
*Contribution by H.E. Marie-Louise Coleiro Preca, President of Malta during a
Joint Press Conference as part of the State Visit to the Republic of Portugal, 15
May 2018*

My dear friend, President de Sousa,
Honourable Ministers,
Excellencies,
Distinguished guests,
members of the media.

President de Sousa, it is truly a pleasure to be in your beautiful country, once again, for this historical State Visit, on the occasion of the 50th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations between our countries, in 1958.

I remember being in Portugal four years ago, while I was Minister for the Family and Social Solidarity. At that time, alongside my Portuguese counterpart, I signed an important Memorandum of Understanding in the area of Family and Social Policies, which translated into an Agreement of Cooperation between our respective ministries, by my successor.

I was impressed by how deeply the people of Portugal value the principles of social justice, and I am pleased to see that these principles are still so close to your hearts.

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

Dear President Sousa, every time I have met with you, at both a bilateral level and at international fora, I am impressed by your example as a statesman, but more-so, your passion for the socialist ideals of solidarity and justice.

A fundamental message from our conversations today, which I think it is important to share with the members of the media, is the fact that both of our countries are committed to stand together, to pursue common goals and objectives.

In this way, we can further achieve more productive bilateral relations and a stronger European Union a European Union which promotes inclusive prosperity and sustainable friendship amongst all of our peoples.

I truly would like to express my satisfaction to President de Sousa, and the Portuguese authorities, for their constructive and insightful contributions during our meetings, this morning.

My visit to Portugal, together with a strong delegation that includes Malta's Minister for the Economy, Investment and Small Business, the Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade Promotion, and the Parliamentary Secretary for EU Funds and Social Dialogue, is evidence of Malta's commitment to continue building on the excellent bilateral relations, which exist between our countries.

I would like to emphasise that I am impressed by the enthusiasm shown by both our countries, to continue to find opportunities, to form new and powerful synergies between our authorities, our respective business communities, social and cultural sectors, and civil society.

The richness of our history brought our people together.

The potential of tourism is bringing our people together.

Cultural collaboration, Valletta's ongoing term as European Capital of Culture for 2018 provides us with another ideal opportunity not only to showcase our respective cultures, and also to further develop new connections between our peoples.

We also spoke about the phenomenon of migration, and discussed the need for a united international effort, to address migration at its source, in respectful and dignified ways.

We both understand that this issue is global in scope, and therefore requires a global response. For this reason, I am pleased to note that both Malta and Portugal are both on the same page, as regards the United Nations' Global Compacts on Migration and Refugees.

We must continue to promote the best interests of the migrating individuals and families, by promoting a rights-based and people-centred approach, which is especially sensitive to the vulnerabilities faced by children and women.

Moreover, my State Visit is an ideal opportunity for us to continue to intensify other areas of political, economic, and social relations between our countries.

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.

Amongst the various sectors discussed, between President de Sousa and myself and our delegations, these included the areas of financial services; education and training in various sectors, such as healthcare; transshipment and logistics; industry; and the teaching of English as a foreign language; aviation services; blockchain technology; and tourism and hospitality.

I believe that tourism, hospitality, and educational endeavours are not simply an economic operation, but also a means of bringing our peoples together to develop sustainable friendships.

For this reason, my State Visit is aimed at developing our already excellent diplomatic and political relations, into tangible collaborations for our businesses, while also forming stronger relationships between our peoples.

Malta's position of geo-strategic importance in the Euro-Mediterranean region parallels Portugal's important role in the Iberian Peninsula. This makes us ideal collaborators, and not competitors.

This State Visit of my country's dedication, to continue to enhance peace, security, and prosperity across our regions, as one united family, which includes all the peoples of our European family of nations.

On concluding, let me state that Malta looks forward to more cooperation between our nations. As I had the opportunity to state this morning, I augur that the Portuguese government shall take up the

task of creating a Joint Working Commission, so that our engagement shall continue on a continuous basis, at all levels.

Above all, I am convinced that our countries, being committed to universal human rights and fundamental freedoms, and a profound respect for the rule of law, and intrinsic human dignity, have the potential to be drivers for sustainable peace and inclusive prosperity.

It is these values which define us 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 continue to grow stronger in the future.