

Speech by H.E. Marie-Louise Coleiro Preca, President of Malta during the Exchange of New Year's Greetings with the Heads of Honorary Consular Missions in Malta, 11 January 2019

Dear friends,

It is my pleasure to welcome the members of the Honorary Consular Corps of Malta. I thank you for your presence at this traditional gathering, which permits us to exchange greetings and good wishes for a year filled with peace and prosperity.

Let me also express particular appreciation to the Dean of the Honorary Consular Corps, for his courteous greetings..

This is the last time I will be addressing you, as President of Malta, therefore let me take this opportunity to thank you for cooperation and the collaboration of your colleagues, over the past years.

Let me begin by celebrating your many accomplishments. I am confident that this New Year will bring new opportunities, to encourage stronger contacts between our country, and the countries you are working with.

In the course of the past year, relations between the countries you represent and the Republic of Malta have been further consolidated, also thanks to your sterling efforts.

I am confident that this has resulted in shared opportunities, for the benefit of all our peoples.

As honorary consuls, you are perfectly positioned to continue building upon our existing connections, among the social and business communities of our countries.

In so doing, you will be assisting our authorities, to achieve the best outcomes for all stakeholders.

Moreover, in your capacities as honorary consuls, I believe you are ideally placed to encourage a much-needed sense of respectful dialogue among the peoples of our nations, with their national institutions, and authorities.

As consuls, your work is an excellent example of how such contacts can be achieved and maintained.

It is your role to foster stronger connections with the people, across diverse communities and groups, by engaging with and responding to their real concerns and aspirations.

This is what a commitment to achieving sustainable peace is all about.

Such a commitment must lead all of us to listen to our citizens, and to promote respectful dialogue through practical strategies for social inclusion and economic prosperity.

I believe that peace is an active process, which calls for the engagement and cooperation of each individual, every community, and our societies as a whole.

Peace must be strengthened continuously, by safeguarding the common good and addressing the threats of discrimination, inequality, and injustice within our society.

As you are all aware, last year, we celebrated the 70th anniversary of the Declaration of Universal Human Rights. This declaration, which has been of such importance around the world, is a guide for all of our endeavours to create a more equal, equitable, and dignified world.

However, there is still a long way for the international community to go, before the full force of this inspiring document to become a reality for all of the members of our human family.

As honorary consuls, you have the important responsibility to put this universal commitment to human rights, dignity, and equality, into practice.

You are achieving these goals by the work that you are doing, to develop professional networks among diverse communities, which directly contribute to socio-economic opportunities.

Furthermore, you are providing essential citizen-centred services, to ensure that individuals feel connected to their authorities.

I believe that we must continue to emphasise the importance of innovative opportunities for development and growth, among our communities, and across all of our nations.

I believe that there is so much for us to do, both within Europe and further afield, to build societies in which each and every individual is fully respected, and enjoys equitable access to opportunities to nurture their wellbeing.

This is why we must remain strong in our Maltese vision, to be a hub of peace and dialogue within our European Union, our Mediterranean Region, and throughout the world.

I am confident that you will share these key values, of respectful dialogue and peaceful connection, in all of the work that you are doing to strengthen the relationships between Malta and the countries that you represent.

Furthermore, in order to promote our democratic values in a truly effective way, I believe that all of our nations must be vigilant, to address the threats of extremism and nationalism.

It is our shared responsibility to make our voices heard, because there can be no doubt that extremist views are becoming stronger in our societies.

In an increasingly globalised world, I believe that it is the role of consular diplomacy to uphold our democratic commitment to peace, by addressing extremism and replacing it with a message of tolerance and hope.

As consuls, you have the ability to be the champions of this essential message.

For this reason, I augur that, in your own capacities, you will continue to strive to secure the essential values that identify Malta as a country of goodwill, and the people of Malta as a nation committed to global peace.

In closing, let me express my gratitude, on behalf of the people of Malta, for all your work, to ensure that the diverse relationships that unite our peoples, are able to function more smoothly.

I am confident that you shall continue to do all that you can, to build stronger friendships between our communities, within our societies, and among our nations.

Happy New Year!

Thank you.