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The Parliament of Malta hosts the 10th British Islands and Mediterranean Region, Commonwealth Women Parliamentarians Conference

The 10th edition of the Conference of the Commonwealth Women Parliamentarians of the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association (CPA) was organised in the Parliament of Malta on 7 and 8 March 2024. The conference brought together around 30 women parliamentarians from across the British Isles and Mediterranean Region.

The theme chosen for the two-day programme was “*Resilient Women: Moulding Girls into Strong Women*”, with the aim of looking at how women are impacted by an array of circumstances, which calls for greater resilience.

The first session dealt with a number of issues which are considered as urgent and at times life threatening. These include issues and challenges affecting women across the Commonwealth, where global challenges including violence against women and girls, global instability and wars, the lack of women in leadership and the backlash against gender equality and women’s empowerment. The panel and participants shared good practices in responding to these challenges.

The second session delved into the impact of the cost-of-living crisis, cultural and societal inequality and discrimination, where it was noted that the women parliamentarians are the ones who have a track record of scrutinising policy, legislation and budgets to identify the impact on women and girls. They have led the way in highlighting discriminatory practices targeted at or disproportionately affecting women. This session discussed how women parliamentarians in the region worked on gender sensitive scrutiny and ensuring women are protected in law.

The third session challenged women being Members of Parliament. During this session, the participants had an opportunity to share how parliaments are structured to meet the needs of women parliamentarians and to safeguard the mental and physical wellbeing of women MPs. With the insight of the contributors, the session explored how the opportunities for women parliamentarians to perform their roles, especially during unprecedented times, can be enhanced. MPs present shared their experiences of being MPs, juggling a number of roles whilst serving as a parliamentarian, including the many personal attacks and threats directed at them as well as their family members.

On the second day of the conference, as part of the commemoration of International Women’s Day on 8 March, the panel consisted of former Maltese MPs who went on to hold prominent roles, as well as current MPs, who were invited to share their success story in politics as women. European Commissioner for Equality Helena Dalli, former President of the Republic of Malta Marie Louise Coleiro Preca and Deputy Opposition Whip and alternate Women Parliamentary Leaders Country Ambassador, MP Paula Mifsud Bonnici. During this session, young



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parliamentarians and aspiring women hoping to enter the political world were invited to participate and discuss how to build a successful political career with all the successes and challenges this may bring about.

The conference, held in the Parliament Building, welcomed representatives from the branches of the British Isles and Mediterranean: Cyprus, Gibraltar, Guernsey, the Isle of Man, Jersey, Northern Ireland, Scotland, Wales and the UK.

Maltese Commonwealth Women Parliamentarians Steering Committee Members MP Naomi Cachia and MP Graziella Attard Previ, MP Bernice Bonello, MP Rebekah Borg, MP Eve Borg Bonello, MP Claudette Buttigieg, Parliamentary Secretary for Reforms and Equality Rebecca Buttigieg, MP Abigail Camilleri, MP Janice Chetcuti, MP Katya De Giovanni, MP Graziella Galea, and MP Amanda Spiteri Grech, took part in this conference.