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## **PRESS RELEASE BY THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES**

### ***Edward Zammit Lewis participates in the meetings of the Chairpersons of the European Affairs Committees in Nicosia***

At the beginning of the Cypriot Presidency of the Council of the European Union, the Cypriot House of Representatives is hosting a meeting of Chairpersons of Parliamentary Committees of European Union Affairs (COSAC) to present the priorities of their Presidency for the first six months of 2026 and European geopolitical challenges and responses.

The priorities of the Cypriot EU presidency were presented by Deputy Minister for European Affairs of Cyprus, Marilena Raouna. In her intervention, Ms Raouna stated that Cyprus assumes the rotating Presidency of the Council of the European Union at a time of intensified geopolitical instability, persistent security challenges, economic transformation and growing social pressures. She then explained how the priorities of the Cyprus Presidency are structured around three main pillars: a strategically autonomous and resilient European Union, an outward-looking European Union, and a socially strong and cohesive European Union.

In his intervention, Edward Zammit Lewis, Chairman of the Foreign and European Affairs Committee of the Maltese House of Representatives supported the priorities chosen by the Cypriot Presidency of the EU Council. He mentioned that both Cyprus and Malta are islands in the Mediterranean and share similar realities and challenges. He stressed that during this crucial and sensitive period, the EU should remain resilient and loyal to its core values. Zammit Lewis emphasised that respect for international law and for sovereign territorial integrity are crucial to keep global order. This is even more sensitive for small island states like Malta and Cyprus. Zammit Lewis also stated that Europe should remain socially strong and cohesive. Therefore, he continued, the next EU budget plays a very important role in keeping the EU on the right track. He stressed that Europe without a strong social policy is a soulless Europe and when Europe fails to address the needs of its citizens, Europe will be failing its proper vocation. Therefore, Zammit Lewis concluded that whatever challenges Europe is facing and might face in the future, social policy and social measures should remain strong.

During the second session, the debate focused on the European geopolitical challenges and responses. In his intervention Zammit Lewis stated that while the EU knows what the global challenges are, one of the major stumbling blocks that the EU faces when dealing with crisis and global challenges, is that it reacts too slowly and in a fragmented way. Zammit Lewis pointed out, however, that both with COVID and the war in Ukraine, the EU has shown that it can act as a unit and in an effective way. He stressed that, acting as a unit is not just a token but a necessity in the current geopolitical scenario. Zammit Lewis also mentioned that stability and peace in the Mediterranean are crucial both from a security and economic perspective. He concluded by stating that enlargement is important for the security of the European Union and that enlargement should not simply be a ticking process, but a credible and viable process for a better future of the Union, adding that that failing to deal



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with enlargement process in an effective way, the European Union risks to alienate prospective members to seek somewhere else, other than a future in the Union.