

**Speech delivered by H.E. Marie-Louise Coleiro Preca, President of Malta, at the  
Malta-Turkey Business Forum, 23 January 2019**

**Your Excellency, Fuat Oktay, Vice President of the Republic of Turkey,**

**Honorable Ministers and Parliamentary Secretaries,**

**Distinguished guests,**

**Dear friends,**

**It is my pleasure to be in Istanbul, and to meet with the representatives of the  
business community in Turkey.**

**During my State Visit in Turkey, together with a high-level ministerial delegation  
from my country, we'll have the opportunity to discuss with His Excellency, the  
President of the Republic of Turkey, President Erdogan and various other high-  
level officials about the potential of mutual business and trade.**

**I am proud of the fact that both Malta and Turkey have a great sense of  
commitment, to maximise the development of the full potential of our shared  
Mediterranean region.**

**Although we both come from this important region, we are certainly not competitors. I believe that we can continue to develop our already excellent collaboration, and take it to the next level.**

**Malta's geo-strategic potential is immense, due to my country's position in the central Euro-Mediterranean Region. This potential is equally paralleled by Turkey's important position in the Euro-Asian region. One can say that we are two natural hubs, of our respective geo-strategic regions, within the Mediterranean Sea.**

**We have come to Turkey, with a strong and diverse business delegation. A business delegation that operates in a variety of sectors such as: training and education; maritime; ICT; manufacturing; construction; i-gaming; tourism in its various sectors; financial services, and blockchain technology, amongst others.**

**This economic forum, offers ample opportunities to explore possibilities to continue to enhance and strengthen our mutual business sectors. I am convinced that this Forum and the subsequent Business-to-Business meetings, will reap positive results.**

**We have come to enhance and strengthen our connections.**

**Governments are excellent enablers and facilitators, however, we believe that it is you, as the people in business and as the entrepreneurs of our countries, that can bring the necessary creative and essential innovation, to develop potential business partnerships and collaborations.**

**As you are all aware, over the past years Malta has been registering significant and impressive economic growth.**

**According to the latest Economic Forecast, published by the European Commission, economic projections for Malta are, “very positive... with strong GDP growth, which is set to continue.”**

**In fact, Malta registered the highest GDP growth amongst the countries of the European Union. Malta registered 5.4 per cent Economic growth at the end of last year.**

**Furthermore, Foreign Direct Investment in Malta increased by almost 1 billion euros, in the second quarter of 2018.**

**To realise the extent of this success, one must analyse the data in the Maltese context.**

**Malta's success is also realized through the growth of Maltese businesses, which have become extensive, so much so that Maltese businesses are seeking new ventures and opportunities, for expansion beyond the Maltese shores.**

**We also need to translate our excellent diplomatic and political relations through tangible business collaborations.**

**It is by taking our socio-economic ties to a higher-level, that we will ensure people-to-people contact, and to also develop sustainable friendships.**

**We do not want to be simply acquaintances, but we must continue to work to become partners for the benefit of our peoples and our region.**

**The presence of a strong ministerial delegation together with a diverse trade delegation from Malta, and the presence of entrepreneurs and people in business from Turkey, for this economic forum, is a clear indication of the confidence and trust, that we mutually enjoy, in each other.**

**This gives us great satisfaction.**

**This is also reflected in the fact that commercial interests between Malta and Turkey have grown, over the years, and this is resulting in a decrease of the trade deficit.**

**Another indicator of our business enthusiasm, but also of the urge for connection, is the increase in visitors from Turkey to Malta. On the other hand, Malta's economic success, is also resulting into an increase of Maltese tourists visiting Turkey.**

**However, there is much more we can do in this respect. An important tourism sector, in my country is educational tourism. Definitely, this is an area where we can seek further collaboration for Turkish students to come to Malta to study the English Language, at our many excellent educational institutions.**

**Therefore, let me encourage you, and also extend my government's invitation, for the business communities of both our countries to take advantage of the many opportunities that exist between us.**

**Malta offers the right environment for business, which includes a sound financial sector, a highly-competent and professional workforce in all sectors, excellent connectivity, and a favourable tax regime.**

**Dear Friends,**

**The only limit to what we can achieve, is how high our aspirations go, and how big our ambitions can be, to create an environment of inclusive prosperity for the benefit of the peoples of Malta and Turkey.**

**Malta has already experienced the benefits of Turkish investment, especially in banking, in infrastructure, in insurance and in the ship registration sectors as well as the substantial Turkish investment in the Maltese Free Port Container Terminal, which is the third largest transfer and logistics centre in the Mediterranean Region.**

**I must also highlight another area, in which Malta is distinguishing itself as a world leader, and which will be of interest to Turkish businesses.**

**As entrepreneurs and as people in business, I am convinced, that you acknowledge that the new technologies are our future.**

**Malta's proactive approach towards innovative business, has made it, in a short time, a blockchain hub. Malta is leading the way in the necessary legislation and regulation of this industry. We are attracting many of the biggest companies of this contemporary disruptive technology.**

**Malta is continuing to be proactive, and again is now, in the process of creating the necessary regulatory framework for Artificial Intelligence.**

**In this context of continuing to strengthen our already excellent relations, by finding tangible ways of connecting, let me reaffirm my government's support for the ongoing dialogue between Turkey and the European Union. It is Malta's vision and mission to continue to support the enlargement process of the European Union.**

**This is Malta's belief, for a sustainable, peaceful and an inclusive and prosperous Europe and region.**

**Finally, let me urge you to take this opportunity to find innovative ways to enhance business collaboration between our two countries, so that, together, we can ensure that our nations, will continue to grow and prosper together, not only in the best interests of our economies, but above all, in the best interest of our peoples.**

**Thank you for your attention.**