



Press Release

PR 140670

04.04.2014

**ADDRESS BY HER EXCELLENCY MRS MARIE-LOUISE COLEIRO PRECA,
PRESIDENT OF MALTA, THE PALACE, VALLETTA - FRIDAY, 4TH APRIL 2014**

Honorable Members
Presidents Emeriti
Excellencies
Distinguished Guests
Ladies and Gentlemen,

The appointment of the Head of State of Malta is not a celebration of one person but a celebration of all the people of Malta and Gozo. A celebration of a proud people who live in a sovereign state. Indeed, this is the day when, as people of Malta and Gozo, we recognise each other as one nation - a nation which although small, managed, in the course of time to grow and become strong enough to take charge of its own destiny.

Today I present myself to you most humbly and with a high sense of duty, commitment and determination, so that together we can build upon the good work of our forefathers. Today I feel the smallest among you.

I want to work with you to continue to develop our nation, for it to become stronger, for our sake and the sake of the children that will succeed us.

Over the course of time, we have proved ourselves as people who can rise to the occasion both in moments of distress and of joy.

My nomination today comes with the support and approval of both sides of the House of Representatives, as well as the respect and trust of thousands of Maltese and Gozitan people. These are sources that empower me and continue to kindle in me love for my country, a country endowed with strong values reminiscent of larger nations.

Our people managed to create a state out of a small rock – a state that engenders wealth and promotes peace.

Unity

I consider the strengthening of unity as one of the priorities that we should work for in this journey together.

Attachments: 1

Page: 1 of 7

I dedicate myself to work tirelessly for unity.

I am convinced that just as we have succeeded on various occasions to show this sentiment, the same can be achieved on a daily basis. It would be in the best interests of everyone, but mostly our children.

We should work to push to the forefront the virtue and value of brotherly love among the people of Malta and Gozo in order to safeguard respect, tolerance and dignity for all.

We need to accept the fact that it doesn't matter that we harbour different views. Indeed this is most needed. We need to recognise the fact that there is nothing wrong with offering constructive criticism of each another as this helps to strengthen democracy. However, at the same time we would do well to understand the fact that it is when we come together that we can best understand each other, that we can show compassion and lend a helping hand in difficult times.

Democracy

This is the way by which a sovereign state and the Maltese democratic fabric are strengthened. It is when each and everyone of us feels free to participate, even when in disagreement, that we renew democracy among us.

We will be living in a truly democratic country when we succeed in recognising our collective diversity.

In the coming years we need to continue working incessantly on this. We must continue to understand the importance of diversity and multi-culturalism. This is a strong social challenge and an important reality that affects us all.

We should understand and recognise that the effects of globalisation are not solely economic.

Social media is creating cultural globalisation and a strong movement of persons. Let us not be afraid of this fact.

Let us all, people of Malta and Gozo alike face these challenges with a critical sense as well as with the awareness that this social change offers opportunities for those who want to mobilise human and material resources in the name of social justice.

Identity

On the other hand it is important that we continue to strengthen our Maltese and Gozitan identity. After all, what is that makes us what we are?

We have our own language, flag and national anthem, culture, traditions and the authentic patrimony that makes us a nation with a unique identity.

How many of us recognise this true Maltese identity?

Therefore, while in the years to come we need to enhance knowledge and respect towards cultural and traditional diversities, we also need to ensure the strengthening of our national identity.

It is an identity that makes us a unique nation, who despite its demographic smallness is big because of the contribution it has made to world history.

Malta and Gozo lie at the crossroads of civilisations. Therefore let us work on this, strengthening our role as a bridge that links civilisations and peoples together.

The Maltese Diaspora

We should pause to think of our Maltese and Gozitan brothers and sisters scattered all over the world - those Maltese and Gozitans who for some reason or other left our country but remain Maltese. We should strengthen our ties with them. We should enhance their awareness of this nation. We should show them that they remain part of us. We should help them appreciate Maltese identity.

I also wish that their children recognise the origins of their parents and feel close to us. This is their country as much as ours.

