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3



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

### ***The Speaker of the House participates in the Conference of the European Union Speakers in Palma de Mallorca***

Between April 21 and 23, 2024, Anġlu Farrugia, Speaker of the House of Representatives, Parliament of Malta, took part in the 2024 Conference of European Union Speakers of Parliaments, which was organized in Palma de Mallorca as part of the inter-parliamentary dimension of the 2023 Spanish Presidency of the Council of the European Union.

Following the inaugural session addressed by the King of Spain Felipe VI and the Speakers of the Spanish Senate Pedro Rollán and of the Chamber of Deputies Francina Armengol, the conference was divided into two main sessions. Session 1 dealt with ‘The Strategic Autonomy of the European Union faced with the new challenges for liberal democracies in times of social media and artificial intelligence as regards foreign and defence policy: the illegal invasion of Russia against Ukraine and the conflict in the Middle East’ and Session 2 discussed ‘Strengthening the European Union from an economic and social perspective: the new fiscal rules of the European Union and enhancement of the Economic and Monetary Union in the context of prospective enlargement, social rights, and environmental and climate change challenges’.

Speaker Farrugia addressed the participants of the conference during Session 1 and spoke about the fact that the challenges and pressure on the European project both from within and from outside the Union have increased dramatically, and it is only natural that one starts to question whether the Union has the necessary tools to keep building the project when surrounded by so much uncertainty. The main lesson from the pandemic was the extent of interdependence, yet there is now this discussion on what measures are necessary for the European Union to fend for itself to enable it to pursue its interests and objectives without undue reliance on external actors, not least in matters of defence, energy, and security. The Speaker also referred to the threat of the spread of misinformation to our democracies, taking into account that it has been estimated that across the globe, more voters than ever in history will head to the polls as at least 64 countries (plus the European Union itself)—representing a combined population of almost half of the people in the world—are expected to hold national elections. The risks of the spread of misinformation and manipulation affecting public discourse, resulting in a compromised ability to discern truth from falsehoods, made even easier through AI, cannot be ignored.

With regard to the Middle East conflict, the Speaker appealed to all stakeholders to seek the path of constructive dialogue and mutual understanding, adding that parliaments, with their ability to bring together different opinions at the discussion table, can serve as catalysts to promote reason and understanding aimed at procuring peace and stability in the region. He further stressed that the need for a two-state solution has never been as urgent. Speaker



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Farrugia urged those present to support the full implementation of UNSC Resolutions 2712, 2720, and 2728, calling for an immediate ceasefire, the immediate release of hostages, and ensuring humanitarian access to Gaza.

In the margins of the EUSC, the Speaker took part in a meeting of the Parliaments of the South (Spain, France, Italy, Portugal, Greece, Cyprus, and Malta) discussing the situation of immigration in the southern area of the European borders. During this meeting, Speaker Anġlu Farrugia argued that the fact that migration routes across the Mediterranean tend to change means that all countries have faced this situation at some point and could thus understand the impact of this phenomenon. He also noted that Malta has always argued that without peace in the Mediterranean, there cannot be peace in Europe, and thus the region needs to be protected from destabilising forces.

Speaker Farrugia also had a bilateral meeting with the Speaker of Moldova, Igor Grosu. During this meeting, the two dignitaries discussed enhancing bilateral cooperation between the respective parliaments in light of Moldova's application for EU membership.

The Clerk of the House, Ms Eleanor Scerri, accompanied the Speaker to this conference.