

SPEECH BY H.E. MARIE LOUISE COLEIRO PRECA, PRESIDENT OF MALTA AT THE PRESS CONFERENCE DURING THE OFFICIAL VISIT BY THE PRESIDENT OF MALTA

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Let me begin by thanking Her Excellency, President Michelle Bachelet, for her kind invitation, which I accepted gladly, to visit Chile.

Your Excellency, it is truly my pleasure to be in your country. Chile is a country of such extensive natural beauty and cultural diversity, and I must thank you for the hospitality that you, and the people of Chile, have shown to us.

Truly, I feel that I have come to a very warm and friendly country.

I would also like to state that I feel proud to be the first Head of State from Malta to visit Latin America, and in particular, Chile. I have come to Latin America and Chile to strengthen the friendships that, I am sure, will continue to flourish between our peoples.

President Bachelet and I have met before, at a World Women's Leaders Council event in New York, which focused on the empowerment of women and issues of gender-based violence.

The event itself made a strong statement, that more must be done, by the international community, to speak out in support of the rights of women and girls across our world.

I am convinced that we both stand in solidarity with all peoples who are experiencing exclusion, violence, and precarity, simply because of their gender.

I am proud to have the President of Chile as a committed ally in the work we must all do, together, to ensure that equality and equity become a reality, in the lives of every woman and girl in our world.

Furthermore, my tete-a-tete with President Bachelet touched upon other issues of importance between our two countries.

These primarily included the development of relations between the peoples and the authorities of Malta and Chile, from one simply based on diplomatic relations, which began in 1989, to a more profound relationship between our communities and our governments.

Despite our geographical distance, our nations are both maritime states, with much to share, mainly in the areas of trade, investment, education, and tourism.

Indeed, Malta's upcoming facilitation of the international "Our Oceans" Conference will continue the spirit of active innovation, which characterised the conference when it was hosted by Chile in 2015, and by the USA in 2016.

Malta has a unique place in the centre of the Mediterranean Sea, between Africa and Europe. Our connections with the rest of the world are further strengthened, by our membership within the Commonwealth and the European Union.

In fact, Malta is an ideal gateway for dialogue and collaboration, to create connections across different continents and regions, and bring together diverse communities and peoples.

Today also marks a historical moment, in the relations between our nations, with the signing of a Memorandum of Understanding on Political Consultations, between our governments.

This agreement will greatly facilitate regular consultations between Malta and Chile, on bilateral, regional, and international matters of mutual interest. It shall provide a platform, from which to encourage greater closeness between our nations, to move forward.

Moreover, I hope that our deliberations will open further possibilities, for more agreements between our countries.

Let me also take this opportunity to commend the meetings, held earlier this year, between Start-Up Chile and a number of Maltese stakeholders.

Let us continue to create such opportunities for the business communities of our respective countries, to continue to create opportunities for collaboration, for the mutual benefit of the peoples of our nations.

We must also strengthen the good relations which exist between Chile and the European Union. These are already having a positive effect in the areas of climate change and sustainable development, in particular.

On concluding, let me encourage our civil society organisations, both in Malta and Chile, to collaborate on issues of poverty, discrimination, and injustice. In so doing, we shall be acting on our common commitment to the United Nations' Agenda 2030, and its Sustainable Development Goals.

We have a lot to learn from each other, about how best to tackle such issues, by promoting an approach rooted in universal human rights.

In so doing, we shall ensure that we are building sustainable and effective peace, prosperity, and wellbeing, for all the families and communities of Malta and Chile, and all the peoples of our world.

Thank you for your attention.