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

***Speaker Farrugia participates in the meeting of Speakers of Parliaments of the South of the European union and of the North of Africa in Lanzarote, Spain on 27-28 January 2025***

The Spanish Parliament is hosting a meeting in Lanzarote which brings together Speakers of Parliaments in the Mediterranean region to discuss the migratory situation in the Mediterranean from a comprehensive perspective.

During his intervention Speaker Farrugia, while stating that one of the causes of irregular migration and displacement are conflicts like the one in Gaza, emphasised that the current ceasefire in the region should develop into lasting peace in the Middle East. Such a development will bring stability to the region together with a more normal way of life for the people.

Speaker Farrugia admitted that managing immigration is difficult and sensitive as lives of human beings are at stake. He stressed that while financial solutions can help but they are not enough, as dangerous, and sometimes fatal boat crossings should stop.

Speaker Farrugia also opined that the European pact on migration is not enough as it fails to reach the right balance between solidarity and fair sharing of responsibility between Member States in this field. He stated that firstly, mandatory solidarity, though required, remains flexible, allowing Member States to contribute financially or through other means instead of relocation. Secondly, and perhaps more worrisome, is the lack of assurances that identified needs, such as relocation, will be fully met within the solidarity component.

Speaker Farrugia stated that while a sudden rise in the number of arrivals requires short-term and urgent solutions, the challenges caused by migration flows can only be effectively addressed through long-term strategies. Farrugia referred to the 2015 Valletta Summit as an important milestone toward achieving long-term solutions to migration issues.

In conclusion Speaker Farrugia stated that parliamentary diplomacy can contribute to improve difficult situations and realities such as the situation of migration. He put forward a proposal to have a more structured, Group of Speakers of Parliaments of the Mediterranean. Such a group would serve as a platform for dialogue, collaboration, and the exchange of ideas among the legislative leaders in the region. He stressed that such group will be complementary to the works of the Union for the Mediterranean and the Parliamentary Assembly of the Mediterranean.

At the end of meeting, the Speakers present in this meeting adopted a Joint Declaration of the Parliament on the South dealing with addressing migratory flows in the region. On Tuesday 28 January the Speakers will visit the emergency migration reception and referral Centre Montana Mina. This meeting forms part of the calendar of events of the Spanish Presidency of the Parliament Assembly Union of the Mediterranean.