

**ADDRESS BY H.E. THE PRESIDENT OF THE HELLENIC REPUBLIC MR  
KAROLOS PAPOULIAS TO H.E. THE PRESIDENT OF THE REPUBLIC OF  
MALTA DR GEORGE ABELA**

Mr. President,

I am especially happy to be visiting Valletta. I wish to thank you for the warm welcome and for the hospitality you have extended to me and to the Greek delegation.

My visit is evidence of the importance we attach to the promotion of our relations at every level: political, economic and cultural.

Bonds of friendship and peaceful coexistence between the peoples of Malta and Greece exist since the 19th century, when your compatriots settled on Greek islands. Today, the descendants of those Maltese, approximately 3,000 to 4,000 people, are an additional link between us.

The accession of Malta to the European Union was a Greek foreign policy priority and we are very happy that it was achieved during the Greek Presidency in 2003.

During the fifth Greek Presidency we hope to successfully promote issues related to growth and employment in Europe, to the promotion of European economic integration, to immigration and the European maritime policy. These are sectors of special importance to both our countries.

You are aware that Greece is going through an unprecedented economic crisis. In order to overcome it, we must implement an effective and credible policy.

The Greek people, especially the most vulnerable social groups, have suffered and continue to suffer. As we proceed with the necessary structural reforms, we attach great importance to solidarity among European partners and to your support.

Greece and Malta are partners in the Mediterranean; they are maritime countries with long shipping traditions. As countries of the European south, we support the European Union

policies for our region.

Greece has made the objective of a single maritime policy a main priority of its current Presidency of the European Union. Today, thousands are employed in the wider maritime sector of Europe. With the right strategy this number could rise even further in the coming years.

We note your country's effective cooperation in dealing with illegal immigration. Illegal immigration is for Greece, as it is also for Malta, a major national and social problem. It is also a serious European problem. We look forward to a constructive cooperation in order to deal with this problem that is common to both our countries.

Mr. President,

Economic cooperation can and should be a major part of our bilateral relations. We wish to strengthen the cooperation between Greek and Maltese investors. Our economic cooperation can rise to a higher level in spite of the difficult times. We hope that our bilateral trade will increase.

We look forward to welcoming a higher number of Maltese citizens who will wish to spend their holidays in Greece. We are very happy that Greece is among their preferred tourist destinations.

Our cultural cooperation is equally important. Greek language and civilization are taught at the Maltese higher education establishments. I wish to assure you that we will continue to support every initiative aiming at the promotion of our cultural cooperation.

Mr. President,

On the Cyprus issue, Greece is in favour of the negotiating process in view of a viable and functional solution, fully compatible with the fact that the Republic of Cyprus is a member of the EU.

It is unacceptable that an EU member state should be suffering invasion and illegal

occupation, as is the case for Cyprus.

We greatly appreciate your support to the Republic of Cyprus, your excellent relations and your cooperation, bilaterally and within the European Union. We also expect from Turkey to contribute to the solution of the problem in a positive manner. We live in an era of international tensions.

The North African states, which have been in crisis since the beginning of 2011, are the focus of global interest. We all wish that the internal political situation will be normalized, the democratic institutions will be solid and that peace and stability will prevail once again.

Our concern for the region of the near and Middle East becomes even greater because of the fact that millions of Christians live on these territories. The Christian populations in the area are the first to be under serious threat from religious extremism.

Mr. President,

I hope that this visit will contribute to more frequent and stronger ties between us.

With these thoughts, I raise my glass to wish you, your wife and your family, health and happiness and progress in every field to the people of Malta.