

**SPEECH BY H.E. MARIE-LOUISE COLEIRO PRECA,
PRESIDENT OF MALTA**

Let me begin by once again, welcoming Your Excellency, President Kolinda Grabar-Kitarović, on your second visit to the Maltese Islands.

Furthermore, I look forward to your participation at the upcoming Arraiolos Group Meeting, which shall be held in September of this year.

The high level Arraiolos meeting, which brings together non-executive Heads of States, from different European countries, will once again give us a powerful platform to discuss the challenges and opportunities facing the European Union, our region and beyond.

I am so pleased to have you on board, and I am sure that the united commitment of our colleagues, during the Arraiolos meeting, will produce an environment of active dialogue and collaboration.

Let me also take this opportunity to note the various other high level meetings that have recently taken place, and are evidence of the vibrant ties between our two countries.

These have included meetings between our respective Ministers of Foreign Affairs, held in April, and bilateral talks between our Prime Ministers, held in March, where they discussed the future of the European Union, amongst other topics.

Relations between Malta and the Republic of Croatia have been strengthened by the importance that we both place, in the success of the European Project.

Our mutual commitment reflects a deep kinship of values, founded on a common concern for peace within our regions, in our European Union, and throughout our world.

I firmly believe that we must continue working together, to give due prominence to all issues that promote the prosperity and the wellbeing of all members of society in our nations.

In order to achieve this, we must continue to encourage the strengthening of social and cultural diversity; the participation of civil society; and the fostering of an inclusive sense of active citizenship.

By doing so, we shall be safeguarding the most treasured ideals of our democracies, which are essential during these times of global uncertainty.

The role of the European Union to safeguard our ideals is clear.

Therefore, I would like to commend the Republic of Croatia for its efforts to ensure stability in the Western Balkan region. We must continue to focus on building stronger links between, and among, all our countries, and across the various regions of Europe.

A focus on stability and opportunity in the Western Balkans, and the potential for peaceful prosperity, is a priority of Malta's ongoing presidency of the Council of the European Union.

Furthermore, in this spirit of prosperity, it is encouraging to note the large number of registered Croatian employees who are active in the Maltese workforce.

Moreover, tourism between our countries is also steadily growing. Such opportunities, through employment and tourism, are an excellent means of bringing people together, nurturing connections and friendships among the communities of our respective countries.

Let us work together, to encourage greater synergy between the business communities of our respective countries. In this way, they shall be able to effectively and efficiently identify new opportunities for mutual growth.

Indeed, a clear focus on the prosperity of our societies is essential if we are to ensure that the challenges posed by poverty and precarity are proactively addressed. We cannot allow certain groups or communities to face a heightened risk of economic or social exclusion. Rather, we must build healthy relationships between diverse groups, across society, for the benefit of all.

Let us always remember that we must be guided by the ideals of democratic participation; respect for Human Rights; and the upholding the rule of law.

These are the precious heritage and legacy of all our European cultures, and a light on our journey through contemporary difficulties.

I trust that a strong spirit of partnership shall continue to grow between our peoples, fostering shared wellbeing, mutual prosperity, and meaningful wellbeing, in our countries, across our European Union, and throughout our world.