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Il-Bitħa ta' Nettunu: Fl-1861 l-istatwa ta' Nettunu nġabet hawnhekk mill-pixkerija fin-nofsinhar ta' Malta. Il-funtana l-kbira li hemm wara din l-istatwa fiha l-arma tal-Gran Mastru Perellos.

Neptune Courtyard: In 1861 the statue of Neptune was moved here from the fish market in the south of Valletta. The large wall fountain behind Neptune bears the coat of arms of Grand Master Perellos.

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Cover:
Event to mark the first Reading of a Bill which will lower the voting age for local council elections to 16.

Ritratti/*Photos: DOI*

Daħla

Wasalna fi tmiem sena oħra. Għall-Parlament din ma kinitx sena bħall-oħrajn. Wara elezzjoni ġenerali dejjem jitfaċċaw uċuħ ġodda fil-Parlament u t-Tnax il-Parlament, li fetaħ uffiċjalment fis-6 ta' April, ma kienx eċċezzjoni. Anzi, dan huwa Parlament iffurmat minn taħlita sabiħa ta' Membri b'esperjenza parlamentari kbira u għadd ta' deputati ġodda mimlijin enerġija u entużjażmu. Fil-fatt, terz tad-deputati kollha, jew 23, kienu eletti għall-ewwel darba fl-aħħar elezzjoni ġenerali. Deputat ieħor ġdid huwa l-Onor. Antoine Borg li kien elett mis seba' distrett elettorali fl-elezzjoni każwali li saret wara r-riżenja ta' Dott. Lawrence Gonzi minn deputat parlamentari.

Dan il-Parlament huwa kkaratterizzat minn żewġ fatti:

- L-età medja tad-deputati preżenti hija ta' 48 sena. L-aktar deputat anzjan, l-Onor. Joe Debono Grech, għandu 74 sena u l-iżgħar deputat huwa l-Onor. Ian Borg, Segretarju Parlamentari għall-Presidenza tal-UE 2017 u l-Fondi Ewropej, li għandu 27 sena.

- Il-Parlament illum għandu għaxar Membri Parlamentari nisa, ħamsa fuq kull naħa tal-Kamra, li huwa l-akbar numru ta' nisa li qatt kien hemm fil-Parlament f'leġiżlatura waħda.

Din is-sena kienet ikkaratterizzata wkoll mill-fatt li l-Parlament kien mitlub japprova żewġ baġits fi żmien ftit xhur. F'April ġew approvati l-Estimi Ġenerali għas-sena 2013, filwaqt li ftit ġimgħat ilu ġew approvati l-Estimi Ġenerali għall-2014, wara li l-Parlament iddedika 15-il seduta, jew madwar 53 siegħa ta' dibattiti f'Kumitat ta' Provvista fuq il-voti li jaqgħu taħt id-diversi Ministeri.

Ix-xhur li għaddew fissru ħidma estensiva wkoll għall-kumitati tal-Kamra. Il-Kumitat Permanenti dwar il-Kontijiet Pubbliċi, minbarra x-xogħol regolari tiegħu, żamm għadd ta' laqgħat biex jiddiskuti r-Rapport tal-Awditur Ġenerali: *An Analysis of the Effectiveness of the Enemalta Corporation's Fuel Procurement*. Barra minn hekk saru tliet laqgħat ta' Kumitat Magħżul imwaqqaf bil-għan li sal-15 ta' Diċembru 2013, jirrakkomanda lill-Kamra dwar it-twaqqif ta' Uffiċċju tal-Kummissarju dwar l-istandards, l-etika u l-imġiba xierqa fil-ħajja pubblika u ta' Kumitat Permanenti tal-Kamra dwar l-istess materja. Fis-16 ta' Diċembru 2013, l-iSpeaker ippreżenta lill-Kamra rapport interim tal-Kumitat Magħżul li jinkludi abbozz ta' liġi li jipprovdi għat-twaqqif ta' uffiċċju ta' kummissarju u ta' kumitat permanenti tal-Kamra dwar l-istandards, l-etika u l-imġiba xierqa fil-ħajja pubblika.

