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*Speech delivered by H.E. Marie-Louise Coleiro Preca, President of Malta, during  
a Meeting with Canadian Businessmen, 30 April 2018*

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[Salutations]

Dear friends,

It is a great pleasure to meet with so many members of the Maltese business community who have made Canada their home, and who are contributing to the prosperity of this beautiful country.

I am so very proud of all the work that you have done, and continue to do, to promote the good name of Malta among the business communities of Canada, and beyond.

In fact, your success is an example of the fundamental values of resilience, diligence, and hard-work, which characterise the people of Malta and Gozo, wherever we are in the world.

The presence of my delegation in Canada is evidence of the importance that we are placing, to develop the excellent diplomatic relations that already exist between Malta and Canada, into stronger socio-economic cooperation between our business communities.

There is much scope for sustainable collaboration, and meaningful advantages, that can be gained by fostering greater closeness between us.

For example, Malta is an active member of the European Union, and a gateway to a huge market of five hundred million Europeans. The EU is the world's largest trading block, and the world's largest trader of manufactured goods and services.

Malta also shares, with Canada, membership of the Commonwealth of Nations. This unique relationship provides us with added scope for collaboration, not only with one another, but also within the family of Commonwealth Nations.

Many of these countries, such as nations in the African continent, are rapidly expanding markets, which are ready for direct investment. I have visited several countries in the region, and wherever I go the message is the same - African businesses and government authorities are eager to build partnerships with Malta, and Maltese businesses.

Let us therefore capitalise on these opportunities, together.

I am convinced that this is an ideal time to create new synergies between your businesses and the business community in Malta, to further expand and develop our markets.

As you know, these are exciting times for Malta. Our country is at a stage of impressive economic growth, and Maltese investors are seeking new opportunities and avenues for expansion, beyond the Maltese shores.

Let me take this opportunity to draw your attention to some exciting data, to provide comparative indicators for Malta and Canada.

The real GDP growth rate for last year, in Malta, was 6.6 percent, compared to 3 percent in Canada. Moreover, projected figures for GDP growth in 2018 are 5.6 percent, compared to 2.3 percent in Canada.

Furthermore, the percentage of direct foreign investment as a percentage of Malta's GDP is 22.3, while Canada registers a deficit of -0.8 percent.

In light of these indicators, I augur that mutual investment, between our respective business communities, will reach further into Canadian markets, and that Canadian businesses will find a similar scope for development within the Maltese islands.

Malta is a European leader in a number of sectors, including the maritime industry; information and communication technologies; film industry; healthcare; financial services; pharmaceuticals; and the tourism and hospitality industries, to name a few.

Each of these sectors represents an opportunity for us to innovate, together, to develop new strategies for shared prosperity.

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

Everybody must feel included in our efforts, to safeguard long-term, sustainable, and inclusive prosperity, for the benefit of our united people.

Most especially, we must work together to achieve the best for our younger generations.

In this context, let me mention current unemployment figures, which stand at 3.5 percent in Malta, as compared to 6.5 percent in Canada. There is a growing need for Malta to outsource its workforce in many sectors, and this would be an ideal opportunity for young people of Maltese descent to return to their country, as valued contributors and collaborators.

We must continue to encourage new generations of Maltese-Canadians to feel connected with the home of their foremothers and forefathers, and to see Malta as a place of potential; a place of opportunity; and place of investment.

The door is open for you, to take our connections to the next level, and to strengthen the links of heritage and history which already unite us, as one Maltese family.

I look forward to seeing our business communities grow stronger, as we continue to develop the links between us.

On concluding, I augur that you shall use this opportunity to explore exciting possibilities for collaborations and partnerships with your counterparts in Malta.

In this way, we shall be taking practical actions, for the lasting benefit of our Maltese Islands, and the Maltese people all over the world.

Thank you for your attention.