
*Speech by H.E. Marie-Louise Coleiro Preca, President of Malta, at the reception
in honour of diplomats who presented their credentials*

5th December 2017

Honorary Minister Abela

Excellencies

Distinguished guests

Dear friends

It is my pleasure to welcome four distinguished diplomats, *Her Excellency, the Ambassador of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia; Her Excellency, the High Commissioner of Canada; His Excellency, the Ambassador of Bosnia Herzegovina; and His Excellency, the Ambassador of the Republic of Croatia.*

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 Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia,

Since diplomatic relations were first established in 1982, our two countries have continued to develop excellent diplomatic and political relations.

In fact, Malta considers Ethiopia to be an important partner, both as the seat of the African Union Head Quarters, and for the positive and constructive role it plays in the Horn of Africa.

Malta looks forward to developing further cooperation with the Ethiopian government and the people of Ethiopia.

I believe there is further scope for us to strengthen the bilateral ties between our countries, and to seek additional areas of cooperation such as in trade, science and technology, and the teaching of the English language.

Moreover, Malta remains fully committed towards long-term sustainable development, in line with the United Nations' Agenda 2030. Malta firmly believes that it is important to participate in the efforts of the international community in the field of development assistance, with the primary objective of eradicating poverty while also promoting good governance and respect for human rights.

Ambassador, this morning's constructive conversation gives me hope in the potential of our future endeavours, to enable our peoples and our business communities to engage. This will lead to mutual growth and prosperity.

I look forward to the signing of the pending agreements, the Double Taxation and Air Services Agreement in particular, so as to facilitate further closeness between our respective private sectors, to connect and explore all possibilities of bilateral trade and business.

Malta believes in sustainable investment, as a way of practically addressing poverty and creating shared prosperity for all.

Let me also take this opportunity to commend Ethiopia on the positive report issued by the International Monetary Fund, outlining the positive fiscal state of affairs in Ethiopia.

Ambassador, 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, High Commissioner of Canada,

Let me begin by offering my congratulations on the celebration of Canada's 150th anniversary. Let me also say that the excellent existing connections between Malta

and Canada are based upon our shared commitment, to uphold strongly democratic values.

Diplomatic relations were first established between Malta and Canada in 1964, and since that time our connection has always grown stronger. This is thanks to our mutual heritage and partnership within the Commonwealth of Nations, and the vibrant history of migration, which has seen so many Maltese people settling down in Canada.

Malta attaches great importance to the large Maltese community based in Canada. We welcome the active involvement of this community, which is attested to by the numerous organisations that have been set up, and the annual events that take place to continue nurturing, and celebrating, our traditions.

Furthermore, Malta attaches great importance to pursuing and strengthening relations with Canada on a multilateral and bilateral level. Cooperation through the Commonwealth, as seen during CHOGM 2015, should therefore continue to be reinforced.

Indeed, it was a pleasure to welcome Prime Minister Justin Trudeau to Malta, two years ago, when he participated in the Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting.

Moreover, let me take this opportunity to appreciate the interest shown by Prime Minister Trudeau, in the Children's Forum which was organised during the 2015 CHOGM in Malta. We must continue to promote such a focus, on the 640 million children and young people who make up our Commonwealth of Nations.

In the sector of trade, Canada is an important partner for Malta, and currently ranks as our 8th largest trade partner and the 6th largest, in terms of imports. Let us continue to build upon this relationship, by encouraging and enabling closer ties between the business communities of our respective countries.

This is a most appropriate time for further connections between our businesses, due to the Comprehensive Economic and Trade Agreement between Canada and the EU.

As we discussed this morning, High Commissioner, I also look forward to further collaboration in the area of wellbeing, and the sharing of good practices between our relevant academic and professional institutions. In this way, we shall develop innovative indicators for wellbeing, which are of relevance to both Malta and Canada.

I augur that we shall also continue to find ways of fostering stronger social and cultural ties. This will serve as an opportunity to celebrate Canada's continued role as a friend and ally, with whom Malta, and the whole of the European Union, shares common values, deeply rooted in our shared cultural and historical experiences.

Your Excellency, the Ambassador of Bosnia Herzegovina,

Malta was one of the first countries to formally recognise Bosnia Herzegovina as an independent and sovereign nation, in April 1992.

Since the establishment of diplomatic ties in October 1995, our two countries have enjoyed excellent relations, particularly following the humanitarian assistance, which Malta extended to children and war casualties in 1993 from Sarajevo.

Malta welcomes the commitment demonstrated by Bosnia Herzegovina to cultivate new exchanges between our countries.

During our conversation this morning, Ambassador, we identified rich opportunities in the areas of cultural exchange; the teaching of English as a foreign language; and tourism, in particular.

Malta considers Bosnia Herzegovina to be an essential player in the Balkans, to create, and sustain, much-needed stability and peace.

Malta therefore supports the strong message from the EU to Bosnia Herzegovina, that continuing in this path, coming closer to the European Union, is a strategy of solidarity and shared benefits, for all our nations.

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

Let me also take this opportunity to thank Bosnia Herzegovina for supporting Malta's candidacy to the International Maritime Organisation.

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

Your Excellency, Ambassador of the Republic of Croatia,

Diplomatic relations between Malta and the Republic of Croatia were first established in 1992. Since that time, the friendship between our nations has steadily grown.

Croatia and Malta share many elements of common heritage, including a strong maritime history. We share the same Mediterranean Sea, and both of our countries are influential hubs within our respective regions. Moreover, we are both centres for investment and new opportunities.

We are not competitors, but we are complimentary partners!

Let me also say that I look forward to my upcoming State Visit to Croatia, which shall take place early next year. It shall be an excellent opportunity, to continue to strengthen our bilateral relations, in terms of social and business collaborations.

It will also a pleasure to meet, once again, with my friend Her Excellency, the President of Croatia, who I last saw a few days ago, in Iceland, on the occasion of the Women Political Leaders' Summit.

I believe that the social links between our peoples should be further strengthened, with more connections and engagement on a variety of levels.

Let us keep encouraging such connections and engagements, as well as collaboration and investment, by enhancing the links between our peoples in areas of mutual interest. These include trade, tourism, culture, and education.

As Valletta will be the European Capital of Culture in 2018, Malta looks forward to an increased artistic cooperation between our two countries. Such an important event should highlight our shared European values, of democracy, respect for human rights, and the importance of intercultural dialogue.

Let me conclude by saying that Malta shall continue to support Croatia, in its upcoming EU Presidency in 2020, and also looks forward to collaborate on diverse issues of mutual interest and concern within our European family of nations.

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.

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 roadmap for a sustainable future, to secure peace and prosperity for all humanity.

Let us work in synergy, no matter the geographical distances or cultural differences between us.

Let us work together, to ensure that solidarity, and the ideals of social justice, are at the heart of all our endeavours.

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.