Nagħlaq billi nawgura lill-qarrejja kollha l-festi t-tajba u sena mimlija risq u hena.

Anġlu Farrugia
Speaker

We have come to the end of another year, one which was rather unusual for Parliament. New faces are always seen after general elections, and the Twelfth Parliament which opened officially on 6 April was no exception. On the contrary, this Parliament is composed of both seasoned and new Members full of energy and enthusiasm. In fact, out of all the Members, one third, or 23, were elected for the first time in the last general elections. One other new Member was elected from a casual election on the seventh electoral district to fill the seat that was vacated after the resignation of Dr Lawrence Gonzi from a Member of Parliament.

This Parliament is characterised by two facts:

- The average age of the current MPs is 48 years. The oldest MP, Hon. Joe Debono Grech, is 74 years old and the youngest MP, Hon. Ian Borg, Parliamentary Secretary for the EU 2017 Presidency and European Funds, is 27 years old.

- There are ten female MPs, five on either side of the House, which is the highest number ever of female MPs in any one legislature.

This year was also characterised by the fact that Parliament was required to approve two budgets within a few months of each other. The General Estimates for 2013 were approved in April, whereas those for 2014 were approved a few weeks ago when Parliament dedicated 15 sittings, or about 53 hours of debate in Committee of Supply, to the votes under the various Ministries.

The committees of the House were also very active in the past months. The Standing Committee on Public Accounts, in addition to its regular work, met a number of times to discuss the report of the Auditor General: *An Analysis of the Effectiveness of the Enemalta Corporation's Fuel Procurement*. Furthermore, three meetings of the Select Committee set up with the aim of making recommendations to the House on the setting up of the Office of a Commissioner on standards, ethics and proper behaviour in public life, and a Standing Committee of the House on the same matter. On 16 December, the Speaker presented to the House an interim report including a draft bill providing for the setting up of the office of commission and a standing committee on standards, ethics and proper behaviour in public life.

Finally, I would like to extend to all our readers season's greetings and best wishes for a prosperous new year.

Anġlu Farrugia
Speaker

Attivitajiet tal-iSpeaker

Bejn it-23 u s-26 ta' Settembru delegazzjoni mis-Senat Franċiż żaret Malta bħala mistiedna tal-Grupp Interparlamentari ta' Ħbiberija bejn is-Senat Franċiż u l-Parlament Malti. Matul iż-żjara s-Senaturi Franċiżi Philippe Darniche u Charles Revet, President u membru rispettivament, kellhom laqgħa mal-iSpeaker Anġlu Farrugia.

Matul il-laqgħa l-iSpeaker Farrugia tkellem dwar l-interess speċjali komuni li għandhom kemm Malta u kemm Franza fil-Mediterran, u kif ħidma aktar mill-qrib bejn iż-żewġ pajjiżi, anke fil-fora reġjonali, tista' tkun ta' benefiċċju għall-Ewropa. Huwa żied illi l-koperazzjoni bejn iż-żewġ parlamenti għandha jkollha effett pożittiv fuq ir-relazzjoni bejn iż-żewġ pajjiżi.

Is-Senaturi kellhom laqgħat mal-Membri tal-Grupp Interparlamentari mmexxi mill-Onor. Justyne Caruana, mal-Ministru għall-Enerġija u l-Konservazzjoni tal-Ilma, l-Onor. Konrad Mizzi u mal-Onor. Leo Brincat, Ministru għall-Iżvilupp Sostenibbli, l-Ambjent u t-Tibdil fil-Klima, kif ukoll żaru l-impjant tar-reverse osmosis ġewwa Pembroke.

L-Onor. Joe Debono Grech u l-Onor. Charlò Bonnici ħadu sehem f'missjoni tal-Assemblea Parlamentari tal-Kunsill tal-Ewropa bħala osservaturi tal-elezzjonijiet presidenzjali tal-Azerbajġan li saru fid-9 ta' Ottubru 2013. Iż-żewġ Membri segwew l-andament tal-elezzjonijiet ġewwa l-belt ta' Ismayilli.

