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*Press Statement by H.E. Marie-Louise Coleiro Preca, President of Malta, during  
an Official Visit by the Vice President of India , 17 September 2018*

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Your Excellency, Vice-President of the Republic of India,  
Distinguished guests,  
members of the media.

Your Excellency, this historical visit has given us the opportunity to reaffirm the friendship between the peoples of Malta and India.

The recent appointment of a resident Indian High Commissioner for Malta, is adding further impetus to the strong bilateral links between our two countries.

India is an emerging economy to be reckoned with.

Let me take the opportunity to commend the government of Prime Minister Modi, for taking proactive action to implement effective socio-economic reforms, also in relation to civil rights for women and minority communities.

The fact that formal relations between our countries were established immediately, following Malta's independence, is a clear indication of the mutual respect that has always characterised our relationship.

However, the connection between our peoples is far older. In fact, the first historical records of a prominent Maltese person, who lived and worked in India, dates back to the sixteenth century.

On the other hand, an Indian diaspora has been present in the Maltese Islands since the late 1940s. The Indian community has gained the respect of the Maltese, thanks to its peaceful integration, both in the economic world and the social life of our islands.

The Indian community in Malta is growing once again, with many Indian workers contributing to various socio-economic sectors, including healthcare and ICT.

The closeness between our two peoples has also continued to grow, thanks to the adoption of Indian children by Maltese families.

It is salient to point out that, over the past years, we have also seen an acceleration in the growth of diplomatic relations between our countries. This was due to the number of high-level meetings, held between our respective authorities, namely, the regular contact between our Ministers for Foreign Affairs.

The meetings held this morning, between His Excellency, Vice-President Naidu and myself, and our delegations, have provided another platform for constructive and insightful discussions.

During these meetings, we discussed various sectors of mutual interest, including trade; training and education; maritime cooperation; transshipment and logistics; ICT; tourism; the film industry; block-chain technology, amongst others.

From our discussions, one can conclude that there is a sense of shared commitment, to explore the ample opportunities which the private sectors of our countries can benefit from.

I am confident that this evening's Business Forum will further enhance tangible ways of bringing our peoples together, through trade and business.

Malta has already experienced the benefits of Indian investment in the pharmaceutical industry and ICT. Now, we are looking forward to further strategies of expansion.

For this reason, I recommended, to His Excellency, Vice-President Naidu, the establishment of a Joint Commission in the area of trade, to focus on strategies for developing the best interests of our respective business communities.

I would also like to take this opportunity to reiterate my congratulations, for the initiative launched by Prime Minister Modi in 2015, to promote renewable and clean energy.

The International Solar Alliance is creating a powerful context for countries with solar energy capacities, to maximise this valuable resource, and to meet the targets as established by the United Nations' Agenda 2030.

Malta is looking forward to further collaboration in this sector, and to joining this Alliance.

I must also emphasise the enthusiasm, being shown by both our countries, to continue to find opportunities to form new collaborations and partnerships, between our authorities, our respective business communities, cultural sectors, and civil society.

In fact, these partnerships are being reflected, today, by the signing of:

The Memorandum of Understanding on Mutual Cooperation between The Mediterranean Academy of Diplomatic Studies, University of Malta, and the Foreign Service Institute, Ministry of External Affairs, of the Republic of India;

The Memorandum of Understanding between the Ministry for Transport, Infrastructure, and Capital Projects of the Republic of Malta, and the Ministry of Shipping of the Republic of India, on Maritime Cooperation;

The Memorandum of Understanding in the Field of Tourism Cooperation, between the Government of the Republic of Malta and the Government of the Republic of India;

The Memorandum of Understanding between the Associated Chambers of Commerce and Industry of India and the Malta Chamber of Commerce, Enterprise, and Industry.

I believe that strengthening our socio-economic ties is not only a pathway to shared prosperity, but also a means of continuing to build and develop sustainable friendships between our peoples.

Such friendship is reflected by the ongoing celebration of Diwali by the Indian community in Malta, which has now also developed into a special Mediterranean event, by the Mediterranean Tourism Foundation and the Local Council of Vittoriosa, to highlight the importance of multicultural appreciation and inclusion.

In these, and in so many other contexts, Malta's geo-strategic position in the Euro-Mediterranean region and India's geo-strategic position in the East Asian Region, make us unique collaborators.

Though we come from different parts of the world, we can provide mutual benefits for our peoples and our regions.

Our collaboration goes beyond bilateral relations. It is felt in the multilateral fora, such as our work within the Commonwealth of Nations, and also, the development of stronger EU-India relations.

In this context, Malta looks forward to the conclusion of an effective EU-India Free Trade Agreement.

On the other hand, Britain's exit from the European Union should provide an opportunity to further the trade and business links between our countries.

Malta is in a perfect position for relocation, for Indian companies. Malta's excellent connectivity, its skilled and diverse workforce, together together with the status of English as an official language of the Maltese Islands and its membership within the European Union, provides the ideal prerequisites for business to flourish.

Finally, I augur that we shall continue to enhance prosperity across our regions and within our nations, to ensure peace and security, for the benefit of all the peoples of Malta and India.

Thank you.