIE-LOUISE COLEIRO PRECA,
PRESIDENT OF MALTA, AT A RECEPTION HELD ON THE OCCASION
OF THE NATIONAL DAY OF THE KINGDOM OF THE NETHERLANDS
27 April 2017**

**Your Excellency
Distinguished Guests
Dear Friends**

The National Day of the Netherlands is a special time for us.

**It is a day to remember the strong ties of friendship, which unite
our two nations.**

In this spirit of commemoration, please convey, in my name and on behalf of the Government and the People of Malta, our best wishes to His Majesty, Willem-Alexander, and to the Government and the People of the Kingdom of the Netherlands.

Our united ideals, in support of human dignity and democratic participation, are definitely the values that bond us, within the European Union.

For this reason, it is encouraging to note that the Dutch elections, held on 15 March, recorded the highest voter turnout in 30 years. This also reflected an anti-populist and pro-EU attitude, which should fill us with hope for the future.

Diplomatic relations between the Republic of Malta and the Kingdom of the Netherlands have flourished since they were first established in 1965.

The presence of the Maltese Embassy in the Hague and the Dutch Embassy in Malta has considerably enhanced the bilateral cooperation and trade relations between our countries.

Moreover, the Netherlands' support for Malta to host EASO, the European Asylum Support Office, is direct evidence of the concern we both feel, to address the phenomenon of migration.

As migration continues to be a topic of concern, across our nations, we must keep showing solidarity with one another.

We must also never forget that migration is a humanitarian phenomenon.

For this reason, Malta's ongoing Presidency of the Council of the European Union, has made migration, alongside strategies for social inclusion, a key area of its agenda.

Our common goals, for the prosperity and wellbeing of our peoples, will continue to create an impetus for new opportunities, for the benefit of our two countries.

The holding of numerous high-level meetings are proof of this. I am pleased to note that areas of finance, aviation, and forensic science continue to be of particular interest to us.

Bilateral trade between our countries remains healthy, and investment from the Netherlands is particularly remarkable.

The presence of almost 800 companies, in Malta, with shareholding interests from the Netherlands, is evidence of this.

Malta has also seen a steady growth in the number of visitors from the Netherlands, and tourism remains an effective gateway for dialogue and connection between diverse communities and cultures.

Our countries' mutual enrichment and befriending is being made proactively stronger, in the cultural sector.

An interesting event, in this context, happened in April of last year, when students from the University of Tilburg visited Malta to discuss issues of social importance.

The Arts Exhibition, entitled, “Friends in Art”, which featured the works of Maltese and Dutch artists, and was sponsored by the embassy, was another opportunity for arts diplomacy.

Thank you, Ambassador, for your sense of friendship and support.

In fact, I would like to thank you for your active participation in two further environmental and social events, which were hosted by my Foundation for the Wellbeing of Society.

Furthermore, I am also very confident, that Valletta's position as European Capital of Culture in 2018 will open even more exciting opportunities, for cultural cooperation between our peoples.

Excellency,

Our nations must be very proud of the values, which we uphold, of peace, of democratic participation, and of social solidarity, because these ensure a dignified life for all of our citizens.

My last appeal is to remind us that, during these uncertain times, brought about by a most turbulent region and world, we must remain strong, while we continue to endeavour and prioritise the social, economic, cultural, and political wellbeing of our peoples.

Let us raise our glasses and drink to the health of His Highness, the King of the Netherlands, and to the continuing friendship between the peoples of Malta and Ireland.