L-iSpeaker Anġlu Farrugia, flimkien mal-Onor. Frederick Azzopardi pparteċipaw ukoll fil-monitoraġġ ta' dawn l-elezzjonijiet. Id-delegazzjoni Maltija kienet mistiedna ġewwa l-Azerbajġan mill-President tal-European Academy for Election Observation (EAEO), is-Sur Stef Goris. Fi tmiem il-missjoni, l-iSpeaker Farrugia ppreżenta r-rapport ta' superviżjoni u monitoraġġ lill-President tal-EAEO.

L-iSpeaker iżur Dar l-Ewropa

Bħala kommemorazzjoni tal-erba' snin mid-dħul fis-seħħ tat-Trattat ta' Liżbona fl-1 ta' Diċembru 2009, l-iSpeaker Anġlu Farrugia ġie mistieden iżur Dar l-Ewropa, li fiha huma miġbura r-rappreżentanzi f'Malta tal-Parlament Ewropew u tal-Kummissjoni Ewropea, immexxija minn Dott. Peter Agius u s-Sur Martin Bugelli rispettivament.

Matul din iż-żjara l-iSpeaker Farrugia kellu ċ-ċans jiltaqa' mal-impjegati li jaħdmu f'Dar l-Ewropa. Huwa tkellem dwar is-setgħat il-ġodda li kisbu l-parlamenti nazzjonali li jinfluwenzaw b'mod effettiv id-deċiżjonijiet li jittieħdu fuq livell Ewropew, u li jkunu se jaffettwaw liċ-ċittadini Ewropej fid-diversi Stati Membri. Huwa spjega kif il-Parlament Malti qiegħed jagħmel użu minn dawn is-setgħat ġodda, fejn fost oħrajn f'dawn l-aħħar xhur adotta ħames opinjonijiet motivati li fihom ikkomunika lill-Presidenti tal-Parlament Ewropew, tal-Kunsill tal-Unjoni Ewropea u tal-Kummissjoni Ewropea r-raġunijiet li għalihom jidhirlu li l-Kummissjoni qiegħda tmur lil hinn mill-poteri tagħha skont it-Trattati f'proposti ta' leġiżlazzjoni. L-iSpeaker innota li dan huwa mezz ta' kif iċ-ċittadini Ewropej, permezz tar-rappreżentanti eletti tagħhom, iwasslu l-ħsibijiet tagħhom dwar it-treġija għaqlija fl-Unjoni Ewropea.

Attivitajiet tal-iSpeaker (Kont.)

Bejn l-24 u l-25 ta' Ottubru l-Parlament Malta laqa' delegazzjoni mill-Konferenza Konsultattiva Politika tal-Poplu Ċiniż (CPPCC), immexxija mill-Viċi President tagħha, is-Sur Du Qinglin. Fil-laqgħa bejn id-delegazzjoni Ċiniża u membri miż-żewġ naħat tal-Kamra, li saret ftit xhur biss qabel it-42 sena anniversarju mit-twaqqif ta' relazzjonijiet diplomatiċi bejn Malta u ċ-Ċina, l-iSpeaker Anġlu Farrugia tkellem dwar il-ħtieġa li l-parlamenti madwar id-dinja jersqu aktar qrib xulxin. F'dan il-kuntest issuġġerixxa illi jitwaqqaf Grupp Interparlamentari ta' Ħbiberija bejn il-parlamenti taż-żewġ pajjiżi, li ladarba jkun stabbilit ikun jista' jaġixxi bħala forum fejn jiġu diskussi dawk l-oqsma li jistgħu jgawdu minn sinerġiji meta l-parlamenti jaħdmu flimkien. L-iSpeaker sostna illi 'Id-diplomazija parlamentari hi bħal dik il-biċċa għodda mħarrġa f'idejn l-imgħallem li biha jaħdem xogħol tajjeb u skont is-sengħa'. Huwa żied illi f'Malta jeżisti qbil bejn il-partiti politiċi ewlenin dwar relazzjonijiet mill-qrib maċ-Ċina u li ż-żewġ naħat jistgħu jgħinu sabiex ikun faċilitat l-aċċess fir-reġjuni rispettivi.

