



Press Release

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Speaker Farrugia participates in CPA webinar on Covid-19 and independent parliaments

Speaker Anġlu Farrugia took part in a webinar organised for Speakers and Presiding Officers of the Commonwealth on Covid-19 and independent parliaments. The purpose of the webinar was to provide a timely and unique opportunity for Speakers and Presiding Officers of the Commonwealth to examine the nature of parliaments as independent institutions in the context of COVID-19, highlighting how parliaments in the long-term should seek to establish policies, strategies, and powers to give them the necessary resources to function effectively regardless of the challenge.

The webinar was addressed by a panel comprising amongst others Dame Eleanor Laing MP, Deputy Speaker, UK House of Commons, Anthony Rota MP, Speaker, House of Commons of Canada, and Brigid Annisette-George MP, Speaker of the House, Trinidad & Tobago. The Speakers outlined the response of their respective legislatures to the Covid-19 crisis to ensure that they continue to work effectively whilst safeguarding the health and well-being of the Members, parliamentary staff and the community. The implementation of a hybrid Parliament, i.e. a mix of members participating in person and remotely in parliamentary sessions, was a common theme addressed by the panellists.

In the Q&A session that followed the panel debate, Speaker Farrugia spoke of the fact that the Maltese Parliament has been steadily reaping more advantages of having gained full administrative autonomy from the executive, including decisions on procurement and recruitment which did not depend on approval from the executive branch. He argued that this independence provided greater flexibility and more timely responses to various challenges, not least those presented by the Covid-19 pandemic. This was evidenced, for example, in the swift way it could adapt to virtual proceedings to allow the greater part of parliamentary work to continue uninterrupted, especially with regard to the organisation of and participation in inter-parliamentary conferences. Speaker Farrugia also asked whether they shared the same experience of greater efficiency in passing urgent legislation more swiftly in times of crises.

In addressing the questions by the floor, the panellists remarked that they agreed fully with the remarks made by Speaker Farrugia.