

---

*Speech delivered by H.E. Marie-Louise Coleiro Preca, President of Malta at the  
2nd Malta-Albania Business Forum – Malta Plenary Session, 22 May 2018*

---

[Salutations]

Distinguished guests,  
Dear friends.

Your Excellency, President Meta, it is a pleasure to once again welcome you to Malta, together with your trade delegation.

I am confident that your working visit will not only continue to consolidate the excellent diplomatic relations between Malta and Albania; but it will also have a powerful effect, to stimulate further connections between the private sectors of our countries.

Your working visit to Malta is an important continuation of the work we started in Albania, in 2016, during my State Visit, when I was accompanied by a strong trade mission from Malta.

During that State Visit, we initiated important processes of connection between our business communities.

This working visit also builds upon your State Visit to Malta, earlier this year.

Furthermore, positive evidence of the work we have been building, over the past years, is the signing of a Memorandum of Understanding between our respective Chambers of Commerce and Industry.

For this reason, I believe there are many opportunities to take our connections to the next level, through various partnerships and collaborations, in diverse areas of the services industry; commerce; construction; education and training; and tourism and hospitality, amongst others.

On the other hand, tourism, hospitality, and education, which are such important sectors, have a two-pronged effect. These sectors are not simply economic operations.

Tourism, hospitality, and education are also a means of bringing our two peoples together, to connect, and to develop our relations into sustainable friendships.

For any further development and growth in these important sectors, and further business collaborations, we must aim to develop regular, direct connectivity between our two countries.

I augur that such opportunities for connectivity will be positively explored, between our respective authorities.

Today's business forum, and the forum being held tomorrow in Gozo, is further proof that our connections are ready to move forward. They are being positively strengthened, for the mutual benefit and inclusive prosperity of our peoples.

Moreover, the focus we are placing on socio-economic development is evidence of our firm commitment, to build sustainable peace within our respective regions, that is, the Euro-Mediterranean and the Balkans.

The presence of so many Maltese and Albanian entrepreneurs and business people, at today's forum, is a clear indication of the importance that both of our countries place, to encourage the friendship that already exists between our two peoples.

Let me also take this opportunity to once again commend the Maltese and Albanian Chambers of Commerce for their activities. I am sure we all look forward to further exchanges, between the Chambers of our respective countries, which will undoubtedly foster closer collaborations.

I believe that it is essential for our collaborations to include the participation of larger enterprises, but also between small and medium sized businesses.

These links will make a valuable contribution to the multi-level and mutual strengthening of our nations.

As you all know, these are exciting times for Malta. Let me therefore take this opportunity to draw your attention to some impressive data.

The real GDP growth rate for last year, in Malta, was 6.6 percent. Moreover, projected figures for GDP growth in 2018 are 5.6 percent.

Furthermore, the percentage of direct foreign investment as a percentage of Malta's GDP, is 22.3 percent.

For this reason, in Malta, we are at a stage whereby, due to our impressive economic growth, our businesses are seeking new opportunities and avenues for expansion, beyond the Maltese shores.

In conclusion, I believe that there is no limit to what we can achieve together.

Our geo-strategic potential is immense, due to Malta's presence in the Mediterranean Region, and Albania's position as a gateway to the Balkans.

I believe that we must keep up the excellent momentum, which has been achieved so far between our countries, and continue building upon our success.

Our events during this working visit, today and tomorrow, are evidence of how much Malta and Albania want to open the doors of opportunity, for our private sectors.

However, I must remind everyone, that governments are only enablers and interlocutors. The development of business collaborations and partnerships depends upon your endeavours.

I truly look forward to seeing these endeavours develop, during this Business Forum, and beyond.

This is one of the most important ways that we can follow, to create inclusive prosperity for our peoples and our nations.

Thank you for your attention.