Nhar l-10 ta' Novembru il-Perit Renzo Piano għamel żjara ta' korteżija lill-iSpeaker Anġlu Farrugia. Matul il-laqgħa ġie diskuss il-progress fil-bini l-ġdid tal-Parlament, fejn ġie nnotat illi dan għandu jitlesta sa Ġunju 2014 biex b'hekk il-Parlament jibda jiltaqa' fih minnufih wara l-waqfa tas-sajf.

Għal din il-laqgħa kien hemm preżenti wkoll id-Deputy Speaker Ċensu Galea, il-Viċi Prim Ministru l-Onor. Louis Grech, il-Whip tal-Gvern l-Onor. Carmelo Abela, il-Whip tal-Oppożizzjoni l-Onor. David Agius, il-Viċi Kap tal-Oppożizzjoni l-Onor. Mario de Marco, l-Onor. Deborah Schembri u l-Iskrivan tal-Kamra, is-Sur Raymond Scicluna. Flimkien mal-Perit Piano kien hemm ukoll il-Perit Antonio Belvedere u ċ-Chairman u l-Kap Eżekuttiv tal-Grand Harbour Regeneration Corporation plc, Dr Stefan Zrinzo Azzopardi u s-Sur Chris Paris rispettivament.

L-iSpeaker imexxi delegazzjoni tal-Parlament Malti fi żjara ta' informazzjoni fl-Istituzzjonijiet Ewropej fi Brussell.

Bejn is-27 u t-28 ta' Settembru l-iSpeaker mexxa delegazzjoni tal-Parlament Malti, magħmula mill-Onor. Carmelo Abela, l-Onor. David Agius, l-Onor. Anthony Bezzina, l-Onor. Charles Buhagiar, l-Onor. Claudette Buttigieg, l-Onor. Robert Cutajar, l-Onor. Kristy Debono, l-Onor. Marlene Farrugia, l-Onor. Etienne Grech, l-Onor. Paula Mifsud Bonnici, l-Onor. Joseph Sammut, l-Onor. Silvio Schembri, is-Sur Raymond Scicluna, l-Iskrivan tal-Kamra, flimkien ma' sitt uffiċjali li jaħdmu f'sezzjonijiet differenti fil-Parlament ta' Malta fi żjara ta' informazzjoni fl-Istituzzjonijiet Ewropej fi Brussell organizzata mir-rappreżentanza tal-Kummissjoni Ewropea ġewwa Malta.

Matul iż-żjara d-delegazzjoni kellha żjarat ta' orjentazzjoni fit-tliet istituzzjonijiet Ewropej prinċipali: il-Kummissjoni Ewropea, il-Parlament Ewropew u l-Kunsill tal-Unjoni Ewropea. Il-parteċipanti kellhom diversi laqgħat ma' uffiċjali għolja ta' dawn l-istituzzjonijiet fejn ingħataw informazzjoni dwar il-ħidma ta' dawn l-istituzzjonijiet. Fil-bini tal-Kummissjoni Ewropea, il-Berlaymont, id-delegazzjoni kellha wkoll laqgħa mal-Kummissarju Malti Tonio Borg. Id-delegazzjoni żaret ukoll ir-Rappreżentanza Maltija ġewwa Brussell għal-laqgħa mar-Rappreżentant Permanenti, l-ET s-Sja Marlene Bonnici.

Activities of The Speaker

Between 23 and 26 September a delegation of the French Senate visited Malta as a guest of the Interparliamentary Friendship Group between the French Senate and the Maltese Parliament. During the visit the French Senators Philippe Darniche and Charles Revet, Chairman and member respectively, had a meeting with Speaker Anġlu Farrugia.