Social Commitment

I want to be worthy of the confidence which you are entrusting in me today. I promise to remain the person I always was, a person with whom you can speak with and confide in.

Your difficulties are my challenges. Your successes my joys. I firmly wish that this Presidency will be one that inspires goodwill and recognition of the solidarity between us. I am committed and determined to observe political impartiality scrupulously.

I am determined that ,together with you, I will continue to highlight those difficulties and challenges that affect the lives of families and individuals in our country. This is to ensure a proper and dignified environment for each and everyone of us, whoever we are, and wherever we come from.

It is only in this manner that I believe we can aspire to have a happy society, giving people the opportunity to do their best to succeed without obstacles.

Voluntary Work

Our country is one that inspires generosity. Generosity can take several forms, both of a financial nature as well as through dedicating time for others. I intend, like my predecessors before me, to make this Presidency an opportunity to strengthen voluntary work in our country.

Voluntary work is a strong foundation upon which many social initiatives are built. I wish that we continue to strengthen such work and enhance awareness of the importance of voluntary work both in the social and economic sectors.

I wish that we do this hand-in-hand together, through a wide collaboration of all sectors in our country. In this enterprise I see a golden opportunity that will bring us ever closer. I intend to involve everyone - those in the social sector, the business and commercial sector, state institutions and the many Maltese and Gozitans of goodwill that are prepared to contribute towards causes of a social nature.

Let's all work together.

I also believe in a Presidency that listens and facilitates the voice of the people of Malta and Gozo to ensure that the definition of the State will truly reflect that this is a SOVEREIGN STATE.

New Functions

This is a Presidency with new and wider functions. A Presidency which we should as one people make successful, so that social and economic problems, which leave a negative impact on everyone, are addressed at a national level and are no longer part of a partisan political game.

I believe that the Presidency should serve as a shield to protect liberty, democracy and human rights. For this to take place I am using my energy to see that a culture of social justice is cultivated built on the basis of mutual respect and inclusivity, tolerance and diversity - all of which are values that should continue to make us proud that we are Maltese and Gozitans.

National Anniversaries

The political history of our country is one that testifies to the fact that our people, although small in number, could, with firm determination, achieve what was their right.

It is an honour for me that I will be President during this year when we celebrate four important national anniversaries in the political lifeline of our country: the Fiftieth anniversary of Independence, the Fortieth anniversary of Malta becoming a Republic, the Thirty-fifth anniversary since Malta acquired complete Freedom, and the Tenth anniversary since becoming a member of the European Union. Each and every one of these anniversaries constitutes part of an important process in the political history of our nation. A nation that managed to arrive where it is today due to its hard work, courage and determination to succeed in all that it does.

What we are today we owe to our forefathers. Their vision and zeal should serve as our tools to continue moving ahead as one people towards political maturity that makes us truly modern.

Therefore I wish that this Presidency not only honours the memory of our ancestors and their achievements, but also and to a certain extent more, renders this memory more alive in the elderly members of its society.

A society is identified as strong when it recognises the value of its elders, appreciates them and takes care of them.

Regional and international events taking place in Malta

During this Presidency, a number of important events will be taking place in Malta. Next year Malta will host for the second time the Commonwealth Heads of Governments Meeting (CHOGM), in 2017 Malta will for the first time have the Presidency of the European Union, while in 2018 our capital City, Valletta, will be the European Capital of Culture.

These events, while continuing to show our country's importance in international, regional and cultural fields, are also an opportunity to showcase to the world who we are.

The Presidency is set to play its part in raising our country's profile, aware of the fact that each and every event must not only be a success but also leave a fruitful legacy for those who come after us.

Constitutional Reforms

This Presidency is going to be engaged in constitutional reforms. Such constitutional reforms, while of great importance in the process of our democratic evolution, should ensure that they express the needs and aspirations of an ever-changing society. Such a task, while requiring great wisdom and wide consultation, should also make sure that it honours the first architects of our constitutional development who with great skill and dedication arrived at the constitution as we know it today.

At this most solemn moment I wish to salute and give them due honour in my name and in the name of all the people of Malta and Gozo.

