
Speech by H.E. Marie-Louise Coleiro Preca, President of Malta at the 2nd Malta-Tunisia Business Forum

12th March 2018

It is a great pleasure to welcome you to Malta, and to see the great interest that there is between the business communities of Malta and Tunisia.

This is the second forum, which is being held in a few months, after the one that was held in Tunisia, and which has brought both our business communities together.

I am confident that such meetings will help to form and forge closer synergies, and will help to create new opportunities for business collaboration and connection.

The presence in Malta of a Tunisian trade delegation is evidence of the importance that both of our governments are placing, to the development of our excellent diplomatic and political relations, into stronger socio-economic cooperations; and also, to encourage the friendship that already exists between our two peoples.

As two countries with a strong Mediterranean heritage, Malta and Tunisia have so much that links us together as two nations.

Both our nations share rich histories, that tells of the influence from diverse cultures and civilisations, which have left their mark upon our countries and our Mediterranean Region.

There is much scope for sustainable collaboration, as both our countries can bring much meaningful advantages, to each other.

For example, Malta is not only a member of the European Union, and a gateway to a huge market of five hundred million Europeans, but it is also a member of the Commonwealth of Nations, which brings together 53 other countries from across the whole world.

On the other hand, Tunisia, like Malta, is an active voice in the Union for the Mediterranean, and a strong participant in the Western Mediterranean Forum, known as the 5+5.

I am, therefore, confident that our respective geo-strategic positions can be positively explored, to enhance further socio-economic opportunities together, to further

expand collaboration and partnerships, between our countries and our business communities, and other stakeholders in the region.

Malta and Tunisia are definitely not competitors, even though we both come from the Mediterranean region. Rather, we are ideal collaborators, working towards the same goals of sustainable development and inclusive prosperity.

We have great opportunities together, to expand and extend our markets.

A number of encouraging factors have already created the right environment to facilitate such processes of partnership, such as the Memorandum of Understanding in the area of Cooperation on Employment and Vocational Training; and the the Memorandum of Understanding in the area of Tourism, which were signed during my State Visit to Tunisia, last year.

I am informed that during today's business forum, two further Memoranda of Understanding will be signed, between the Tunisian Union of Liberal Professions and the Malta Federation of Professional Associations; and between the Tunisian General Union of Veterinarians and the Malta Veterinary Association, respectively.

Such examples of the closeness between our respective communities, in diverse sectors of interest, gives me great hope and confidence for the future development of mutual contacts to harness collaboration, cooperation, and partnership, in other significant areas.

Let me also take this opportunity to commend the Maltese and Tunisian Chambers of Commerce for their initiatives and activities.

I am sure we all look forward to further exchanges, between the Chambers of our respective countries, which will undoubtedly foster and enhance closer collaborations.

As you know, these are exciting times for Malta, as my country is at a stage of impressive economic growth, and Maltese investors are seeking new opportunities and avenues for expansion, beyond the Maltese shores.

I do hope that Maltese investment will reach further into Tunisia, to help in the creation of job opportunities for Tunisia's young generation. We want Tunisia to flourish, and to continue to be a model for other North African countries.

Hence, I encourage you to continue to endeavour to grow and prosper together, for the sake of your businesses, but also for the benefit of our two peoples, and especially, for both of our young generations.

I also think that it is essential for our potential collaborations to include the participation and the engagement of larger enterprises, but also between small and medium sized businesses.

These links will make a valuable contribution to the multi-level and mutual strengthening of our nations, and our respective geo-strategic positions as points of contact in the Mediterranean Region.

I believe that there is no limit to what we can achieve together. Our geo-strategic potential is immense, due to our shared presence in the Mediterranean Region.

I also believe that we must keep up the excellent momentum, which has been created between our countries, and continue to build upon what we have achieved so far.

Let me therefore reiterate, as I did on the occasion of my State Visit, the importance of establishing a Joint Commission between our respective governments, for the ultimate benefit of the Maltese and Tunisian peoples.

By meeting regularly, through a Joint Commission, our respective authorities and business communities shall continue to explore further socio-economic opportunities between our countries.

Let us always remember that governments are enablers and facilitators. Both our governments have the essential political-will, to develop the necessary environment for businesses to flourish.

Therefore, the door is open for you, to take our connections to the next level.

I look forward to seeing your endeavours in continuing to develop your businesses, during this Second Business Forum and indeed beyond.

In this way, we shall be taking practical actions, for the lasting benefit of our peoples, our nations, and our Mediterranean region.

Thank you for your attention.