During the meeting Speaker Farrugia referred to the special common interest that both Malta and France have in the Mediterranean, and how Europe can benefit from closer cooperation between the two countries, including in the regional fora. He added that cooperation between the two parliaments should have a positive effect on the relation between the two countries.

The delegation also had a meeting with the Maltese Members of the Friendship Group led by Hon. Justyne Caruana, with the Minister for Energy and the Conservation of Water, Hon. Konrad Mizzi and with Hon. Leo Brincat, Minister for Sustainable Development, the Environment and Climate Change, and also visited the reverse osmosis plant in Pembroke.

To mark the four years from the entry into force of the Treaty of Lisbon on 1 December 2009, Speaker Anġlu Farrugia was invited to visit Dar l-Ewropa, which houses the representations in Malta of the European Parliament and of the European Commission, led by Dr Peter Agius and Mr Martin Bugelli respectively.

During this visit Speaker Farrugia had the opportunity to meet with the employees working in Dar l-Ewropa. He spoke of the new powers that national parliaments acquired including that to effectively influence decisions that are taken at European level, and will be affecting the European citizens in the various Member States. He explained how the Maltese Parliament was making use of these new powers, where in the past few months, amongst others, adopted five reasoned opinions wherein it communicated to the Presidents of the European Parliament, the Council of the European Union and the European Commission the reasons why it believes that the Commission in certain legislative proposals is acting beyond the powers allowed by the Treaties. The Speaker remarked that this is one of the ways in which the European citizens, through their elected representatives, can voice their opinions on good governance in the European Union.

The Speaker meets Dr Peter Agius, Head of the European Parliament Representation in Malta and Mr Martin Bugelli, Head of the European Commission Representation in Malta

Hon. Joe Debono Grech and Hon. Charlò Bonnici took part in a mission of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe as observers of the presidential elections in Azerbaijan which were held on 9 October 2013. Both Members followed the conduct of the elections in the city of Ismayilli.

Speaker Anġlu Farrugia, accompanied by Hon. Frederick Azzopardi participated also in the monitoring of these elections. The Maltese delegation was invited to Azerbaijan by the President of the European Academy for Election Observation (EAEO), Mr Stef Goris. At the end of the mission Speaker Farrugia presented a supervision and monitoring report to the President of the EAEO.

Activities of The Speaker (Cont.)

Between 24 and 25 October the Maltese Parliament welcomed a delegation of the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference (CPPCC), led by its Vice President, Mr Du Qinglin. In the meeting between the Chinese delegation and Members from both sides of the House, which took place only a few months away from the 42nd anniversary from the establishment of diplomatic relations between Malta and China, Speaker Anġlu Farrugia spoke about the need for parliaments around the world to move closer together. In this context he suggested that an Interparliamentary Friendship Group between the parliaments of the two countries be established, which once in place can act as a forum where areas which can benefit from synergies from cooperation between the parliaments can be discussed. The Speaker remarked that 'Parliamentary diplomacy may be considered as that expertly-handled tool used by the craftsman to produce his professional handiwork.' He added that in Malta there is consensus between the main political parties on closer relations with China and that both sides can help to facilitate access to the respective regions.

On 10 November Architect Renzo Piano made a courtesy visit to Speaker Anġlu Farrugia. During the meeting, in which the progress of the new Parliament building was discussed, it was noted that the building should be ready by June 2014 so that the Parliament can start meeting there immediately after the summer recess.

Deputy Speaker Hon. Ċensu Galea, the Deputy Prime Minister Hon. Louis Grech, the Government Whip Hon. Carmelo Abela, the Opposition Whip Hon. David Agius, the Deputy Leader of the Opposition Hon. Mario de Marco, Hon. Deborah Schembri and the Clerk of the House Mr Raymond Scicluna, were also present for this meeting. Architect Piano was accompanied by Architect Antonio Belvedere and the Chairman and the Chief Executive Officer of the Grand Harbour Regeneration Corporation plc, Dr Stefan Zrinzo Azzopardi and Mr Chris Paris respectively.

