

[Salutations]

Excellencies, distinguished guests, dear friends,

It is a pleasure to join you here in Paris for this reception, to celebrate the strong and flourishing relationship that exists between the peoples of Malta and France.

There has always been a deep sense of connection between our peoples, which is rooted in our shared European and Mediterranean heritage.

Although official diplomatic relations between our two countries were established in 1964, the history that links us together, across the centuries, is far older.

We have only to remember the presence of the Normans and the House of Anjou in Malta, during the Middle Ages; the many contributions which were made by influential Knights of St John, from the langues of France, Provence, and Auvergne; and Napoleon's presence in Malta, through whom two fundamental transformations occurred in the Maltese islands, namely, the abolition of slavery and the provision of a new educational system.

Our mutual membership with the European Union has also been catalyst, to further strengthen the friendship between our peoples.

I believe that this is largely due to our shared commitment to the values of the European Union, mainly of universal human rights, fundamental freedoms, and the safeguarding of human dignity.

For this reason, I remember with great fondness a recent visit to Paris, which I made earlier this year, to participate in a High Level Conference organised by UNESCO, on “Women’s Empowerment and Leadership”.

This conference highlighted these values which we share in common, and made it clear that our nations are united by a profound commitment to the ideals of both of our republics.

We are committed to the celebration of diversity, and to promote inclusive processes of democratic participation, for the benefit of all people, regardless of their gender, ethnicity, background, or creed.

For this reason, let me urge us all to continue using our influence and authority, no matter what our position is, to strengthen the social, political, and cultural friendships between our countries.

Let us also continue to encourage stronger trade and commercial ties, and greater closeness between the business communities of our nations.

In particular, I believe that the area of tourism is an ideal sector through which people can grow and evolve, by coming into closer contact, and experiencing the benefits of diversity.

It is therefore reassuring to note that there continues to be an upward trend in visitors from France, who are being welcomed to our Maltese Islands.

As unfortunate events around the world continue to increase uncertainty, I believe it is essential for us to keep opening new channels for dialogue and connection.

We must do so by using all the means at our disposal, especially through efforts of cultural outreach and tourism diplomacy.

In this way, by prioritising a culture of positive peace that respects and values the participation of each and every citizen, we would be catalysts for the meaningful change, which is needed across the whole of our societies.

We shall also be striving to build more resilient relationships among the communities of our nations, while securing stable sources of sustainable prosperity and holistic wellbeing.

By doing so, we shall also be responding to the mandate of the United Nations' Agenda 2030, and its seventeen Sustainable Development Goals.

Agenda 2030 commits our nations, and the entire international community, to achieve a radical transformation of our world.

Agenda 2030 clearly states that no country can stand alone, to achieve such a transformation, towards a more peace-oriented future.

Therefore, we must work together to implement strategies that continue to safeguard our environment; that eradicate the scourge of poverty and injustice; and to put a stop to the threats of conflict, violence, and discrimination, wherever they occur.

I believe it is our duty to nurture our peoples, to achieve these goals by promoting the ideals of solidarity and respect.

When we act in ways which reinforce solidarity and respect, we shall be challenging the dangerous messages of populist extremism and radicalisation, which are threatening the stability of our nations, especially at this time in history.

I augur that we shall continue, always and in all ways, to promote the friendships between our peoples and to prioritise peace across our world.

Let us keep channels of dialogue open, and invest in innovative processes of collaboration, to sustain even healthier connections between the communities and societies of Malta and France, for the ultimate benefit of both present and future generations.

Thank you, and enjoy the rest of the evening.