
*Press Statement by H.E. Marie-Louise Coleiro Preca, President of Malta, during
a Joint Press Conference with the President of the Republic of Croatia*

26th February 2018

**Your Excellency, President Grabar-Kitarović,
Honourable Ministers and Parliamentary Secretaries
Excellencies,
Distinguished guests,
Members of the media.**

It is truly a pleasure to be in your beautiful country, for this historical State Visit.

It is not only historical because of the fact that this is the first visit by a Maltese Head of State to Croatia, but it is also historical as it is not often that two European Union female Presidents come together, as we are too few women at this level.

Let me start by expressing my appreciation to you, my friend, President Kolinda (Grabar-Kitarović), and to the Government of Croatia, for the warm welcome and great hospitality, you have extended to me and to my delegation.

From the outset, I would like to express my satisfaction about the constructive and insightful discussions during our meetings this morning.

My visit to Croatia, together with a strong official and trade delegation, is evidence of Malta's commitment to continue to build on the excellent bilateral relations, which exist between our two countries.

This State Visit continues to build on the state visit to Malta, last year, of Her Excellency, President Grabar-Kitarovic. This State Visit aims to continue to create ideal opportunities to intensify the excellent political and diplomatic relations, but also to develop further, economic, and social relations between our countries.

The presence of the Minister for the Family, Children's Rights and Social Solidarity; the Parliamentary Secretary for Reforms, Citizenship and Simplification of Administrative Processes; and the Parliamentary Secretary for Planning and the Property Market, forming part of the official Maltese delegation, is evidence of the political will of my government, to explore further opportunities to develop beneficial collaborations between our two countries.

On the other hand, the presence of such a strong business delegation from the Maltese Islands is also evidence of the commitment, which both our nations feel, towards developing sustainable collaborations and potential partnerships, to ensure prosperity for our peoples.

The respective positions of both our countries within the European Union, in its Southern and Eastern regions, makes us ideal collaborators, and not competitors.

My visit to Croatia together with such a diverse trade delegation comes at a most important time. It comes when Malta is experiencing significant economic growth, and when our business are seeking investment opportunities further ashore. It is with this confidence that we come to Croatia seeking worthwhile collaborations and sustainable partnerships, for the mutual benefit of both our businesses and peoples.

By working in synergy, not only will the business sectors of Malta and Croatia flourish, but our markets will also extend and expand.

Also due to the practically full employment situation in Malta, a recent important development occurred, that is the lifting of restrictions for Croatian Workers to take up job opportunities in Malta, like the many thousands of workers, from across Europe, who are already doing so.

I am confident that with the forthcoming signing of a Cooperation Agreement between the Malta Chamber of Commerce, Enterprise and Industry, and the Croatian Chamber of Economy, will lead to fruitful opportunities, in many sectors.

It is clear evidence that our countries are eager to work even more closely with each other and my State Visit aims at developing our already excellent diplomatic and political relations, into tangible results for our trade and businesses to flourish.

During our meetings today, we discussed various business sectors, which included: the areas of financial services; digital games; education and training in various sectors, such as healthcare; transshipment and logistics; tourism and hospitality; and the teaching of English as a foreign language, amongst others.

Air connectivity is another area of great importance, which needs to be developed between our countries, not only for tourism purposes, but also for our businesses in general.

Tourism, hospitality, and the teaching of English as a foreign language are areas in which Malta has achieved international excellence. These are areas which are not only an opportunity for economic growth, but they are also a means of bringing people together to develop friendship, and subsequently, sustainable peace.

At a time when uncertainty reigns across the globe, our work for peace and prosperity, on bilateral level, and subsequently, within our European family of nations, must continue to be a priority for the benefit of the people of our countries, of Europe and of the world.

Let us, therefore, continue to enhance peace and prosperity across our regions, as one united family, which includes all the peoples of Europe.

I am proud of the fact that, it is these values, of peace and prosperity, which define Malta and Croatia as nations of goodwill. This puts further responsibility on countries like us to work arduously towards these values.

These values are fundamental to the stability of our European family of nations where we must continue to work tirelessly to ensure that the European Union strengthens its unity for the benefit of all European peoples and all humanity.

I am certain that the friendship between our countries and our peoples will keep growing stronger.