
*Speech delivered by H.E. Marie-Louise Coleiro Preca, President of Malta,
on the occasion of the National Day of the Russian Federation, 13 June
2018*

[Salutations]

Distinguished guests,
Dear friends.

Thank you, Ambassador, for sharing your kind thoughts with us this evening.

I ask you, in my name and on behalf of the Government and People of Malta, to convey our best wishes, on the occasion of the National Day of the Russian Federation, to His Excellency President Vladimir Putin and to the Government and People of the Russian Federation.

Excellency,

The relations between Malta and Russia have deep historical roots, embedded in mutual respect between our peoples. Last year, we celebrated half a century of diplomatic relations between our two countries.

Over the decades, our connections have grown in diverse areas, such as in transport and education; concerns about trans-border crime; the promotion of trade; and the strengthening of economic cooperation.

However, more can be done to enhance further our diplomatic and political exchanges, and also our economic cooperation.

In this context, Malta would welcome more frequent exchanges between our high-level officials, as this would provide an ideal opportunity to explore political, economic, and trade opportunities between Malta and Russia.

This will also translate our relations into tangible projects of collaboration.

I also believe that there is room for more dialogue, between the Russian Federation and the European Union. Russia's role as a 'Strategic Partner' of the EU is crucial, and while there may be divergent views on issues of international importance, we must nurture cooperation in other equally essential areas.

It is fundamental to celebrate the values we hold in common, while finding peaceful and harmonious ways to manage our differences.

I truly believe that a sustainable and enriching relationship with Russia is a priority. Both our countries should be further committed to develop strategic and important partnerships, in areas such as the economy and energy.

Respect for the dignity of all individuals and groups in our nations should be an intrinsic part of our work, in pursuing a culture of peace and wellbeing.

We owe all this to our peoples.

We owe it to the many Maltese-Russian families, that have become an integral part of our societies. The approximately 6,000 members of the Russian diaspora in Malta is evidence of the growing closeness between our peoples.

Let me therefore take this opportunity to commend the Russian Centre for Science and Culture in Malta. I am pleased to note that this institution is providing opportunities, through a variety of events, to give visibility to the Russian culture and way of life.

It is encouraging to see that the peoples of our nations are developing stronger cultural ties through the initiatives taken by the Russian Centre for Science and Culture.

These events, which provide personal interactions, are essential to facilitate greater understanding, respect, and harmony.

Furthermore, I am pleased to note that Malta has become well known within the Russian Federation, as an ideal hub of services and economic activities in the Euro-Mediterranean Region.

Malta's international reputation in the areas of hospitality, aviation, education, transshipment, and the teaching of English as a foreign language, are sectors of potential mutual growth.

As we all know, Malta is also presently celebrating Valletta as the European Capital of Culture for 2018. Our term as European Capital of Culture is not only showcasing Malta's historical and cultural identity, but also creating an ideal opportunity to promote an enriching multicultural experience.

On concluding, let me affirm Malta's steadfast commitment towards serving as an active hub for dialogue, for connection, and for peacebuilding in the Mediterranean region and beyond.

Dear friends,

I now invite you all to raise your glasses and drink in celebration of the National Day of the Russian Federation, to the excellent relations between Malta and Russia, and the continuing prosperity of our peoples.