GOVERNMENT OF MALTA
DEPARTMENT OF INFORMATION

PRESS RELEASE

PR261668	09.10.2026	6

PRESS RELEASE BY THE OFFICE OF THE SPEAKER

Maltese Parliamentary delegation highlights Parliamentary Responsibility in Addressing Global Challenges at the 153rd IPU Assembly in Tanzania

The Speaker of the House of Representatives, Carmelo Abela, is leading a Maltese parliamentary delegation at the 153rd Assembly of the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU), being held in Arusha, Tanzania. The delegation also includes Deborah Schembri and Bernice Bonello, who are participating in discussions on some of the most pressing challenges facing the international community, including peace and security, international humanitarian law, sustainable development, artificial intelligence, and strengthening democratic governance.

During a session on the enforcement of international humanitarian law and international human rights law, Speaker Abela emphasised that parliaments must move beyond international commitments and ensure their effective implementation through national legislation, adequate resources and meaningful parliamentary oversight. Speaker Abela drew particular attention to the protection of children affected by armed conflict, recalling Malta's leading role in advancing the Children and Armed Conflict agenda during its term on the United Nations Security Council in 2023–2024. He stressed that safeguarding children during conflict is not only a humanitarian obligation but also an essential investment in lasting peace.

Addressing the Standing Committee on Peace and International Security, Speaker Abela also highlighted the importance of strengthening maritime security and protecting critical infrastructure during times of conflict. Referring to Malta's position as a Mediterranean island State with Europe's largest ship registry and one of the world's largest, he underlined the country's particular interest in safeguarding international navigation. He called for stronger parliamentary oversight of maritime resilience, enhanced international cooperation and greater recognition of the vulnerabilities faced by small island States and maritime-dependent economies.

Speaker Abela also participated in the Standing Committee on United Nations Affairs, where he outlined the importance of effective, rules-based multilateral institutions, particularly for small States. Mr Speaker expressed support for efforts under the UN80 Initiative to improve the efficiency and responsiveness of the United Nations system, while advocating stronger engagement between national parliaments and UN Country Teams to reinforce transparency, accountability and national ownership of development programmes.

Speaker Abela and Deborah Schembri participated in the Standing Committee on Sustainable Development. Speaker Abela emphasised the importance of ensuring that technological advancement remains centered on people and the dignity of work. He highlighted the need for continued investment in education, reskilling, and lifelong learning, while stressing parliaments' responsibility to safeguard workers' rights, ensure transparency, and promote human oversight in the use of AI.

Speaker Abela also referred to the work of the Maltese Parliament's Standing Committee on Information Technology and Artificial Intelligence Affairs, underscoring the importance of parliamentary scrutiny in shaping responsible AI policies. He concluded by calling for stronger international cooperation to ensure that innovation contributes to a fairer, more inclusive and resilient labour market.

Deborah Schembri delivered an intervention on artificial intelligence and the future of work. She highlighted AI's potential to boost productivity and innovation, while stressing that technological advancement must not come at the expense of workers' rights, human dignity, or equal opportunities.

Schembri referred to Malta's initiatives to strengthen AI literacy, develop workforce skills, and establish safeguards in line with the European Union's AI Act. She emphasised the importance of lifelong learning, transparency and meaningful human oversight in employment-related decisions, arguing that governments, employers, educators and workers must collectively shape a future of work that is inclusive, fair and sustainable.

Schembri also took part in the workshop on AI and Children's Rights, discussing the need for strong laws to combat the risks posed by AI, given the rapid development of these technologies. AI now permeates all areas of daily life, from education to play, and parliaments have a responsibility to enact laws that protect adults and children alike while promoting its positive aspects. She emphasised that parliaments should pre-empt the emergent issue of risks relating to AI, which is not merely automated but autonomous in its actions, since alongside the usual concerns with AI technologies, autonomous actions could lead to criminal conduct with no physical perpetrator.

Meanwhile, Bernice Bonello addressed the Assembly's General Debate, held under the theme *Enhancing good governance and empowering communities through inclusivity, trust and opportunities for all*. Speaking from the perspective of a young parliamentarian, she emphasised that democratic institutions must earn the trust of citizens through transparency, accountability and genuine participation.

Bonello particularly highlighted the importance of engaging young people in democratic processes, strengthening civic education and ensuring that technological innovation brings institutions closer to citizens without creating new forms of exclusion. She called on parliamentarians to build institutions that govern not merely for people, but with them, stressing that meaningful participation is fundamental to stronger and more resilient democracies. The Maltese parliamentary delegation, led by Speaker Abela, held a bilateral meeting with the Speaker of the United Kingdom House of Commons, Sir Lindsay Hoyle. During the meeting, both Speakers reaffirmed the excellent and longstanding relations between Malta and the United Kingdom, highlighting the importance of further strengthening bilateral cooperation, particularly at the parliamentary level.

They exchanged views on opportunities to enhance interparliamentary dialogue, strengthen institutional ties, and promote greater collaboration between the two legislatures. The discussions also focused on the evolving international political landscape and the challenges facing democracy worldwide. Both Speakers underscored the

shared responsibility of democratic countries to uphold, safeguard and promote democratic principles, the rule of law and fundamental freedoms.

The Maltese parliamentary delegation's participation in the 153rd IPU Assembly reflects Malta's continued commitment to parliamentary dialogue and international cooperation. Through its contributions, the delegation has highlighted parliaments' responsibility to translate international commitments into concrete action, promote inclusive and accountable governance, and contribute to a more peaceful, secure, and sustainable world.

On the last day of the conference, the Maltese parliamentary delegation voted in the Governing Council to elect a new IPU President to serve for the next three years.