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# Press Release

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## **PRESS RELEASE BY THE OFFICE OF THE SPEAKER**

### *The Speaker opens the virtual 49<sup>th</sup> BIMR Conference*

Speaker Anglu Farrugia opened the 49<sup>th</sup> British Isles and Mediterranean Region (BIMR) Conference which is being hosted virtually by the Maltese Parliament. The Speaker remarked that although this year's gathering is taking place during unprecedented times, and against a backdrop of great uncertainty, the Maltese Parliament remained determined to rise to the challenge of organising the first fully virtual BIMR Conference.

Speaker Farrugia noted that the theme chosen for the 2020 conference, 'Parliaments in times of crisis', reflects the Covid-19 reality which the world has been facing and is expected to be facing for the foreseeable future. The Speaker highlighted the principal measures taken by the Maltese Parliament to adapt to this new reality, including temperature checks for everyone entering the Parliament building, social distancing measures, and the extension of teleworking arrangements for its staff, and also highlighted the procedural changes that were made to the work of the parliamentary committees to enable the Parliament's work to continue uninterrupted. He expressed his hope that the sessions would serve as a means of exchanging the experience of the legislatures in this respect.

The Speaker argued that legislators and policy-makers are tasked with finding the very delicate balance between safeguarding the health of citizens and the economy, noting that in addition to controlling the spread of the virus locally, there is an urgent need for the international community to support vulnerable countries in developing and implementing strategies for restarting their economies in a smart way, noting that this is where the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association (CPA) can truly deliver value.

Speaker Farrugia concluded that many great ideas and opportunities have emerged from crises and members of parliament should seize this opportunity to become more open to change, and more open to discuss and think of the weakest and the most vulnerable in our societies.

The Deputy Speaker of the National Assembly of Cameroon and Chairperson of the CPA, Emilia Monjowa Lifaka, and newly elected CPA Secretary General, Stephen Twigg, also addressed the opening session of the 49<sup>th</sup> BIMR Conference.