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The Speaker participates in the Paris Peace Forum, highlighting the importance of protecting children in the digital world and strengthening democracy and security through international cooperation

The Speaker of the House of Representatives, Carmelo Abela, participated in the Paris Peace Forum 2026, held in Paris on 10 November 2026, where he took part in two discussions addressing fundamental challenges facing societies: child safety in the digital world and the balance between national security, democracy and the protection of social contracts.

During the first session, entitled "Too Young to Scroll? Making the Digital World Safe by Design", the Speaker stressed that children should be able to benefit from technology's opportunities without exposure to risks that could undermine their safety, mental health and development.

Among the key challenges he identified were cyberbullying, exposure to harmful content, online exploitation, excessive screen time and the pressures associated with social media. He emphasised that childhood should not be sacrificed to serve the commercial interests of digital platforms.

Referring to studies conducted in Malta on restrictions governing children's use of social media, Abela highlighted the practical challenges of age verification, privacy concerns, and the possibility of children circumventing the restrictions.

The Speaker stressed that protecting children online cannot rely solely on legislation or restrictions. Instead, a comprehensive approach is required, involving governments, parents, educators and tech companies.

In his second engagement, the Speaker opened the roundtable discussion entitled "Defending Without Dividing: Parliaments Between Security and Social Contracts". The discussion focused on the responsibility of parliaments to strike a balance between security requirements and social needs, against a backdrop of geopolitical tensions, strategic competition and rapid technological change.

In his address, the Speaker emphasised that security cannot be measured solely in military terms. While credible defence capabilities are essential to safeguarding national sovereignty and territorial integrity, long-term security also depends on resilient institutions, social cohesion, economic stability and citizens' trust in their democratic institutions.

The Speaker further noted that security and social investment should not be regarded as competing priorities. On the contrary, quality public services, including healthcare, education and social protection, together with

responsible public finances and effective security policies, are mutually reinforcing elements that help build more resilient societies.

In his speech, the Speaker also underlined the importance of diplomacy, dialogue and multilateralism as indispensable instruments for preventing conflict and maintaining international peace and stability. He argued that defence capabilities and national preparedness must go hand in hand with diplomatic efforts and peace initiatives pursued through international institutions and mechanisms.

Referring to Malta's position, he said the country's security is closely linked to international cooperation, respect for international law, effective multilateralism, and the peaceful settlement of disputes. In this context, he highlighted the important role of parliamentary diplomacy in building trust, strengthening dialogue and promoting cooperation between countries and across different political perspectives.

He also cautioned against the implications of emerging technologies, including artificial intelligence, hybrid threats and the growing role of non-state actors in the security landscape. He maintained that responses to these challenges must be effective and forward-looking, while remaining firmly grounded in democratic principles, the rule of law and respect for fundamental rights.

Concluding his address, the Speaker stressed that the challenge is not simply to defend one's country, but to ensure that the way in which one does so strengthens rather than undermines the democratic values and social bonds that give legitimacy to our institutions.

The Speaker's two contributions at the Paris Peace Forum 2026 reaffirmed the need for shared responsibility, international cooperation and leadership rooted in human and democratic values. Whether addressing the protection of children in the digital world or strengthening the security and stability of societies, the central message was that technological progress and security must always serve humanity, while safeguarding the dignity, rights and well-being of all.

In the evening, the Speaker joined distinguished guests at the official dinner hosted by the President of the French Republic, Emmanuel Macron.