
Speech delivered by H.E. Marie-Louise Coleiro Preca, President of Malta, on the occasion of the National Day of Israel, 26th June 2018

Distinguished guests,
Dear friends,

Thank you, Your Excellency, for your kind greetings.

Please convey, in my name and on behalf of the Government and People of Malta, our sincere best wishes to His Excellency President Rivlin and to the People of the State of Israel, on the celebration of Israel's National Day.

Since relations between Malta and Israel were first established, in 1965, bilateral cooperation between our nations has steadily grown.

The cooperation between our countries now covers a wide range of sectors, which include healthcare, aquaculture, environmental protection, education, oil exploration, water conservation, and tourism.

Malta is pleased to note the development of fruitful relations between our respective authorities, over the past years, and I believe that there is much potential for further contact between our two peoples.

This spirit of connection is evident in the fact that the Member States of the European Union share a long and common history with Israel.

It is essential for us to remember the lessons of our history, in order to be guided to a more prosperous and peaceful future.

For this reason, I am proud that it was through my Foundation for the Wellbeing of Society, that we instituted the first public commemoration, in Malta, of International Holocaust Remembrance Day.

We have worked closely with Yad Vashem over the years, Israel's official institution for the remembrance of the Holocaust and Holocaust studies. Our annual events are also supported by diverse stakeholders, together with the Embassy of the Netherlands, the Embassy of Germany, and the Italian Embassy.

I am informed that the Maltese Foreign Minister's recent visit to Israel, has strengthened connections with Yad Vashem in the area of Holocaust Education, and I look forward to seeing this relationship bear fruit, among our Maltese students.

Such education, for peace and for understanding, is essential.

I believe that we must continue working together, as nations of the Mediterranean, to safeguard the integrity and the wellbeing of all our respective peoples.

In order to achieve these goals, we must promote genuine processes of friendship.

In this context, the positive role of tourism, as a gateway for person-to-person contact and peace-building, is a valuable opportunity to foster greater closeness among the peoples of Malta and Israel.

Such connections will also translate into synergies between the respective business, cultural, and social communities of our nations, leading to new opportunities for shared growth and prosperity.

In the cultural sector, Valletta's ongoing term as the European Capital of Culture for 2018 provides an ideal showcase for the richness of our Mediterranean cultures.

Valletta 2018 is not only a platform for Maltese identity and culture. We are also eager to share this important space, in order to nurture a spirit of dialogue and sharing among diverse countries and cultures.

Excellency,

On concluding, let me say that Malta and Israel, as Mediterranean neighbours, must continue working together, to safeguard sustainable peace and to promote inclusive prosperity in our region.

Let us raise our glasses and drink to the health of the President of Israel, to the peoples of Malta and Israel, and to the friendship that unites us.