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

***The Deputy Speaker of the Maltese Parliament participates in the 18th Conference of Presidents of Parliament of Small European States***

Deputy Speaker of the House of Representatives David Agius is participating in the 18th Conference of Presidents of Parliament of Small European States, taking place in Nicosia, Cyprus. The conference brings together Speakers and Presidents of Parliament from Andorra, Cyprus, Liechtenstein, Luxembourg, Monaco, Montenegro, and San Marino.

The President of the House of Representatives of the Republic of Cyprus, Annita Demetriou, welcomed all participants and underscored the importance of unity among small states. She called for strengthened cooperation in pursuing shared objectives, both within Europe and beyond.

During the first thematic discussion: “Participatory Democracy: Bringing Parliaments Closer to the Citizens”, Deputy Speaker Agius expressed concern over the growing trend of voter abstention, noting it as a challenge for Malta and other states.

He explained that Members of Parliament in Malta maintain constant and direct contact with citizens in their daily lives. This, he said, ensures that parliamentarians remain closely attuned to the realities and concerns on the ground.

Deputy Speaker Agius also underlined Malta’s commitment to openness and inclusivity in parliamentary life. He pointed to initiatives such as special sessions dedicated to young people and the elderly, alongside the broadcasting of all plenary sessions and committee meetings through Parliament’s website and television channel.

Speaking on parliamentary diplomacy, Deputy Speaker Agius described it as a catalyst for building bridges between nations and called for further efforts to strengthen this essential dimension of parliamentary work.

He concluded by underscoring that participatory democracy – both nationally and internationally – is vital to ensuring that citizens feel engaged in the decision-making process.

After the first session the Speakers were granted an audience with the President of the Republic of Cyprus, Nikos Christodoulides.

Addressing the conference during its consideration of the second theme “Artificial Intelligence: Challenges, Opportunities and Best Practices for Parliaments of Small States,” Deputy Speaker Agius noted that artificial intelligence is an undeniable strategic reality and a powerful tool, but it should never replace humans.



# PRESS RELEASE

Deputy Speaker Agius announced that the Maltese Parliament is establishing a dedicated Standing Committee on Artificial Intelligence. The Committee will explore the use of AI across key sectors, including tourism, public administration, and education, while also carefully examining potential risks and negative implications.

He concluded his intervention by noting that artificial intelligence is a chance for small states to punch above their weight. He explained that their size, often seen as a limitation, can become an advantage, allowing them to adopt reforms and digital strategies quickly, experiment on a national scale, and showcase how innovation can serve society.

At the initiative of the Principality of Monaco, the conference added to its agenda the discussion of a proposed Memorandum of Understanding aimed at institutionalizing the *Conference of Presidents of Parliament of Small European States*. Malta, together with other participating small states, presented suggestions and proposed amendments to the draft text. It was agreed that the Memorandum of Understanding will be updated to incorporate the amendments discussed and will be formally considered for adoption at the next conference, scheduled to take place in Andorra in 2026.