The Speaker addressing a press conference during a visit by a delegation of the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference

Between 27 and 28 September the Speaker led a delegation of the Maltese Parliament, comprising Hon. Carmelo Abela, Hon. David Agius, Hon. Anthony Bezzina, Hon. Charles Buhagiar, Hon. Claudette Buttigieg, Hon. Robert Cutajar, Hon. Kristy Debono, Hon. Marlene Farrugia, Hon. Etienne Grech, Hon. Paula Mifsud Bonnici, Hon. Joseph Sammut, Hon. Silvio Schembri, Mr Raymond Scicluna, Clerk of the House, together with six officials from the different sections of the Maltese Parliament, on an information visit to the European Institutions in Brussels organised by the Representation of the European Commission in Malta.

During the visit the delegation had orientation visits to the three principal European institutions: the European Commission, the European Parliament and the Council of the European Union. The participants had various meetings with senior officials from these institutions where the work of the respective institutions was explained. In the building of the European Commission, the Berlaymont, the delegation also had a meeting with the Maltese Commissioner Tonio Borg. The delegation also visited the Maltese Representation in Brussels for a meeting with the Permanent Representative, HE Ms Marlene Bonnici.

Laqgħat Interparlamentari barra minn Malta

Is-Sur Lino Debono u Dr Vincent Moran ħadu sehem fis-Seminar u Laqgħa tal-Bureau tal-Assoċjazzjoni tal-Membri Parlamentari Anzjani (Seminar and Meeting of the Bureau of the Association of former Members of Parliament), li nżammet ġewwa The Hague, l-Olanda, bejn it-3 u l-5 ta' Ottubru 2013.

Matul il-laqgħa, il-Bureau kellu l-opportunità ta' interazzjoni mas-Sur Jozias van Aartsen, is-Sindku ta' The Hague, u ma' Dr Abiodun Williams, il-Kap Rappreżentant tan-Nazzjonijiet Uniti f'The Hague.

Il-Bureau ddiskuta diversi punti amministrattivi, inklużi l-presidenza li jmiss, is-suġġett tal-kollokju li jmiss u l-amalgamazzjoni ta' aktar assoċjazzjonijiet Ewropej mal-Assoċjazzjoni tal-Membri Parlamentari Anzjani. Is-Sur Fourre, ir-relatur għall-kollokju li jmiss, ippreżenta l-ewwel abbozz ta' rapport tiegħu dwar is-suġġett L-Isfidi tad-Demokrazija fl-Era tal-Globalizzazzjoni *(The Challenges of Democracy in the Age of Globalisation).* Intlaħaq qbil li fil-laqgħa li jmiss jiġi ppreżentat għad-diskussjoni abbozz emendat li jkun ibbażat fuq id-dibattitu li sar f'The Hague.

L-Onor. Carmelo Abela, il-Whip tal-Gvern, u l-Onor. Michael Gonzi pparteċipaw fil-129 Assemblea tal-Unjoni Interparlamentari, li saret f'Ġinevra bejn is-7 u d-9 ta' Ottubru 2013.

L-Onor. Gonzi kien il-moderatur f'diskussjoni tal-panel dwar Il-Kontroll tal-Partiti Politiċi fuq il-Membri Parlamentari: Nilħqu l-Bilanċ Ġust (Political Party Control over Parliamentarians: Striking the Right Balance). L-Onor. Abela għamel l-intervent tiegħu matul din id-diskussjoni, fejn saħaq fuq il-libertà li għandu jkollhom il-Membri Parlamentari meta jitkellmu dwar il-partit politiku tagħhom stess, u, jekk ikun hemm bżonn, saħansitra jivvotaw kontra l-pożizzjoni tal-partit tagħhom kull meta jaraw li dan ikun qiegħed jaġixxi b'mod differenti minn kif kien stabbilit fil-manifest politiku tiegħu. L-Onor. Abela rrefera wkoll għall-fatt li l-Membri Parlamentari kellhom it-tendenza li jikkonsultaw lill-grupp parlamentari tagħhom aktar milli lill-kostitwenti tagħhom qabel it-teħid ta' voti importanti fil-Parlament. Huwa kkonkluda billi qal li ċ-ċavetta għas-suċċess hija li jintlaħaq il-bilanċ ġust bejn l-interessi kollha: il-Membru tal-Parlament, il-partit u l-kostitwenti.

