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*Press Statement by H.E. Marie-Louise Coleiro Preca, President of Malta during  
a State Visit to the Republic of Bulgaria*

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5th February 2018

**My dear friend, President Radev,  
Honourable Ministers,  
Excellencies,  
Distinguished guests,  
members of the media.**

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

**Let me start by expressing my appreciation to you, my dear friend, President Radev, and to the Government of Bulgaria, for the warm welcome and great hospitality, extended to me and to my delegation.**

**Let me also congratulate Bulgaria on an excellent start to your Presidency of the Council of the European Union. The motto of the Presidency, “United We Stand Strong”, is so inspiring.**

**I wholeheartedly agree that when we stand strong and work together, to pursue common goals and objectives, we can achieve a more competitive Union, which also promotes cohesion.**

**I would like to express my satisfaction to President Radev, and the Bulgarian authorities, for their constructive and insightful contributions during our meetings, this morning.**

**My visit to Bulgaria, together with my strong delegation, is evidence of Malta’s commitment to continue building on the excellent bilateral relations, which exist between our countries.**

**Moreover, my State Visit is an ideal opportunity for us to continue to intensify the political, economic, and social relations between us.**

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

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

**The signing of Memoranda of Understanding and agreements, between our respective commercial and educational entities, is also evidence that our countries are eager to work even more closely with each other.**

**These Memoranda of Understanding and agreements, which will be signed in the afternoon, include those between:**

**The Bulgarian Small and Medium Enterprises Promotion Agency and Trade Malta Limited;  
the Gozo Business Chamber and the Maltese-Bulgarian Business Chamber;  
the Burgas Chamber of Commerce and Industry and the Gozo Business Chamber;  
the Malta Chamber of Commerce, Enterprise, and Industry and the Bulgarian Chamber of Commerce and Industry;  
and the Mediterranean Academy of Diplomatic Studies at the University of Malta, and the University of National and World Economy of Sofia.**

**Such Memoranda of Understanding and agreements will certainly open further mutual opportunities, in a variety of sectors.**

**For our mutual businesses to flourish, and in particular to develop further the tourism industry, it is imperative that we ensure direct connectivity between our two countries. Hence, I look forward to the outcomes of the constructive discussions which are being held between Air Malta and Bulgaria Air.**

**Amongst the various sectors discussed, between President Radev and myself, and our delegations, these 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.**

**Tourism, hospitality, and the teaching of English as a foreign language are not simply an economic operation, but also a means of bringing our peoples together to develop sustainable friendship.**

**My State Visit is aimed at developing our already excellent diplomatic and political relations, into tangible results for our businesses, while also forming stronger relationships between our peoples.**

**Malta's position of geo-strategic importance in the Euro-Mediterranean region parallels Bulgaria's geo-strategic position in the Western Balkan region. This makes us ideal collaborators, and not competitors.**

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

**Whether we come from the southern shores or the eastern region of Europe, we must remain united by the essential values that we share in common.**

**We must be united by our commitment to universal human rights and fundamental freedoms, and a profound respect for the rule of law, and intrinsic human dignity.**

**It is these values which define Malta and Bulgaria as nations of goodwill, and it is thanks to these deep roots that, I am certain, the friendship between our countries and our peoples will keep growing stronger in the future.**