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# Press Release

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

### *Speaker Farrugia addresses the European Conference of Presidents of Parliament*

Early this afternoon, Speaker Anġlu Farrugia delivered his address to the European Conference of Presidents of Parliament, which is being organised in Athens by the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe and the Hellenic Parliament.

Under ‘Theme 1: Democracies facing the Covid-19 public health crisis: sharing experiences and the way forward’, Speaker Farrugia said that, despite the shockwaves the pandemic transmitted to our economies and the way it affected our life, “the crisis has, in many ways, acted as a catalyst for the modernization of public administration systems, with bureaucratic procedures being simplified and public services being digitalized in record-time, becoming more responsive, efficient, effective and easily accessible.”

He informed the conference that the “legislative and the committee work of the Maltese Parliament was not impacted significantly” and that “parliamentary sittings carried on as normal and members continued to attend sittings regularly”, though “a number of vulnerable members were excused from sittings” to ensure their protection. He added that “committee meetings were held in hybrid format”, with the hearing of witnesses being done via video conferencing.

He referred to the “unique frontline role of local authorities, the level of governance and accountability which is closest to citizens.”

He mentioned the initiative YouSafe, which was created as a Community Support Platform in view of the fast developments related to the Covid-19 pandemic, with 68 Facebook Groups (one for each Local Council) being linked with the Page.

Speaker Farrugia concluded his intervention by saying that the “major lesson learnt from this experience is that strong and effective multi-level governance is essential to prevent, identify and manage emergencies, including pandemics.” He noted that “resilience, flexibility, capacity and coordination are instrumental to good governance responses and to ensure that key services continue come what may.” He finally said that “the response must ensure compliance with the fundamental values of democracy, human rights and rule of law, which after all are the values that ultimately unite us all here today.”

Speaker Farrugia was accompanied by the Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the Republic of Malta to the Hellenic Republic Joseph Cuschieri.