



Press Release

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Members of Parliament David Agius and Alex Muscat address the 37th Small Branches Conference of the CPA

A parliamentary delegation led by Speaker Anġlu Farrugia is participating in the 37th Small Branches Conference, which is being organised as part of the 64th Commonwealth Parliamentary Conference being held in Kampala, Uganda, between the 23rd and 29th of September 2019.

On the 24th of September, MP David Agius was invited to be one of the discussion leaders during the second session dealing with the possible effects of Brexit on the CPA Small Branches. This session was moderated by Dr W. Mckeewva Bush, Speaker of the Cayman Islands. During his presentation, MP Agius spoke about the common recurring theme related to Brexit; uncertainty. He said that small economies are normally well-adapted to dealing with uncertainty under different circumstances. He proposed that as the European Union has its own legislative forum with the European Parliament, the Commonwealth should have its own Parliament so that its proposals could be put into practice. He said that a Commonwealth Parliament could strengthen the agenda of Commonwealth countries and be a voice for all its members.

MP Agius added that with the UK's eventual departure from the EU, Malta can serve as a bridge between the European Union and the rest of the Commonwealth, in particular with smaller jurisdictions. He stated that this bridge is possible, as the European Union and the Commonwealth share common goals, including democracy, peace, security, equality and prosperity. MP Agius argued that post-Brexit, Malta is set to lose an important ally within the EU, particularly in the field of tax harmonisation. He concluded, however, that Malta expects to keep strong relations with the United Kingdom nonetheless.

During the same conference MP Alex Muscat was one of the discussion leaders during the session on climate change and the possible effects on CPA Small Branch economies and development, the session being moderated by Speaker Anġlu Farrugia. MP Muscat outlined the importance of climate change for small jurisdictions, given their vulnerability to climate change impacts, which could become critical if no appropriate action is taken. He stressed that, although small states are the victims of this reality, parliamentarians are in a position to hold their respective governments to account on this crucial issue.

MP Muscat then referred to Malta as an example of a small island state setting the example, when in 1988 it put forward the UN General Assembly Resolution, launching the negotiation and the eventual adoption of the 1992 UN Convention on Climate Change. He remarked that climate policy action in Malta is driven by policy action at international level, particularly through policy and legislative

actions taken by the EU. MP Muscat mentioned the change of electric power generation from heavy-fuel oil to natural gas as a concrete example with which Malta is reducing greenhouse gases. MP Muscat then outlined the potential impacts of climate change on small states' economies and development, which could result in far-ranging effects on the environment and their economic prospects. He concluded by stating that parliamentarians have a critical role to play, by raising awareness of the issue of climate change with citizens, developing appropriate policies and strengthening legislation to not only protect the environment, but also the rights of its vulnerable victims.

Before the end of the Small Branches Conference, Speaker Farrugia presented a draft climate change toolkit and gave an overview of the working document to the delegates. The aim of the toolkit is to serve as a practical manual for parliamentarians to publish good practices within their legislations and use them to adopt new initiatives to fight climate change issues, and to collaborate to eradicate the influence of big pollutant companies.

The 37th Small Branches Conference came to an end with the election of the second Small Branches chairperson, whereby the Speaker of the Cook Islands, Niki Rattle, was elected. The role of chairperson of Small Branches is an officer role within the CPA's governance structure, and the new incumbent will sit on the CPA International Executive Committee to bring a voice for Small Branches to the governing body of the CPA.