

**Speech delivered by H.E. Marie-Louise Coleiro Preca, President of Malta, at the  
Malta-Tunisia Business Forum, 5 February 2019**

**Distinguished guests,**

**Dear friends.**

**Your Excellency, President Essebsi, it is a pleasure to once again welcome you and your delegation to another important Business Forum.**

**Your State Visit is doing so such, to further consolidate the excellent diplomatic relations between Malta and Tunisia. Your visit is evidence of the political will, shared by both of our governments, to promote further collaboration between our the private sector of our countries.**

**This Business Forum will continue to build upon the many high-level meetings being held between our respective authorities, and which were given renewed impetus doing my Official Visit to Tunisia, in 2017.**

**At that time, we celebrated the 50th anniversary of diplomatic relations between our countries, and signed an important Memorandum of Understanding on Tourism, and a Framework Convention in the field of Education.**

**Both tourism and education are not only important economic operations ..... most of all, tourism and education are catalysts to create an environment of friendship and trust, between our peoples.**

**While discussing tourism in particular, President Essebsi and I also deliberated on creating closer cooperation, through the work of the Mediterranean Tourism Foundation.**

**The ethos of the Mediterranean Tourism Foundation is not only to encourage the tourism sector as an economic industry, but also, to promote friendship and peace-building in our Mediterranean Region.**

**I am confident that this Business Forum will help us to keep developing tourism, and other important areas for cooperation.**

**In this context, I am pleased to note that the technical meeting of the Malta-Tunisia Joint Commission, held yesterday, continued to explore more opportunities for collaboration.**

**Besides this important meeting, the MOUs and Agreements that have just been signed will continue to commit us to work in synergy.**

**Dear members of the business community,**

**The meetings held between President Essebsi and myself, and our respective delegations, have provided another platform for you to engage in constructive and insightful discussions amongst you.**

**During our meetings, we discussed various sectors of mutual interest, including trade; training and education; maritime cooperation; pharmaceuticals; ICT; tourism; the film industry; financial services, and blockchain technology, amongst others.**

**From our deliberations, it was clear that Malta and Tunisia share a united commitment, to enable and facilitate the efforts of our business people and entrepreneurs.**

**Malta and Tunisia are united by a common Mediterranean heritage. As collaborators, both of our countries have unique contributions to make in our respective spheres of influence.**

**Malta's geo-strategic importance and membership in the European Union means that we are an ideal gateway to opportunities in the European market, and our membership of the Commonwealth of Nations also enables us to reach over 2 billion people across the globe.**

**I am confident that, as members of our respective business communities, you will seize the opportunity being created by this forum, through the subsequent business-to-business meetings.**

**I augur that you will explore the full potential that exists between our countries, to continue to consolidate our existing connections but even more, to create new partnerships.**

**As people in business and as entrepreneurs, you are the ones that must bring creativity, determination, and expertise, to push this commitment to the next level.**

**As you are all aware, thanks to the efforts of my government over the past years, Malta has been registering significant and impressive economic growth.**

**In fact, 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 the years to come.**

**In fact, Malta is consistently registering the highest GDP growth among the member states of the European Union.**

**Furthermore, Foreign Direct Investment in Malta continues to increase by almost 1 billion euros, for the second quarter of 2018.**

**In this context, I am proud to say that Maltese businesses are growing, and as a result they are also seeking new opportunities for expansion beyond the Maltese shores.**

**Furthermore, the flourishing tourism industry in Malta has not only benefitted from increased visitors from all over the world, but also, from a diversified portfolio.**

**Malta looks forward to hosting the sixth edition of the Mediterranean Tourism Forum later this month, and I hope that stakeholders from Tunisia will be well represented at this prestigious and high-level networking event.**

**I must also highlight another area, in which Malta is distinguishing itself as a world leader, and which, I am sure, will be of interest to Tunisian businesses. Malta has placed itself at the heart of today's revolutionary and disruptive technology.**

**So much so that my government, a very short time ago, legislated to regulate the blockchain industry, thereby creating confidence for both business owners and service users.**

**Even though we have achieved this impressive economic success, we are not sitting on our laurels. Malta is now in the process of creating a ground-breaking regulatory framework in the sector of Artificial Intelligence.**

**This framework will surely create added benefits, since this area of technological advancement is becoming more prominent, every day.**

**Therefore, let me reiterate the remarks of my Prime Minister, who has consistently called for innovative collaborations and partnerships, to create sustainable investment in the Mediterranean Region.**

**In this context, let me once more extend my government's invitation, for the business communities of both of our countries to take advantage of the potential opportunities, which exist between us.**

**Dear friends,**

**As people on the ground, with a proven sense of business and opportunity, you are the ones who must set the agenda for the future.**

**Your vision and ambition will be the benchmark, for how far we can go, together, to create inclusive prosperity and sustainable development for the benefit of Malta and Tunisia.**

**On concluding, let me encourage you to be proactive and innovative, so that your business ventures will find their match in our respective countries, to grow and prosper together, for the benefit of your own businesses, but also the Maltese and Tunisian peoples.**

**Thank you for your attention.**