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*Speech by H.E. Marie-Louise Coleiro Preca, President of Malta, at a Reception  
in honour of Diplomats who presented their credentials*

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16<sup>th</sup> November 2017

**Excellencies  
Distinguished guests  
Dear friends**

**It is my pleasure to welcome four distinguished diplomats *His Excellency, the Ambassador of the Republic of Tunisia; His Excellency, the Ambassador of the Kingdom of Thailand; Her Excellency, the Ambassador of the Kingdom of Norway; and His Excellency, the Ambassador of the Grand Duchy of Luxembourg:***

**Excellencies,**

**I would like to congratulate you all on your appointments, and wish you every success in your endeavours.**

**Your Excellencies, please convey my very best wishes to your respective Heads of State, while also expressing sentiments of friendship towards the peoples of your nations.**

**Your Excellency, *Ambassador of the Republic of Tunisia,***

**Malta and Tunisia have always enjoyed a special bond, thanks to our shared Mediterranean heritage and traditions. There are many connections, through our respective diaspora, which stretch back across the centuries.**

**Moreover, it was truly a pleasure to have visited Tunisia, last week, on a State Visit, and to have met with His Excellency the President of the Republic of Tunisia, Mr Essebsi, and the Tunisian Head of Government, together with a strong Maltese business delegation.**

**This visit was a historical landmark in the relations between Malta and Tunisia, and served to commemorate the 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary since the establishment of bilateral relations in 1967.**

**The political and diplomatic ties between our countries have always been excellent, culminating in a number of important bilateral agreements.**

**My State Visit to Tunisia was a strong statement, that our countries want to further develop our excellent political and diplomatic relations, into effective and tangible economic initiatives.**

**Our meetings in Tunisia, with the country's highest officials, aimed at enabling our business communities to come together, and explore all possible trade and business collaborations.**

**I would like to reiterate, Your Excellency, Ambassador of the Republic of Tunisia, that we must keep up the momentum which has been energised last week, between Malta and Tunisia.**

**This can be done by ensuring that the Joint Commission, between our two countries will meet, in the first quarter of next year, so that our respective line ministries and institutions will continue to build upon what we began during my State Visit.**

**Malta and Tunisia also support each other at the multilateral and regional levels, including synergies in Mediterranean fora, such as the Union for the Mediterranean and the Western Mediterranean Forum. Moreover, Malta will also continue to be a facilitator for Tunisia, within the European Union.**

**Your Excellency, Malta wants Tunisia to prosper, in particular, for the benefit of the young people of Tunisia. I am convinced that Tunisia's economic success can inspire other countries in the region, and will translate itself into a sense of stability and prosperity, throughout the Mediterranean.**

**Your Excellency, *Ambassador of the Kingdom of Thailand,***

Although official diplomatic relations between Malta and Thailand were established in 1985, the links between our countries are far older, with a Thai Consulate having been first established in Malta in 1884.

Furthermore, it was my pleasure to meet with Her Royal Highness, Princess Maha Chakri Sirindhorn, during her private visit to the Maltese Islands in 2014.

Our two countries may be geographically distant, however Malta looks forward to further strengthening bilateral relations between our peoples. These are especially necessary in the area of economic cooperation, which shall definitely lead to mutual prosperity for Malta and Thailand.

Malta also welcomes the positive political developments that are taking place in Thailand, with the promulgation of the Thai Constitution in April of this year.

These developments represent a mutual commitment, expressed by both our peoples, to the values of democratic participation, the upholding of the rule of law, and universal human rights and fundamental freedoms.

Moreover, I believe that there are a number of areas in which we can increase our social and economic cooperation, including Malta's expertise in the area of teaching English as a foreign language, and the training of diplomats at the University of Malta.

I must also take this opportunity to commend the ever-growing relationship between the European Union and Thailand, with the hope that this will result in benefits for all of our peoples.

Your Excellency, *Ambassador of the Kingdom of Norway*,

Diplomatic relations between Malta and the Kingdom of Norway were first established in 1969, and since that time, the friendship between our nations has steadily grown.

Let me also take this opportunity thank the government of Norway for the provision of Norwegian funds to Malta, from 2014-2020, which are of such benefit for the people of Malta.

Furthermore, during high-level meetings by the Norwegian Prime Minister, and the Prime Minister of Malta, held in February of this year, two important Memoranda of Understanding were completed.

Moreover, I believe that it is essential for Malta and Norway to continue exploring ways to forge stronger ties, both on a social basis and between our respective business communities and industries.

Both Malta and Norway have strong maritime traditions, as can be seen by the large number of Norwegian shipping companies registered in, and operating from, Malta. Therefore there is great scope for further synergies to be facilitated, within this sector of mutual interest.

Another important aspect of the links between us is in the sector of tourism. Since 2017, the Norwegian Spirit, a vessel forming part of Norway Cruise Line's fleet, has been sailing on cruises around the Mediterranean that start and end in Malta.

This has created opportunities for the promotion of Malta with a number of tourists, thereby also highlighting closer contact between different communities and diverse cultures.

Let me conclude by saying that the responsible way in which Norway is address the migration situation should inspire us all, to act in a spirit of solidarity.

Your Excellency, *Ambassador of the Grand Duchy of Luxembourg,*

Diplomatic relations between Malta and Luxembourg were first established in 1969.

There is a small but active community of Maltese people in Luxembourg, whose presence is evidence of the positive ties that exist between our respective peoples.

**There are some key similarities between our two countries. We are both hubs for the provision of specialised services in our respective regions, and I augur that there shall be further opportunities for collaboration between our business communities.**

**Indeed, in March of this year, there were 406 local companies in Malta, registered with shareholder interests from Luxembourg.**

**Furthermore, the numbers of tourists and visitors from Luxembourg to Malta has increased steadily over the years, which creates ample opportunities for person-to-person contact, and deeper sharing between our peoples.**

**I believe that creating such contacts is essential, and can be further enhanced through social and cultural cooperation.**

**Whilst noting the excellent work that has been carried out so far, Malta looks forward to intensifying our cultural collaboration, particularly during Valletta's upcoming term as the European Capital of Culture in 2018.**

**Excellencies,**

**On concluding, let me encourage all of us to continue fostering cooperation among our respective nations, while also working together, to implement the United Nations' Agenda 2030, and its seventeen Sustainable Development Goals, which our countries are also committed to achieve.**

**These goals offer us a practical roadmap for a sustainable future, to secure peace and prosperity for all humanity.**

**Excellencies, dear guests, friends,**

**Please raise your glasses to drink to the good health of the new Ambassadors, and to excellent relations between Malta and the countries they represent, and to the friendships of our peoples.**