
Speech delivered by H.E. Marie-Louise Coleiro Preca, President of Malta, in honour of newly-accredited Diplomats to Malta, 14 June 2018

Excellencies
Distinguished guests
Dear friends

It is my pleasure to welcome four distinguished diplomats, *Her Excellency, the Ambassador of the Kingdom of Spain; His Excellency, the Ambassador of the Republic of Cuba; His Excellency, the Ambassador of the Republic of Guatemala; and Her Excellency, the Ambassador of the Lebanon.*

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 countries.

Your Excellency, Ambassador of the Kingdom of Spain,

Formal diplomatic ties between our peoples were first established in 1968, and this year marks the 50th anniversary of these relations.

However, our connections are far older. In fact, they go back hundreds of years, during the period of the Knights of St John and even before.

Moreover, the peoples of Malta and Spain are united by a common Mediterranean culture, and a shared commitment to the prosperity of our European Union.

Let me, first of all, take this opportunity to commend the focus that the new government in Spain has put on equality, which is evident in number of women who form part of the cabinet.

Your country is truly putting into action the goals of the United Nations' Agenda 2030, in particular Sustainable Development Goal Number 5, by focusing on equality and the inclusion of women in positions of authority.

Let me also commend the recent actions, taken by Spain, to offer humanitarian assistance to migrants, facing uncertainty and danger on the Mediterranean Sea.

This powerful display of solidarity is bringing into practice the fundamental value, on which the European Union was founded, namely, that of solidarity.

Addressing migration in the Mediterranean cannot be shouldered by the frontline Member States, alone. Migration poses challenges that must be addressed by all the Member States of the European Union, alongside the international community.

While we must provide effective and timely support for migrants and refugees, we must also tackle migrant smuggling and human trafficking, which are a scourge in our countries.

It is by promoting the values of universal human rights, that we can ensure the wellbeing and the prosperity of all humanity.

On a bilateral level, and as we have discussed this morning, Ambassador, Malta and Spain must address the trade deficit in order to take our socio-economic relations to the next level.

On the other hand, we must note the strong developments that have taken place between our countries, for example, in the tourism sector.

Tourism does not only offer opportunities for economic growth, it is also a powerful way to bring our peoples together in a spirit of respectful friendship.

Your Excellency, Ambassador of the Republic of Cuba,

Let me begin by once again reiterating my sincerest and deepest condolences to the people of Cuba, following the air accident that took place on the 18 May, just outside of Havana.

Diplomatic relations between Malta and Cuba were established 41 years ago, and I am confident that Your Excellency's accreditation is an important step, to further cooperation between our two countries.

Your Excellency, I am sure that during your term as Ambassador, our respective authorities will have the renewed impetus to address pending Memoranda of Understanding.

As we discussed this morning, culture is an area that will enrich our peoples, and allow us to develop sustainable and long-lasting friendships.

In fact, I was particularly pleased to hear your ideas about developing relations between our capital cities, Valletta and Havana. This is a most appropriate time to pursue such initiatives, due to the fact that Valletta is currently the European Capital of Culture for 2018.

In this context, Malta welcomes the long-standing relations between European Union and Cuba, and the progress that has been made to enhance these relations.

Malta will continue to support and encourage future engagement between the European Union and Cuba, and we look forward to seeing more cooperation in various sectors.

Your Excellency, Ambassador of the Republic of Guatemala,

Let me begin, Ambassador, by reiterating my condolences, on behalf of the people and the government of Malta, in light of the recent volcano eruption, which has led to such destruction and loss of life in Guatemala.

Although diplomatic relations between Malta and Guatemala were established relatively recently, in 1995, there is ample scope for further collaboration between our respective countries.

Malta has a long history of solidarity with the people of Guatemala, expressed through various projects of humanitarian aid and support.

I am also pleased to note that Guatemala maintains comprehensive relations with the European Union, including political dialogue, an extensive cooperation programme, and a beneficial trade regime.

I believe that we must be united, as an international community, to work together, in pursuit of a global culture of peace and prosperity.

Your Excellency, Ambassador of Lebanon,

Although diplomatic relations were first established between our countries in 1975, our shared heritage as Mediterranean nations has deep roots in our respective histories.

For this reason, Malta celebrates the steady and friendly relations that we presently enjoy with Lebanon.

Malta is committed to strengthening our bilateral relations, and we look forward to intensifying this relationship in the coming years, by expanding our socio-economic, cultural, and political ties.

Let me also take the opportunity to acknowledge the huge efforts made by Lebanon, to host millions of refugees within its territory, particularly refugees who are fleeing the ongoing violence in Syria.

As we discussed this morning, Ambassador, the international community cannot afford to ignore the challenges being faced by Lebanon.

The migration and refugee crisis is a global phenomenon, which requires an international approach.

For this reason, in Malta's view, the New York Declaration on Refugees and Migrants must be reflected in the United Nations' Global Compacts, which will be presented later this year, in September.

Excellencies,

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

Let me reiterate that Malta's ongoing celebrations as European Capital of Culture for 2018 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, to promote multiculturalism and inclusion.

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.