
*Speech by H.E Marie-Louise Coleiro Preca, President of Malta during the
Tunisia-Malta Business Forum*

Your Excellency Youssef Chahed Tunisian Head of Government,

Hon Ministers,

Members of the Business Communities of Malta and Tunisia,

Dear Friends,

It is a great pleasure to be in Tunisia. Malta looks at Tunisia as a most friendly country.

We share the same sea. Our ancestors have contributed to the same historical and cultural legacy of the Mediterranean Region.

Before I continue with further remarks, I would like to express my deep appreciation to His Excellency President Essebsi, and to you, Your Excellency Youssef Chahed, Tunisian Head of Government, for the warm welcome and great hospitality, extended to me and to my delegation.

We come to Tunisia on the occasion of the 50th Anniversary of the start of diplomatic relations between our two countries.

We come at this point looking forward to the next 50 years of collaboration.

We come to Tunisia to translate our excellent diplomatic and political relations into economic, business and trade cooperation.

This is why I am accompanied by two prominent Ministers from my Government and a strong business delegation...A business delegation that represents an array of industry, services, and trade.

This powerful delegation is evidence of Malta's resolve and determination to not only continue to be a voice that facilitates Tunisian aspirations in the European Union, but also to be a catalyst and a hub for Tunisian markets, in the European Union.

Today's constructive meetings with His Excellency President Essebsi is evidence of the strong political will that exists between our two countries, to open the necessary doors, and to enable our businesses to come together in potential partnerships and collaborations.

Malta believes in the potential that Tunisia has.

We look at Tunisia as a land of opportunity that deserves to grow and prosper. We come to Tunisia because we believe that both our countries have the potential to expand, to grow, and to prosper together, within our Mediterranean Family of Nations.

We are convinced, that Tunisia is a guiding light in terms of its endeavours, in the process, to become, a vibrant democratic state. We are also convinced that Tunisia can be a role model of economic prosperity in our region.

At this time, Malta is experiencing significant economic growth, and more Maltese businesses are seeking opportunities to further invest, beyond Malta's shores.

Tunisia, being a friendly, neighbouring country, is a natural destination for Maltese investment. Malta has already enough evidence of successful investment in Tunisia. Over the years, some Maltese businesses have come to friendly Tunisia, invested, and became successful.

I am pleased and proud of their achievements and also, of their contribution in creating several hundreds of job opportunities.

We look at this business forum with confidence. Our businesses have the full potential to explore innovative and creative avenues, so that our markets will extend and expand.

We must not look at ourselves as competitors, but as complementary resourceful communities, in a region prone to economic growth.

I am pleased to note that the environment between our two countries, is already conducive to build strong business connections, due to a number of factors, which are already in place, and which will enable our business communities to collaborate and partner.

These factors include the Double Taxation Agreement, direct air travel connectivity, as well as the Memorandum of Understanding on Tourism, and the Convention in the field of cooperation and vocational training, which were signed this morning.

I have no doubt that our efforts today, will have positive effects on the different levels of our societies, and in particular for our young people.

Let me take this opportunity to, encourage our respective Chambers of Commerce to continue to engage in collaboration and to act as catalysts for our authorities to continue to open doors, for our respective businesses to flourish together, so as to ensure the necessary creation of job opportunities, for our young people.

In this context, our endeavours will not only ensure the growth of our businesses in terms of material profits, and job creation, but it will also have a direct impact on the stability and peaceful way forward, for our region.

These are exciting times for Malta and Tunisia as both our countries have immense potential to grow, to expand and to prosper together.

Let's not lose the momentum of this business forum, but let us ensure, as relevant authorities, to continue to put into effective action our good will, our sense of determination, to put into effect, the aspirations of our two peoples.

Excellencies, we have a great responsibility...after these constructive meetings, we need to continue, through the already established Joint Commission between our two countries, to bring together, the respective authorities, to translate our political will and determination, to open all necessary doors, to facilitate for our businesses, the various tools and resources, to prosper.

I can assure you that Maltese Business People are enthusiastic to develop partnerships with their Tunisian counterparts.

Let me urge you all to explore our respective business and commercial strengths, to tap into the relevant economic operation.

In this context, let us continue to work as one Mediterranean Family of Nations, for the prosperity and for the Wellbeing of our peoples.