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PRESS RELEASE BY THE OFFICE OF THE SPEAKER

Maltese Parliamentary Delegation participates in the 148th Inter Parliamentary Union Assembly in Geneva

The 148th Assembly of the Inter-Parliamentary Union is meeting between 24 and 27 March in Geneva. The Maltese parliamentary delegation is headed by Speaker Anglu Farrugia and includes MPs Randolph De Battista and Ryan Callus. The Maltese delegation is actively participating in various fora held during the IPU Assembly.

MP Ryan Callus participated in a panel discussion on interfaith dialogue. The panel focused on how to build bridges through interfaith dialogue for more peaceful and inclusive societies. MP Callus stated that parliamentarians and authorities should pay more attention to the impact that disinformation through artificial intelligence can have on the role of different religions in societies. On the issue of radicalism, MP Callus emphasised that interfaith dialogue should be a continuous process rather than a one-time issue and therefore requires constant efforts by politicians. However, MPs are often faced by situations where politicians refuse to speak about radicalism out of fear of losing votes or popularity. MP Callus stressed that this absence creates a vacuum which is conveniently filled by radicalism and extremism, and it is why we must keep this dialogue alive.

Addressing the general debat, MP Randolph De Battista showed his disappointment for the fact that for the second time in a row the Assembly did not manage to reach consensus and adopt an emergency resolution on the situation in Gaza. This happened because unfortunately parliamentarians are not ready to listen enough to other opinions on the same subject. MP De Battista also remarked that unfortunately even this time there remain situations in a number of countries where a regression in LGBTIQ rights are being experienced. He stressed that protection of human rights and keeping peace is not only the responsibility of the people directly affected by breaches of those rights, but everyone's responsibility. MP De Battista concluded his remarks by proposing the establishment of an official forum of the LGBTIQ+ for Members of Parliament within the IPU.

Speaker Farrugia participated in the 43rd session of the Committee to promote respect for International Humanitarian Law. The Committee monitors ratification of relevant international instruments and their implementation at the national level, and works to raise awareness in parliaments on issues requiring parliamentary action.

On the margins of the general debate the Maltese parliamentary delegation met with the Speaker of Serbia Ana Brnabic. Speaker Farrugia congratulated Brnabic upon her recent appointment as Speaker of the Serbian Parliament. The two sides discussed how the two parliaments can strengthen their relations.

The Maltese parliamentary delegation also met with Ben Majekodumni, Chief of Staff to the Commissioner of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine refugees in the Near East (UNRWA). The dire situation in the Middle East, particularly in Gaza was discussed. Mr Majekodumni explained the difficulties that



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UNRWA is facing in the region and what the impact would be should the situation continue to deteriorate. The Maltese parliamentary delegation reiterated its commitment to continue supporting the work of UNRWA.