



PR251111

21.06.2025

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PRESS RELEASE BY THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Maltese Parliamentary Delegation attends the 54th British Isles and Mediterranean Region (BIMR) Conference of the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association (CPA) in Cardiff, Wales

A delegation led by Carmelo Abela, and comprising Graziella Attard Previ and Ian Vassallo, has attended the fifty-fourth CPA British Islands and Mediterranean Region Conference. The annual conference was held between 17 and 19 June in Cardiff, Wales.

The theme chosen for the three-day programme was *Addressing the needs of a modern Parliament* and focused on the Welsh experience of creating a Youth Parliament, the importance of LGBT Voices in Parliament, supporting the mental health and wellbeing of Parliamentarians, and the implementation, training and oversight of AI in Parliaments. Graziella Attard Previ also participated in the Steering Committee meeting of the Commonwealth Women Parliamentarians representing the Maltese Parliament.

The Maltese delegation participated actively and contributed to the various plenary sessions and workshops. During the session which tackled youth parliaments, Ian Vassallo highlighted some of the initiatives organised by the Maltese Parliament on a yearly basis, including Young Parliamentarians, the National Youth Parliament and EkoSkola among others. He also explained that all young people from the age of 16 can now contribute actively in general and local elections since the voting age being recently reduced from 18.

During the workshop which dealt with the importance of LGBT voices in Parliament, Graziella Attard Previ was invited to be a panellist during the session. Attard Previ spoke about the importance of forming allies, both locally and internationally and advocating for LGBT+ rights to ensure an effective impact. She highlighted the shocking fact that 35 of 56 Commonwealth countries still criminalise same sex relations. She appealed that parliamentarians have the role of being supportive towards activists in these countries, hence offering them a safe space to amplify their voices and empowering them in their endeavour to acquire their rights. Carmelo Abela also gave his contribution to the same discussion arguing that whilst legislation is important, it must also be a government commitment to ensure that the legislation is implemented. He also highlighted the importance of education of society at large by not shutting voices but empowering them.

During the session on the mental health and wellbeing of parliamentarians, Carmelo Abela and Ian Vassallo stressed that mental health challenges in politics stem not only from the demands of the job, but also from constant public and media scrutiny. MPs often face personal attacks, and while they may grow resilient, their families—unwillingly drawn into public life—often bear the greater burden.

Both MPs called for mental health to be taken seriously in Parliament, proposing induction programs that include mental health awareness, strategies for setting boundaries, and tools for managing scrutiny. They emphasized the need to end the stigma around seeking help, and to promote a culture of openness, support, and collaboration.



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“It’s time we treat mental well-being with the same importance as physical health,” they agreed. “Let’s build a Parliament where no one suffers in silence.”

During the final workshop which focused on the role of AI in modern legislatures, Carmelo Abela acknowledged that whilst locally Parliament still has a long way to go in making better use of AI, it is crucial to accept that this technology is no longer a distant concept—it is a present and growing reality.

Abela emphasized that despite valid concerns, Parliaments must not resist this transformation. Instead, they should proactively adapt by investing in AI-related infrastructure, building internal expertise, and creating opportunities where AI can enhance efficiency, transparency, and decision-making processes.

He further highlighted the need for comprehensive training for MPs and staff, ensuring they are equipped to understand, regulate, and responsibly harness AI. “This is not just about technology—it’s about preparing our institution for the future. We must invest in the right tools and knowledge to legislate effectively and ethically in this new era,” Abela stated.

During the Annual General Meeting, Regional Secretary of the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association UK and BIMR Secretariat Sarah Dickson updated the participants on upcoming Commonwealth Parliamentary Conferences and other business pertaining the Commonwealth Association of Parliamentarians. The AGM also saw the election of the new Commonwealth Women Parliamentarian representative of the Region, whereby Sasha Kazantseva-Miller, member of the States of Guernsey parliament, was elected for the period 2025 - 2028.