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*Toast delivered by H.E. Marie-Louise Coleiro Preca, President of Malta on the occasion of the Independence Day of the United States of America, 26th June 2018*

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Distinguished guests,  
Dear friends,

Thank you, Ambassador Hill, for your opening remarks.

I am informed that this will be your last celebration of America's Independence Day, as American Ambassador to Malta. It will also be my last one, before the end of my term.

Let me therefore take this opportunity to commend you for your contributions, and to wish you success in all your future endeavours.

Please convey, in my name and on behalf of the Government and People of Malta, our greetings to President and to the People of the United States, on the celebration of America's Independence Day.

It is important for us to remember that the historical relationship between Malta and the United States is far older than the establishment of diplomatic relations between our countries.

In fact, it is rooted in the American battle of Independence, when Emmanuel de Rohan, Grandmaster of the Knights of Malta, sent a letter of congratulations to the Founding Father of the United States, Benjamin Franklin.

In this letter, de Rohan assured Franklin that he could expect hospitality and a warm welcome for the people of America, on Malta's shores.

It is to be hoped that this spirit of hospitality, of welcome, and of solidarity, is a value that the peoples of Malta and the United States will always hold close to our hearts.

On my recent working visit to North America, it was a pleasure to meet members of our Maltese diaspora. Listening to their experiences, I was pleased to acknowledge their full integration in American society, as effective contributors to the prosperity of their communities and their adopted country.

The Maltese are, like many other cultures, an example of how enriched and strengthened we are, when our nations learn to value and to celebrate the importance of diversity.

I must also commend the work being done by the Institute for Justice and the Rule of Law, in Malta, which has offered rights-based training to over three thousands lawmakers, police officials, prosecutors and judges, since it was established in 2014.

Malta attaches great importance to the work done by the Institute, and its mandate to promote justice, peace, and security within our Mediterranean region and across the world.

Let me also take this opportunity to thank Ambassador Hill and the US Embassy in Malta, for the ongoing support that has been shown, to the work of my Foundation for the Wellbeing of Society.

It was a pleasure to have had your contribution at last year's edition of the President's Secret Garden, and your attendance at most of the events hosted by my Foundation and also my Office.

I augur that your successor, Ambassador Hill, will be just as actively involved, and show a genuine commitment to issues of social justice and the promotion of holistic wellbeing.

Excellency,

Let us now raise our glasses and toast to the excellent relations and the close friendship between the peoples of Malta and the United States of America.