

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

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

**Honorable Ministers and Parliamentary Secretaries**

**Distinguished guests,**

**Dear friends,**

**It is my pleasure to be in Turkey, accompanied by a strong ministerial delegation and a high-level institutional representation from the tourism industry in Malta.**

**Last month, I also was in Istanbul, when I was invited to open the 3rd UNWTO-UNESCO World Conference on Tourism and Culture. During my keynote speech, I reiterated my conviction that without investing in sustainable peace, there can be no prosperity in our countries and our world; and that the tourism industry can be an effective driver to achieve this goal, to make global peace a reality.**

**Therefore, I believe that sustainable tourism is a form of tangible diplomacy, not only bringing people in contact with one another, but building respect among diverse people and values their human dignity.**

**In fact, sustainable tourism for peace and prosperity is at the heart of the Mediterranean Tourism Foundation, of which I am patron. This important foundation is connecting stakeholders from across our region, to develop a collaborative and sustainable tourism industry.**

**The Mediterranean Tourism Foundation is not new to a substantial number of Turkish stakeholders.**

**In this context, I believe that, Malta and Turkey, as countries sharing the Mediterranean Sea, have not only the potential to work together, but also, it should be our goal to collaborate, to ensure that our region, remains a top destination for visitors, from all over the world.**

**The latest indicators from the World Economic Forum tell us that tourism and hospitality have the ability to boost the competitiveness of economies and enhance economic opportunities, for the benefit of all humanity.**

**It is important to acknowledge that the tourism sector in our respective countries, is one of the strongest pillars of our economies.**

**It is important to note that our tourism industry has been built on the authentic values of our respective identities. These include the celebration of our nations' diversity, the richness of our Mediterranean heritage, and our commitment to provide top quality hospitality.**

**Although we share the same richness of our Mediterranean region, both our countries, have unique and diverse cultures, traditions, and characteristics.**

**We should not perceive each other as competitors in the region.**

**We are not, due to our individual uniqueness. I believe that collaborating in this sector, can bring to both our countries, and our region, a substantial increase of visitors from other regions of the world, for example, by tapping further into the vast Asian market.**

**Comparing the amounts of Asian tourists, who visit mainland Europe, to those visiting the Mediterranean countries like ours, one can easily reach the conclusion that these are still insufficiently tapped markets.**

**We are therefore best placed, in our region, to explore possibilities of collaboration because we are also very well connected. Turkish Airlines is a global connector, while Air Malta is a Euro-Mediterranean connector.**

**There are also other bilateral possibilities to increase tourist traffic between the two countries. Malta offers a reputable educational tourism sector, for language learning services, and also, for medical training.**

**The tourism profile of Malta has evolved over the years, to include a much more varied portfolio.**

**This varied portfolio has been developed over the years because: we have strengthened our national infrastructure; embarked on a nation-wide programme of extensive restoration of our historical and natural heritage; and have invested in the expansion of the entertainment and the hospitality sectors, amongst other initiatives.**

**I believe that there is so much potential for Maltese and Turkish stakeholders in the tourism industry.**

**Most importantly, the tourism industry has the ability to bring socio-economic wellbeing to communities and societies as a whole.**

**As Special Ambassador of the UNWTO for Sustainable Tourism, I would like to highlight the need that the tourism sector takes into consideration the sustainability of our planet.**

**Each and every one of us is responsible for the wellbeing of our future generations.**

**Therefore, I would like to encourage you, and all the people in the tourism industry, to ensure that we invest in a responsible way, to be able to achieve the full mandate of the United Nations' Agenda 2030 and in particular Sustainable Development Goal Number 8, Target 9 which focuses on the importance of sustainable economies and tourism.**

**All of our countries, are committed, to ensure, that:**

**"By 2030, we must develop and implement policies for sustainable tourism which can ensure the creation of jobs and the celebration of local culture and products."**

**I am convinced that our two countries, are already working towards achieving these goals.**

**A well-planned, a well-regulated and a responsible tourism industry can create an excellent mechanism that channels resources equitably, for the benefit of all of our communities.**

**On concluding, I am confident that there are ample opportunities for Malta and Turkey to work together, to share best practices with one another and to learn from each other.**

**In this way, we will be encouraging socio-economic sustainable development, not just for our two countries, but also for the Euro-Mediterranean Region and beyond.**

**Thank you for your attention.**