L-Onor. Abela intervjena wkoll fid-diskussjoni tal-panel dwar Ir-Rwol tal-Parlamenti fil-ħarsien tad-Drittijiet tat-Tfal, b'mod partikolari Tfal Immigranti mhux Akkumpanjati (*The Role of Parliaments in protecting the Rights of the Children, in particular Unaccompanied Migrant Children*). L-Onor. Abela tkellem dwar il-fatt li t-tfal għandhom jiġu protetti l-ħin kollu, iżda speċjalment matul żminijiet ta' konflitt u kriżi. Huwa semma li dan kien importanti ħafna għal Malta fid-dawl tal-problemi li tiffaċċja minħabba l-immigrazzjoni, fejn ta d-dettalji tal-isfidi li dawn ikkawżaw għal Malta. Huwa kkonkluda billi ħeġġeġ lil kulħadd jerfa' r-responsabbiltajiet tiegħu sabiex b'hekk ikunu jistgħu jiġu garantiti d-drittijiet ta' kull tifel u tifla.

LIETUVOS RESPUBLIKOS SEIMAS

Logo tal-Presidenza Litwana tal-Kunsill tal-Unjoni Ewropea 2013 - Dimensjoni Parlamentari

Interparliamentary Meetings Abroad

Mr Lino Debono and Dr Vincent Moran took part in the Seminar and Meeting of the Bureau of the Association of former Members of Parliament, held in The Hague, the Netherlands between 3 and 5 October 2013.

During the meeting, the Bureau was able to inter-relate with Mr Jozias van Aartsen, Mayor of The Hague, and with Dr Abiodun Williams, Head Representative of the United Nations in The Hague.

The Bureau discussed various administrative items including the next presidency, the topic of the next colloquy and the amalgamation of more European associations with the Association of Former Members of Parliament. Mr Fourre, the rapporteur for the next colloquy, presented his first draft report on the subject The Challenges of Democracy in the Age of Globalisation. It was agreed that an amended draft, based on the debate in The Hague, will be presented for discussion at the next meeting.

Hon. Carmelo Abela, Government Whip, and Hon. Michael Gonzi participated in the 129th Assembly of the Interparliamentary Union which was held in Geneva between 7 and 9 October 2013.

Hon. Gonzi was the moderator in the panel discussion on Political Party Control over Parliamentarians: Striking the Right Balance. Hon. Abela made an intervention during this panel discussion where he spoke about the liberty Members of Parliament should have when talking about their own political party, perhaps even having to vote against their own party if they felt that it was acting differently to what was set out in its political manifesto. Hon. Abela also referred to the fact that Members of Parliament tended to consult their own parliamentary grouping more than they did their constituents before important votes were taken in Parliament. He concluded by saying that the key is to strike the right balance between all interests: the Member of Parliament, the party and the constituents.

Hon. Abela also intervened in the panel discussion on The Role of Parliaments in protecting the Rights of the Children, in particular Unaccompanied Migrant Children. Hon. Abela spoke of the fact that children needed to be protected at all times, but especially during times of conflict and crisis. He mentioned that this was very important for Malta given the problems of immigration it faced, giving details of the challenges these posed for Malta. He concluded by urging everyone to shoulder their responsibilities so that the rights of every child could be guaranteed.

Laqgħat Interparlamentari barra minn Malta (Kont.)

