



Press Release

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SPEECH BY THE HON. ANGELO FARRUGIA SPEAKER OF THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES OF THE REPUBLIC OF MALTA ON THE OCCASION OF THE ADOPTION OF THE NEW TUNISIAN CONSTITUTION - TUNIS, 7TH FEBRUARY 2014

Your Excellency Mr President of the Republic of Tunisia,
Your Excellency Mr President of the National Constituent Assembly of the Republic of Tunisia,
Honourable Prime Minister of the Republic of Tunisia,
Honourable Ministers,
Excellencies,
Distinguished Guests,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is a great honour for me today to address such an auspicious gathering on the happy occasion of the adoption of the New Tunisian Constitution.

I am indeed pleased to convey, on behalf of the House of Representatives of the Republic of Malta, my sincerest congratulations to the President of the Republic of Tunisia HE Dr Moncef Marzouki, the President of the National Constituent Assembly, HE Dr Mustapha Ben Jaafar, the Government led by Prime Minister Hon Mehdi Jomaa and equally the People of the Republic of Tunisia on such a happy occasion.

This very important political development marks a historical achievement for the people of Tunisia and also sets a very sterling example to other countries in the region that are striving to build a democratic and pluralistic political system.

Tunisia is the birthplace of the Arab Spring and, as it strove to achieve the democratic aspirations which triggered the Yasmin Revolution of 2011, the Tunisian politicians have successfully moved the country towards a new legal Charter, which 'inter alia' protects human rights and promotes gender equality which are a fundamental characteristic for any democratic society.

The formation of the new Government led by HE Mehdi Jomaa and the establishment of the National Electoral Commission were only made possible through the good will of the people of Tunisia.

In this regard, Mr President, Malta welcomes the fact that the Tunisian politicians are planning to hold elections later on this year, which is another crucial political goal that would further strengthen Tunisia's transition process towards democracy.

I would therefore like to reiterate Malta's continuous support of the Tunisian transition process towards democracy, while underscoring the untiring efforts of the Tunisian people to fulfil their political goals.

I would also like to commend the continuous efforts undertaken by the political leaders of Tunisia including the previous Tunisian Government of Dr Ali Laraayedh, to achieve consensus and subsequently fulfil their country's political objectives.

Mr President, both the Republic of Tunisia and the European Union enjoy strong relations and in fact, during the past years, the European Union has continuously extended its commitment to support the Tunisian authorities in their efforts to overcome successfully the various social, economic and security challenges facing this country. As a matter of fact, the European Union has been on the forefront of international efforts to assist Tunisia in its transition towards democracy.

Indeed, the re-building of a new Tunisia based on democratic institutions and the rule of law is an excellent opportunity to further expand and deepen EU-Tunisian relations on all levels.

Both the EU and Tunisia are equally determined to seize this opportunity in order to strengthen the ties between them and promote stability, security and prosperity on the basis of partnership based on solidarity and common interests.

In the light of these positive developments, the European Union is committed to strengthening its partnership with Tunisia in accordance with the European Neighbouring Policy.

Rest assured Mr President, that Malta, as a neighbouring and friendly country which keeps close at heart Tunisia and the Tunisian people, will do everything in its possibility to see this happening. Indeed Mr President the excellent relations between our two countries are marked by special historic ties between our peoples. It was in the beginning of the 19th century that the Maltese started to sail to this country and establish themselves here. Way before our formal diplomatic relations were established, the Maltese and the Tunisians were already well ahead in their human relations – the people to people relationship.

It is with a sense of satisfaction that we note that the commerce between the two countries then, was a flourishing one. It is with a sense of challenge that now we look into the future of our excellent relations - a challenge for even superior relations between our two countries marked by an increase in not only commerce but also in investment, in tourism and in all other sectors of bilateral cooperation.

As I am sure you agree, Mr President, it is with such multifaceted exchanges that we can help more each other. It is therefore with earnest that we look forward to closer collaboration in all fields for the benefit of our peoples. The road ahead though is not an easy one. Suffice to say the precarious security situation in the region from which we are partly affected. Our thoughts go to the security forces who, as manifested only this week in Tunisia, bear the brunt in the fight against organised crime and terrorism. The Government of Malta and the people of Malta convey their sympathy and condolences to the families of those who - past and just recently – have lost their lives in their combat against evil.

Yet allow me Mr President to say that Tunisia has shown the world, thanks to the collective effort of its political leaders, civil society and the Tunisian people, that it can do it and indeed it succeeded

in its endeavours to build a better future, a future built on justice, a future built on democracy, a future built on the respect of human rights, in a nutshell - a future which really merits the Tunisian people. For this I am delighted to be here with you and to convey to you the congratulations of our President of the Republic Dr George Abela, our Prime Minister the Hon Dr Joseph Muscat and his government, and the Maltese people.

Thank you.