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Maltese Parliamentary delegation participates in the 153rd IPU Assembly in Arusha, Tanzania

A Maltese Parliamentary delegation, led by the Speaker of the House of Representatives, Carmelo Abela, and comprising MPs Deborah Schembri and Bernice Bonello, is participating in the 153rd Assembly of the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU) in Arusha, Tanzania.

Addressing the General Debate on *Enhancing Good Governance and Empowering Communities through Inclusivity, Trust and Opportunities for All*, Speaker Abela highlighted Malta's commitment to inclusive governance, parliamentary dialogue and the protection of human dignity. He stressed that good governance must remain centred on people and that parliaments have a responsibility to ensure that citizens are heard, governments are held to account, and public trust is strengthened through openness and meaningful engagement.

Speaker Abela also highlighted Malta's efforts to strengthen inclusion, referring to the unanimous amendment of the Constitution in July 2026 to expressly include disability as a protected characteristic. He stressed that inclusive governance must create genuine opportunities for all citizens to participate in decisions affecting their lives. Speaker Abela also pointed out that at a time when our societies face rapid technological, economic, environmental and social change, maintaining this relationship between citizens and institutions becomes even more important. He stressed that our response must be to bring people closer to democratic institutions, rather than allowing distance and mistrust to grow.

Speaker Abela concluded by stating that by building inclusive institutions, nurturing trust and providing meaningful opportunities for all, parliamentarians can empower communities and strengthen the democratic foundations upon which our societies depend.

Speaker Carmelo Abela also participated in the informal consultation on *Pathways to peaceful coexistence in the Middle East*. He stressed that humanitarian action, while essential, cannot substitute for a sustainable political solution, and highlighted the role of parliamentary diplomacy in maintaining dialogue and building bridges when formal diplomatic channels face difficulties. He called for sustained and inclusive parliamentary engagement aimed at building trust and creating the conditions for peaceful coexistence.

During the Standing Committee on peace and international security, Speaker Abela addressed the challenges posed by the increasing use of artificial intelligence in military systems. He stressed that human judgement and responsibility must remain central to decisions involving the use of force and highlighted the role of parliaments in ensuring accountability and compliance with international humanitarian law.

Speaker Abela also participated in a meeting of the IPU Task Force on Ukraine, stressing the need to continue identifying areas where practical engagement remains possible, particularly on humanitarian issues. Discussions with the Ukrainian and Russian delegations addressed, among other matters, children, political prisoners and other detainees, with the Task Force reaffirming the importance of maintaining dialogue despite the limited progress achieved so far.

The Maltese parliamentary delegation participated in the Forum of Women Parliamentarians. Deborah Schembri in her intervention emphasised the importance of men and women working together in advancing the rights, dignity and full participation of persons with disabilities. She also intervened during the Standing Committee on Democracy and Human Rights, stressing that disability inclusion is fundamentally a matter of human rights, dignity and equal citizenship. She highlighted Malta's constitutional recognition of disability as a protected characteristic and its move towards supported decision-making, while endorsing the principle of "nothing about us, without us" and the need for persons with disabilities to participate meaningfully in political and public life.

Bernice Bonello participated in the Forum of Young Parliamentarians, which discussed youth perspectives on the work of the Assembly, including the rights and empowerment of persons with disabilities. The Forum also considered preparations for the 154th IPU Assembly and exchanged views on challenges and opportunities concerning youth participation in parliaments, highlighting the importance of giving young parliamentarians a meaningful voice in parliamentary decision-making.

During the course of the week, the Maltese Parliamentary delegation will participate in various sessions of the assembly and other related meeting held on the margins of the Assembly.