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Speaker of the House of Representatives addresses the 148th Inter Parliamentary Union Assembly in Geneva

The 148th Assembly of the Inter-Parliamentary Union is meeting in Geneva gathering 146 parliaments from across the globe. The General Assembly is debating how parliamentary diplomacy can be an important tool to build bridges for peace and understanding.

Speaker of the House of Representatives Anglu Farrugia stated in his intervention that parliamentary diplomacy should emerge as a beacon of hope, in a world where conflicts persist. He however admitted that parliamentary diplomacy is often overlooked in traditional diplomatic discourse, notwithstanding that it holds immense potential in fostering dialogue, cooperation, and reconciliation among nations.

The Speaker emphasised that unlike traditional diplomatic channels, parliamentary diplomacy engages elected representatives hence the voice of the people. It also serves as a catalyst for the building of bridges between nations, bridging gaps that may exist due to historical grievances, ideological differences, or geopolitical tensions. He stressed however, that best practice lies when parliamentary diplomacy and traditional diplomacy work in unison. The parliamentary foreign affairs committees are a concrete example and can achieve this important goal. Parliamentary diplomacy is based on a commitment to developing a culture of dialogue in respect for cultural diversity and identity. This is one of the strengths which parliamentary diplomacy, through the so called 'soft' diplomacy, keeps an open line of dialogue underpinned by intercultural dialogue.

He concluded his speech by stating that parliamentary diplomacy represents an opportunity to overcome the cultural constraints that diplomacy faces. He urged parliamentarians to foster an integrated relationship between traditional and parliamentary diplomacy which strengthens both, while allowing each the freedom to develop its own strand.

The Speaker also chaired the high-level segment session on 'Mitigating the humanitarian consequences of war: the role of Parliamentarians'. Ms Mirjana Spoljaric Egger, President of the International Committee of the Red Cross and Ms Pramila Patten, UN Special Representative of the Secretary General on Sexual Violence and Conflict, addressed this session.

The Speaker lead delegation is composed of MP Randolph De Battista, MP Ryan Callus and Mr Ian Bajada, who is assisting the parliamentary delegation.