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PRESS RELEASE BY THE OFFICE OF THE SPEAKER

Maltese Parliamentary delegation participates in the Second Parliamentary Conference on Interfaith Dialogue

The Inter Parliamentary Union (IPU) is convening a conference bringing together parliamentarians, religious leaders, international experts and civil society from 19 to 21 June 2025 in Rome, Italy. The conference is hosted by the Italian Parliament in cooperation with Religions for Peace under the theme Strengthening trust and embracing hope for our common future.

Deputy Speaker David Agius together with Maltese parliamentarians Davina Sammut Hili and Ryan Callus attended the opening session of the conference. The opening session was opened by key note speeches of Lorenzo Fontana, President of the Italian Chamber of Deputies; Ignazio La Russa, President of the Italian Senate; Dr Tulia Ackson, President of the Inter-Parliamentary Union; Dr Francis Kuria, Secretary General of Religions for Peace, Reverend Rino Fisichella, Archbishop, Pro-Prefect of the Dicastery for Evangelization, Responsible for the 2025 Jubilee and Pier Ferdinando Casini, Senator and Honorary President of the Inter-Parliamentary Union.

The opening session was followed by a high-level panel which focused on countering hatred based on religion or belief. In his brief address Deputy Speaker Agius stated that unfortunately, hatred on the basis of religion or belief, including hate speech, discrimination, and violence is a daily occurrence in international news and therefore parliamentarians must do their utmost to defuse escalation and polarisation. The Deputy Speaker mentioned Malta's constitution as an example of a supreme law that ensures full freedom of conscience and the free exercise of religious worship for all individuals. He stressed that the constitution also protects freedom of expression, including the freedom to hold opinions and to receive and communicate ideas, without interference.

He continued by stating that although laws and constitutions are important, it is their implementation that counts most. It is here where the role of parliamentarians is crucial with their responsibility to legislate and their responsibility to see that legislation is implemented in an effective way. In the background of a very volatile international situation Deputy Speaker concluded by quoting Pope Leo's message stating that nothing is lost with peace however everything can be lost with war.

The IPU is the global organization of national parliaments. It was founded in 1889 as the first multilateral political organization in the world, encouraging cooperation and dialogue between all nations. Today, the IPU comprises 181 national Member Parliaments and 14 regional parliamentary bodies. It promotes peace, democracy and sustainable development. It helps parliaments become stronger, younger, greener, more innovative and gender balanced. It also defends the human rights of parliamentarians through a dedicated committee made up of MPs from around the world.