May the seeds sown in our constitutional process continue to inspire us in the endeavours that we have ahead of us in the months and years to come.

May we all realise that respect for different opinions should remain the backbone of every initiative that we take to strengthen our democracy - a democracy that was, and will continue to be crafted by the people and for the people, a democratic system that upholds the human person at the centre of every initiative.

International Commitment

At an international level Malta should continue to retain its major role as a bridge of dialogue that ties the European and African continents together. It remains essential that all parties involved in the peace process be brought more closely together so that the Mediterranean will be a region that promotes peace and prosperity.

Furthermore, Malta is also a member of the European Union and of the United Nations - regional and international forums in which we should continue to engage, as we always did, to make sure that we leave a better world behind us. It is with great satisfaction that I note that Malta has excellent relations with many countries around the world. This is an endeavour our country should continue.

Immigration

The geostrategic importance of our country continues to gather significance against the backdrop of the huge influx of immigrants arriving on our shores.

While aware of the humanitarian element attached to such arrivals, and the need to give these people all the humanitarian assistance they deserve, our country's size and population density makes it impossible to give our best to these people, who are searching for refuge from conflicts and wars, and aspire for a better life. This fact makes our country dependent for assistance on neighbouring countries and the European Union.

Malta has the support of neighbouring countries, as well as that of Non-Governmental Organisations and the United Nations, who, while sympathetic with our country's experiences, also acknowledge the fact that Malta is a special case. They also demand a lasting solution to stop this human tragedy.

Here, my appeal is to the international community to consider it as their duty to help countries such as Malta, to share the responsibilities and opportunities of such a phenomenon.

This Presidency is also concerned with this, hence I believe that we should continue working in the direction of finding long-term solutions and be catalysts in the process to break-up internationally organised criminal trafficking circles that are wrecking havoc for thousands of lives.

As political instability continues in neighbouring Libya and war rages in Syria, my appeal to the Diplomatic Corps present here today is to strengthen our efforts through effective dialogue to get solutions.

I strongly believe that dialogue remains an effective instrument that brings people together.

It saddens me how our region, the cradle of civilisation, still cannot manage to establish peaceful coexistence. It is a coexistence that could reach its aim if there is recognition and respect towards the different cultures and peoples, the opinions and the different beliefs, as well as languages and multi-ethnic traditions.

I consider us a fortunate people as in our case strong coexistence and solidarity exists between our families. We are fortunate that our forefathers realised the need to keep together and develop without fear, the will to discover new opportunities that made them and us stronger in whatever we engage ourselves in.

Children and Young people

I wish to take this opportunity, of this celebration of the Maltese State, to encourage our children and youths to make their utmost, and show the same courage and will that their forefathers employed before them.

As a mother that closely understands the difficulties that parents face in the different stages of parenthood, I wish to take this opportunity and invite them to make a step forward together to give our children and youths a voice and enough space to tell us what their aspirations are.

Let us come together, parents of Malta and Gozo to continue working towards creating an environment where our children, present and future, can achieve their full potential.

This we can fulfil by safeguarding the environment, education, health, sports and culture and our historic and natural heritage.

Today I reiterate that I feel truly humble in front of you, aware that as Head of State I represent each and every one of you, aware that I have the responsibility to bring forward all your dreams and expectations, your desires and achievements.

I want to be worthy of this beautiful country that possesses such a rich and unique heritage.

I want to be worthy before you by serving as a catalyst to unite after recognising each other's needs and aspirations.

On such an occasion I want to pay heartfelt tribute to all the Presidents that came before me, who with their wisdom and skill succeeded to raise the dignity of the State, through their official and social commitment, in the best interests of our people.

With my work I also want to be worthy of the legacy that they left, confident that it will lead me in the years to come.

Driven by your incessant support, and the love of the people for whom and with whom I am committed to continue serving.

Guided by the values that my parents instilled in me and which, I hope bear witness to the values of every one, I pray to God that together with my husband and daughter, I'll be worthy of the service to my country in whatever I do.

Finally, I want to state before you that whatever I do will only be an expression of the profound love that I have for Malta and the people of Malta and Gozo.

May God be with me.