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PRESS RELEASE BY THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

MP Carmelo Abela participates in the CFSP/CSDP Inter-parliamentary Conference in Bruges

MP Carmelo Abela participated in the Inter-parliamentary Conference for the Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP) and the Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP) held in Bruges within the framework of the Belgian Presidency of the Council of the European Union. The Conference for CFSP and CSDP deals with current questions of parliamentary control of the EU foreign and defence policy. The meeting offered the opportunity for an exchange of views between the national parliaments, the European Parliament and the European Commission.

The conference was opened by Ms Stefanie D'Hose, Speaker of the Belgian Senate, Mr David McAllister, Chairperson of the Committee on Foreign Affairs of the European Parliament and Ms Els Van Hoof, Chairperson of the Foreign Affairs Committee of the Belgian House of Representatives. The CFSP-CSDP conference provided a framework for the exchange of information and best practices in the area of CFSP and CSDP, to enable national Parliaments and the European Parliament to be fully informed when carrying out their respective roles in this policy area.

During the second session on the ongoing process of enlargement, MP Abela emphasised the importance of acknowledging the concerns and ideas put forth by various national delegations, noting that the process of enlargement or integration ultimately hinges on determining what will prevail in the end: the political process of enlargement or the adoption of the European acquis. Agreeing with the necessity of continuing unwavering commitments to the principles of democracy, rule of law, and respect for human rights, MP Abela stressed the significance of maintaining these values throughout the enlargement process while considering the aspirations of candidate countries, especially the younger generation. MP Abela advocated against waiting for institutional reform, expressing his belief that the EU's relevance in the neighbourhood will increase with more Member States joining the EU.

During the urgent debate on the situation in the Middle East, Hon. Abela acknowledged the longstanding nature of the issue and lamented the periodic escalations which he unequivocally condemned, including the attacks on 7 October and its aftermath. Emphasising the importance of valuing all lives regardless of nationality, MP Abela stressed the need for the EU to vocally condemn all loss of lives. Expressing a sense of urgency to move beyond mere condemnation, MP Abela called for a definite ceasefire. He noted Malta's role as a non-permanent member of the Security Council in leading UNSC Resolution 2712, that called all parties to cease hostilities and return to the negotiating table. Advocating for humanitarian assistance and aid as immediate priorities, Hon. Abela concluded by highlighting the necessity for a forward-looking approach and stressed that an immediate ceasefire is a *sine qua non*, and supported a Two-State Solution based on pre-1967 borders, addressing the legitimate concerns and aspirations of both sides, in line with relevant UNSC resolutions. He aligned with his colleagues in asserting the EU's need to play a leading and relevant role in addressing the ongoing situation in the Middle East.



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Among the participants in the CFSP-CSDP conference were Ms Hadja Lahbib, Belgian Minister of Foreign Affairs, European Affairs and Foreign Trade and the Federal Cultural Institutions, Ms Federica Mogherini, Rector of the College of Europe (Bruges) and Ms Delphine Pronk, Ambassador, Chairperson of the Security Committee of the EU and deputy political director of the European External Action Service (EEAS).