
*Press Statement by H.E. Marie-Louise Coleiro Preca, President of Malta during
State Visit in Tunisia*

Excellency

Honourable Ministers

Distinguished guests

Members of the media

It is truly a pleasure to be, once again, among Tunisian friends, in your beautiful country, for this historical Official Visit, also celebrating fifty years since the establishment of diplomatic relations between our two countries, forming part of the Mediterranean Family of Nations.

I would like to express my appreciation to Your Excellency, President Beji Caid Essebsi, and to the Government of Tunisia, for the warm welcome and great hospitality, extended to me and to my delegation.

Let me take this opportunity to thank you, Your Excellency, President Essebsi, and the Tunisian authorities, for your constructive and insightful contributions during our meetings, this morning.

These meetings have continued to build on the good will that was expressed during my visit in Tunisia, last year, and also on the many constructive meetings held during this time between our high-level government officials.

Our shared history and friendship go much beyond these fifty years of diplomatic relations. I will just mention one fact in our recent history; at the beginning of the 20th Century, the Maltese community in Tunisia grew to an overwhelming 15,000 in number. I can assure you that 15,000 is a big number in the Maltese context today, and even more so at that time.

Your Excellency, I have brought with me a strong delegation, including, two important and foremost Ministers of my Government, and a substantial Maltese Business delegation.

This business delegation brings together 17 companies and 22 business people covering an array of sectors including; IT, transshipment, manufacturing, electronics, construction, maritime, hospitality services, medical and energy.

Our presence here is a powerful statement, that Malta is enthusiastic and extremely willing to enhance our already excellent collaboration, and to transcend this excellent diplomatic and political relationship, into further economic cooperation and collaboration.

Maltese Business people are enthusiastic to develop partnerships with their Tunisian counterparts.

Malta believes that Tunisia is a land of opportunity. Hence, we believe that our cooperation should transpire into investment and not in aid, in Tunisia.

Malta wants to see Tunisia prosper for its young people, and our Mediterranean Region.

At this time, Malta is experiencing very significant economic growth, and Maltese businesses are seeking investment beyond Malta's shores.

Tunisia, being an important neighbouring country and also, an integral part of our Mediterranean Family of Nations, has the potential, to attract Maltese investment. Moreover, Malta being a member of the European Union, makes it an ideal hub, for startups and also as a catalyst to link effectively Tunisia, with the European Union.

Malta believes that both our countries, and our respective businesses, can grow, can expand and can prosper together.

I am pleased to note that Malta and Tunisia have already, over these last years, put a number of determining conducive factors in place for our businesses, such as the Double Taxation Agreement and air connectivity between the two countries.

Today's signing of another two Memoranda of Understanding, that is, the MoU for the sector of Tourism and the Convention in the field regarding co-operation and vocational training, will certainly open further opportunities for collaboration and cooperation, in a variety of areas.

I must also mention, with pride, that Maltese business, together with their Tunisian counterparts and authorities, are being creative and innovative, by exploring the potential of Tunisia, also in renewable energy.

Let me urge our authorities, to make the TUNUR project a reality, for Tunisia and Malta, and subsequently, for Europe and the World.

The TUNUR Project is truly commendable, as it does not only target new green jobs for Tunisian youth, but also addresses the scourge that the effects of climate change, might bring to humanity, and in particular, in the African and Mediterranean regions.

I must commend Tunisia, for its insight into tangibly addressing the United Nations' Agenda 2030, and in particular Sustainable Development Goal 13.

I am so proud that the TUNUR project is a collaboration between Tunisia and Malta.

Tourism is another important pillar in our economies. We might seem to be competitors, however, in this age of innovation and creativity, we must look at ways to bring more tourists to our beautiful historical region, of the Mediterranean, collaboratively.

We share the same beautiful sea.

We share some of the most important historical and cultural heritage.

There is much that we can do together, to develop this sector, and bring prosperity to the Southern region of the Mediterranean.

Tourism is not only an important economic operation, that makes us prosper in material terms, but tourism makes us prosper in friendship, through its essential connection between peoples.

Tourism can be fundamental for the wellbeing of our people, and for building sustainable peace.

Hence, I urge our authorities to work tirelessly to consolidate our touristic potential, to ensure the creation of important jobs for our young people, but also to bring peace and stability to our uncertain region.

By working in synergy, not only will the business sectors of Malta and Tunisia flourish, but our markets will also benefit by increased opportunities for expansion.

These efforts for collaboration and cooperation, must not stop, or slow down when this Official Visit is over. The already established Joint Commission, between our countries, is an important medium to deepen and to bring to fruition, our constructive meetings during this visit.

Your Excellency, I urge our authorities, to respond immediately, by calling the next meeting of the Joint Commission, to enhance and effectively, find ways to implement the outcomes of our discussions, into concrete and tangible actions.

A very important point in our discussions, is the Maltese-Tunisian cooperation in the field of youth. We can already benefit from a previous agreement between our two countries in the youth sector, in terms of education and training, but also in terms of friendship-building, by respective exchanges between our young people.

Once again, I would like to reiterate that my Official Visit to Tunisia, is aimed, at not only, developing further our already excellent diplomatic and political relations, into more tangible results for our communities and business.....My Official visit, is also an opportunity for both of our countries to form stronger and healthier collaboration across all strata of our societies, and in particular for our young people.

Finally, I would like to commend His Excellency President Essebsi, and his Government for their outstanding example of endeavouring to bring about effective gender equality for Tunisian Society.

In particular, I would like to congratulate, His Excellency President Essebsi, for his vision in this field, making him a champion of gender equality and human rights, as women's rights, are human rights.

In this context, let us continue to work as one Mediterranean Family of Nations for the peace, for the prosperity, and for the wellbeing of our peoples, and all the nations of our Mediterranean Region.