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The Speaker meets with MHRA to discuss Parliament's role and the tourism sector

Speaker of the House of Representatives Carmelo Abela, met with representatives of the Malta Hotels and Restaurants Association (MHRA), as part of a series of meetings with various sectors of society aimed at directly hearing their perspectives, experiences and aspirations.

The meeting focused on the Parliament's role as an open and accessible institution, the importance of involving different sectors in the democratic process, as well as international challenges.

The Speaker emphasised that Parliament should continue opening its doors to society, not only by welcoming those who wish to engage with the institution, but also by visiting organisations and different sectors at their place of work. In this regard, he explained that parliamentary committees carry out substantial work that does not always receive the recognition it deserves. These committees also provide an important opportunity for associations, NGOs and individuals, regardless of their field of activity, to participate and express their views.

With regard to parliamentary work at European level, the importance of the Standing Committee on Foreign and European Affairs was also discussed, particularly as a forum for debating legislative proposals at European level. The Speaker emphasised the need to further strengthen and develop this type of partnership, while maintaining a positive and productive relationship between all parties involved.

For its part, the MHRA welcomed this meeting and emphasised the importance of democracy being actively practised every day through participation and dialogue. President of MHRA Tony Zahra, representing the Association, welcomed the opportunity for the tourism sector to contribute to the parliamentary process, particularly through committee participation, where it can present its position on legislation that directly affects the industry.

The MHRA highlighted that, given the substantial number of laws and regulations affecting the sector, it is important to establish a more effective mechanism through which organisations can identify and contribute to legislative proposals relevant to their respective industries. The discussion also explored how dialogue between the industry and policymakers could become more direct and in a productive way.

MHRA Chief Executive Officer Andrew Agius Muscat, representing the MHRA, stressed that meetings of this nature should serve as a stronger bridge between Parliament and the tourism industry. He pointed out that tourism cannot be regarded as the sole responsibility of the Ministry for Tourism, but rather as an ecosystem that cuts

across several areas of national life. Greater communication and broader consultation are therefore necessary, involving both local entities and international organisations.

In this regard, the MHRA explained that it is working towards strengthening Malta's position as a Mediterranean hub for discussion and the exchange of knowledge. This vision will form part of the Mediterranean Tourism Forum, scheduled to take place next November, with the aim of bringing experts and leading personalities from different fields to Malta to share best practices and present new initiatives.

The Association also explained that its work extends beyond the hotel and restaurant industry, given that tourism is interconnected with various services and other institutions. Cooperation between various entities is therefore essential to ensuring that Malta offers visitors a high-quality tourism experience. Various issues affecting both Malta and Gozo were also discussed.

The Speaker reiterated the importance of Parliament remaining a space where different views can be heard and discussed within a democratic framework. He noted that the House's rules and procedures must guarantee every Member of Parliament the opportunity to fulfil their parliamentary mandate and express their views, while ensuring that the Office of the Speaker provides the necessary space for this to take place.