
*Speech by H.E. Marie-Louise Coleiro Preca, President of Malta, at the Reception
in Honour of Diplomats who presented their credentials*

25th January 2018

[Salutations]

Excellencies

Distinguished guests

Dear friends

It is my pleasure to welcome three distinguished diplomats, *Her Excellency, the Ambassador of the Republic of Turkey; Her Excellency, the Ambassador of the Arab Republic of Egypt; and His Excellency, the High Commissioner of the Republic of India.*

Excellencies,

I would like to congratulate you all on your appointments, and wish you every success in your endeavours.

Your Excellencies, please convey my very best wishes to your respective Heads of State, while also expressing sentiments of friendship towards the peoples of your nations.

Your Excellency, Ambassador of the Republic of Turkey,

Malta and Turkey have excellent relations, and this is evident in the numerous high-level exchanges taking place between our relevant authorities.

This has been further strengthened by the opening of a Maltese Embassy in Ankara, and the appointment of a Maltese resident Ambassador in Turkey.

While there is an increasing number of tourist arrivals from Turkey, there is still much we can do to further explore and develop the tourism sector between our two countries.

Moreover, as we had the opportunity to discuss this morning, we must look at one another as collaborators, and not competitors in the area of Mediterranean tourism.

The Mediterranean is one of the world's most beautiful regions, therefore, I believe that we must find innovative ways to bring our people further together, to address regional conflicts through the power of tourism.

There is much room for us to develop opportunities to work together, with a focus on person-to-person contact, through tourism for peace. We can do so in a variety of fora, including the Mediterranean Tourism Foundation.

In addition, the Mediterranean Tourism Foundation will be setting up an office in Bodrum, which will certainly facilitate closer contact between the stakeholders of our tourism industries.

Furthermore, the Maltese Government is pleased with the cultural relations that exist between our two countries, and the presence of our respective diasporas.

While noting the fruitful work carried out so far, we look forward to intensifying our cultural, social, and economic cooperation, through opportunities for mutual prosperity.

Let me also take this opportunity to commend the Turkish authorities for their efforts to address the phenomenon of migration, which is having an effect across our Mediterranean region.

Let us continue to explore new opportunities for dialogue and friendship, while also celebrating Turkey's continuing role as an important regional partner, with whom Malta shares many interests of mutual benefit.

Your Excellency, Ambassador of the Arab Republic of Egypt,

Malta considers Egypt to be an essential partner in our Mediterranean region, which is made evident by the various high-level diplomatic exchanges between our respective authorities.

Egypt is a beacon of hope in the region. Furthermore, Egypt is an important collaborator, to strengthen our dialogue with the Arab world.

In this regard, we look forward to developing even closer cooperation with the people and the authorities of Egypt.

As we have said this morning, Your Excellency, I believe that there is much further scope for us, to strengthen the ties between our countries, by seeking additional areas of cooperation. These include the areas of bilateral and Mediterranean tourism; trade, science and technology; and the teaching of the English language.

Moreover, it is essential that we strengthen our connectivity between our countries, in order to facilitate person-to-person contact between our populations.

There are also excellent opportunities for Malta and Egypt to explore the possibility of student and staff exchanges, particularly in the field of medical research and education.

Such initiatives will further enhance collaboration in this essential sector, and I am pleased to note that plans are already underway between the relevant Maltese authorities and the University of Cairo.

Furthermore, Malta is an ideal destination for medical tourism, within and beyond the Mediterranean.

Ambassador, this morning's constructive conversation, about these and other topics, gives me confidence in the potential of our future endeavours, to enable our peoples and our business communities to engage further. This will certainly lead to mutual growth and prosperity.

Let me also take this time to commend Egypt's recent efforts, to tackle migration, through the various efforts undertaken by the Egyptian authorities over the past years.

Let me also note that Malta condemns, in the strongest terms, the terrible attacks upon innocent civilians that have recently taken place in Egypt. We express our solidarity with the families of victims, with the Egyptian Government, and with all the people of Egypt.

In order to effectively address the scourge of terrorism, we must work together. For this reason, Malta aligns itself with the aspirations of both the European Union and Egypt, to keep nurturing a fruitful relationship between the two sides.

Malta has always supported increased partnership and regional engagement in the Mediterranean, and we believe that close relations between the European Union and Egypt will contribute, significantly, to tackle common challenges in a more effective manner, as well as invigorating future initiatives.

Let me also congratulate Egypt on its efforts to promote and prioritise the participation of women, across every level of social and political participation. Such efforts are essential, to keep strengthening the principles of democracy.

Ambassador, in the light of these promising developments, I am confident of a bright future for mutually beneficial exchanges, between the governments, the peoples, and the business communities of our respective nations.

Your Excellency, the High Commissioner of the Republic of India,

It is my pleasure to welcome you to Malta, as a resident High Commissioner. I am certain that you shall continue to strengthen the diplomatic ties, and excellent relations, which exist between our respective countries, and are evident by your appointment to a permanent mission.

These excellent relations are rooted in our mutual heritage, as members of the Commonwealth of Nations, but even more so, through the historical interaction of a sizeable Indian community in Malta, who have made our islands their home. They have always been a peaceful and hardworking community, and contributed to Malta's prosperity over the years.

In light of such mutual befriending, Malta is keen to continue developing its long-standing relations with India.

During our conversation this morning, High Commissioner, we identified opportunities in various areas, including cultural exchanges; opportunities for initiatives in the film industry; the teaching of English as a foreign language; and tourism, in particular.

Such connections through tourism shall certainly be enhanced by the first Mediterranean Diwali Festival, which will take place in Malta, later this year.

Malta notes the long standing relations between European Union and India, and we welcome the progress that is being made, to enhance relations between the two parties.

Malta will continue to support and encourage future engagement between the European Union and India, and we look forward to the upcoming EU-India Summit, which will mark the 55th Anniversary since the establishment of diplomatic relations between the Union and India.

Let us also work together, to set into motion further bilateral agreements between our countries, which will encourage thriving connections between our respective societies.

Such agreements should be encouraged, in areas which include education and academic collaboration; mutual assistance in combatting organised crime; renewed attention to the issue of adoptions; and connections in the areas of infrastructure, transport, and shipping.

Furthermore, let us keep supporting one another, and creating opportunities for synergies between our respective social and business communities, to boost bilateral commerce and trade.

I believe that the social links between our peoples will be further strengthened, by focusing on new connections and engagements, on a variety of levels.

Let us keep encouraging such connections, as well as processes of collaboration and investment, by enhancing the links between our peoples in areas of mutual interest.

Excellencies,

On concluding, let me encourage all of us to continue fostering cooperation among our nations, to create further positive change in our regions and across our world.

A few days ago, Malta began its celebrations as European Capital of Culture for 2018. This is a important event, which clearly reflects our willingness to share our Maltese culture, and to create opportunities to collaborate with our neighbours and friends, from across the world, through cultural diplomacy.

Furthermore, let us take action to implement the United Nations' Agenda 2030, and its seventeen Sustainable Development Goals, which all the leaders of the world have agreed upon.

These goals offer us a practical and common roadmap for a sustainable future, to secure peace and prosperity for all humanity.

Let us work together, no matter the geographical distances or cultural diversity that exists between us.

We must do all that way can, to ensure that solidarity, and the ideals of social justice, are at the heart of all our endeavours. This is in line with the mandate of the Sustainable Development Goals.

Excellencies, dear guests, friends,

Please raise your glasses to drink to the good health of the new Ambassadors, and to excellent relations between Malta and the countries they represent, and to the friendship of our peoples.