

ARRIAOLOS PRESS LAUNCH

28th September 2017 - The Palace Valletta

H.E. Marie-Louise Coleiro Preca – President of Malta

Thank you for joining us, for this morning's press launch.

We want to share with you the announcement of the very first meeting, of the Arriaolos Group, to be held in Malta on the 14th and the 15th September.

The Arriaolos Group is the annual forum of the Non-Executive Presidents of the European Union.

The name of the Group is derived from the small Portuguese town of Arriaolos, where the first meeting was held in 2003.

It was the Former President of Portugal, HE Jorge Sampaio, who decided to invite the Presidents of Finland and Germany, together with the Presidents of Hungary, Latvia and Poland, which at that time were still accession countries to the European Union, to

discuss the impact of the 2004 enlargement of the European Union and to discuss the plans for a European Constitution.

The Malta meeting of the Arriaolos Group is the thirteen meeting. It is the largest meeting to date, as thirteen Presidents, Heads of State, will be participating.

Another first for the Malta meeting is that, for the very first time, there will be three European female Heads of State. In fact, I invited the Croatian and the Estonian Presidents, both are women, to join us.

The countries represented by their respective Head of State for the Malta meeting are, in alphabetical order: Austria, Bulgaria, Croatia, Estonia, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Italy, Latvia, Malta, Poland, Portugal and Slovenia.

The theme chosen for this year's Forum is: Crossing Borders.

The choice of this overarching theme is aimed to create a frank and profound discussion, at a time when Europe, like the rest of the world, has become more polarised on social-class and ethnic lines.

Crossing Borders, is an invitation to the non-executive Presidents of the European Union to reflect on how Europe can rediscover its core social values, reclaim its social model, and achieve higher levels of solidarity, fairness, and inclusion.

With migration becoming the biggest stress test in this regard.

The Presidents will explore how socially-responsible and ethically-driven governance at community, local, regional, and transnational levels, can help disenfranchised, vulnerable European citizens, and marginalised residents, cross social and economic borders, to a more inclusive Europe.

During our deliberations, I am confident that social justice will feature prominently, as a basic condition for Euro-Mediterranean security.

I hope that the Presidents will discuss cross-border mobility, and the challenges and opportunities faced by a troubled Mediterranean region.

Our discussions on this overarching theme will be tackled in two parts:

The first discussion will be introduced and moderated by Professor Carm Borg where he will tackle: the idea of: “Reclaiming Social Europe in the Shadows of a Global Predatory Economy”.

The second discussion will be introduced and moderated by Professor Stephen Calleya, where he will tackle the idea of: “Managing Security Challenges in the Euro-Mediterranean Area”.

I am very pleased to note that we have two very eminent and esteemed professors, to deal with the challenges and opportunities that contemporary Europe is facing.

I am delighted that both Professors Borg and Calleya accepted to take up this important and substantial part of the meeting.

I would like to take this opportunity to convey my appreciation and thank them for the work that they have been doing, since February, when we had the first preparatory meeting of the Chiefs of Staff of the respective Presidents in attendance.

Concluding Remarks:

It is my hope that, through this meeting, we shall become more sensitive and aware of the particular nature of our respective situations.

Each and every one of us will be more resolved to play our respective parts, within the limitations of our powers, to spread a strong message of solidarity and social justice, across Europe.

We must work together, in synergy, to ensure that no citizens or residents in our countries are left behind.

Finally, I would like to convey my heartfelt thanks, to Mr Carm Briffa, Secretary to the Presidency, who has taken this big task on board, including Ms Diane Sladden, who has been coordinating a team for many months.

I would like to thank the staff at my Office, and my Secretariat, over and above their duties.

I would also like to thank the Office of the Prime Minister; the Ministry for Health; the Emergency and Casualty Department at Mater Dei Hospital; the Ministry for Finance; The Ministry for Foreign Affairs and Trade Promotion; the Ministry of Home Affairs and National Security; the Armed Forces of Malta; the Police Corps; and the Civil Protection Department.