

Opening Speech by Marie-Louise Coleiro Preca

**AT THE OFFICIAL OPENING CEREMONY OF LOGOS HOPE
ON WEDNESDAY 10:00 AT VALLETTA CRUISE PORT**

**Distinguished Guests, Logos Hope Director Randy Grebe and Captain James Berry,
dear friends, good morning.**

**I am delighted to be here this morning to welcome the MV Logos Hope and its
international crew, to Malta. It is indeed a pleasure for me on many fronts.**

**First and foremost, I feel honoured to be among such a community of people
coming from diverse cultural backgrounds and faith traditions, with a wide variety
of professional experiences, and from different age groups.**

I am informed that crew does all this work on a voluntary basis too.

**Yet, the crew works towards one aim, that is to create a healthy and prosperous
community in the service of others.**

**Dear Crew Members, you are truly an inspiration to us all. You are demonstrating
a genuine expression of international goodwill and understanding.**

**On the other hand, I am truly pleased to augur the opening of the MV Logos Hope
Experience Deck, which is the largest floating book fair in the world.**

**I am informed that your book fair carries a selection of over 6,000 books, which
can be of interest to everyone.**

It is an undoubtedly amazing source of knowledge for all those who seek it.

**I augur that this rich selection of literature will offer its visitors many opportunities
for personal development, and acquisition of wisdom.**

May the events you have on board and on shore, including seminars and conferences for leaders, men, women, young people, and children provide a new impetus for change for respectful and peaceful communities.

I am honoured to be part of this celebration, a true manifestation of the beautiful outcome, that respect for diversity and multiculturalism bring about.

It is indeed a celebration of kindness and respect to humankind.

It is a manifestation of what volunteering is all about, by giving time to the benefit of others, and giving part of your lives to the wellbeing of others. Thinking and caring for others, is a most amazing and precious value in our world, where people's lives are taken up with their own challenges, and where humankind is continuously being challenged to think of its own concerns.

This is a true celebration of generosity.

The visit of MV Logos Hope to Malta, after 12 years, is also a celebration of what Human Rights are all about.

It is a manifestation of creating an opportunity for all to promote and making available the right to access information and education, by not only promoting reading, but also making books accessible to all.

My own love of books started at a very early age, and with it, the love of reading, the urge to explore and acquire knowledge, which now I can vouch that it stimulated my energies into new dimensions.

I can therefore identify, with the amazing vision and mission of MV Logos Hope, in terms of:

- extending an equal opportunity for knowledge through creating accessible reading for all;**

- of promoting peace by embracing and celebrating human diversity;
- of encouraging, empowering and guiding people towards a purposeful and meaningful life;
- and in terms of inspiring faith and healthy relationships, which are fundamental to the wellbeing of all.

I must congratulate all members of the Crew for their endeavours.

We have all been through, and are still going through, very difficult and uncertain times. The unprecedented experience of living through a pandemic, and now, another war, this time in Europe, have and are causing havoc in our lives, and have impacted our mental health and wellbeing.

Some of our communities have been affected even more severely. I believe that children and young people have suffered the most. Children and young people have and are experiencing a huge and serious gap in their development, due to isolation, uncertainty and vulnerability. Lockdowns have disrupted their education, their social interaction, their mobility, their very basic essential needs to enhance their experiences of life.

Lack of accessibility to basic education, the digital divide, and other basic essential needs are just some examples of the impact of this unprecedented time in human history.

Children and young people who were already vulnerable and disadvantaged before the pandemic have become even more vulnerable and disadvantaged. The pandemic and the war in Ukraine have created more casualties, with Children and young people being the victims of such a horrendous experience.

It is therefore so obvious, that we all need to commit ourselves to supporting each other in these difficult times, and in particular to focus, on the urgent needs of our Children and Young People.

We need more than ever, to promote every effort, particularly in schools and centres of higher education, as well as in places of recreation and sporting venues, to encourage dialogue amongst our children and young people because they are missing out on their present and will eventually affect their future, with serious impact on our communities and the future of our Islands.

Therefore, the coming of MV Logos Hope is a welcome event and experience.

This event, and experience, is also an opportunity of celebrating the principles enshrined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, in particular: the right to freedom of thought, of conscience and of religion.

I encourage all of us to acknowledge and promote that, despite the many cultural and religious differences amongst us, our human family must be committed to unity, respect, love, peace, to ensure that the principles of social justice can be enjoyed and celebrated by all.

On concluding I would like to encourage everyone to work, in whatever capacity and responsibility they might be, to promote respect and unity, amongst our communities. I augur that we endeavour not to lose hope for a better tomorrow by holding high to our aspirations, even in the midst of global conflicts, and uncertainties.

Each, and every one of us, need to endlessly and courageously strive towards the building of a culture of positive peace to ensure holistic wellbeing and sustainable prosperity, for all without prejudice. We need to empower our children and young people with the values of respect and love.

Finally I also hope that during the twenty days visit of MV Logos Hope in Malta, our children and young people, will be positively impacted with the opportunity of enjoying quality literature, and the experience of uplifting, and educational programmes and meaningful dialogue.

I hope also that the crew will have the opportunity to build lasting friendships with the people living on the Maltese Islands.

I believe that the Maltese Islands, being at the heart of the Mediterranean Region, and with its amazing history of welcoming so many diverse cultures and as described in history books, being at the crossroads of civilisations, is an ideal hub for building peace.

The Maltese Islands provide an opportunity for promoting unity amongst continents, nations, and cultures. The Maltese Islands have been and must continue to be an ideal model for inclusion and respect to our neighbouring nations, and beyond.

We welcome the endeavours of MV Logos Hope to our Islands and our Mediterranean Region.

I therefore feel that I am privileged to launch this floating international book fair on this vessel that aims to bring diverse cultures together in the quest to build peace among nations.