L-Onor. Anthony Agius Decelis u l-Onor. Joe Cassar ħadu sehem fil-Laqgħa taċ-Chairpersons tal-Kumitati dwar l-Edukazzjoni, x-Xjenza u l-Kultura, u tal-Kumitati dwar l-Iżvilupp tas-Soċjetà tal-Informatika, li ġiet organizzata mill-Presidenza Litwana tal-Kunsill tal-Unjoni Ewropea fis-26 u s-27 ta' Settembru 2013 ġewwa Vilnius. It-tema kienet Magħqudin fid-Diversità: Aspetti relatati mal-Iżvilupp Politiku u Soċjali tal-Lingwi u l-Kulturi tal-UE (United in Diversity: Political and Social Development Aspects of EU Languages and Cultures).

Il-Laqgħa ffokat fuq żewġ suġġetti: It-traduzzjoni awtomatika tal-lingwi Ewropej: il-problemi, l-isfidi, il-prospetti u Id-diġitalizzazzjoni ta' lingwa bħala parti mill-wirt kulturali.

Is-Sur Mindaugas Bastys, Chairperson tal-Kumitat tas-Seimas dwar l-Iżvilupp tas-Soċjetà tal-Informatika, ikkonkluda l-laqgħa billi esprima t-tamiet tiegħu li l-laqgħa u l-adozzjoni tal-Konklużjonijiet iservu bħala wieħed mill-passi meħtieġa fl-implimentazzjoni b'mod sħiħ u konsistenti tal-politika dwar il-multilingwiżmu. Huwa qal ukoll li qiegħed jittama li l-Membri Parlamentari issa jippreżentaw dawn il-Konklużjonijiet lill-gvernijiet nazzjonali rispettivi tagħhom u li jieħdu l-miżuri meħtieġa ta' skrutinju parlamentari sabiex b'hekk, fuq il-livell tal-politika nazzjonali, il-gvernijiet jagħmlu enfasi partikolari fuq l-iżgurar tad-diversità lingwistika, it-traduzzjoni awtomatika u d-diġitalizzazzjoni ta' lingwa bħala parti mill-wirt kulturali ta' pajjiżhom.

Article 13

As foreseen in Title II of Protocol (No 1) on the role of national Parliaments in the European Union annexed to the European Union Treaties, the European Parliament and the national Parliaments of the Contracting Parties will together determine the organisation and promotion of a conference of representatives of the relevant committees of the national Parliaments and representatives of the relevant committees of the European Parliament in order to discuss budgetary policies and other issues covered by this Treaty.

L-Onor. Anthony Agius Decelis u l-Onor. Ċensu Galea ħadu sehem fil-Laqgħa taċ-Chairpersons tal-Kumitati dwar l-Affarijiet Rurali fuq ir-Riforma tal-Politika Agrikola Komuni (PAK), li ġiet organizzata mill-Presidenza Litwana tal-Kunsill bejn il-21 u t-22 ta' Lulju 2013 ġewwa Vilnjus. Il-laqgħa ffokat fuq żewġ suġġetti: Il-Politika Agrikola Komuni wara l-2013 u Il-Biedja fuq Skala Żgħira: Is-Sitwazzjoni Attwali u l-Prospetti għall-Ġejjieni.

Bħala konklużjoni tad-dibattiti, iċ-Chairperson tal-laqgħa, Saulius Bucevičius, il-President tal-Kumitat dwar l-Affarijiet Rurali tas-Seimas tar-Repubblika tal-Litwanja, qal li finalment, wara kważi sentejn ta' negozjati, kien intlaħaq ftehim dwar ir-riforma tal-PAK li tidħol fis-seħħ wara l-2013. Ir-riforma l-ġdida ħadet f'kunsiderazzjoni d-differenzi eżistenti bejn diversi reġjuni agrikoli fl-Unjoni Ewropea, il-ħtieġa li r-riforma tal-PAK issir b'mod gradwali, u l-fatt li s-settur agrikolu fl-Unjoni Ewropea huwa marbut mill-qrib mal-ekonomija b'mod ġenerali.

Huwa żied li l-ġejjieni tal-PAK jiddependi ħafna fuq l-Istati Membri individwali, minħabba li hija r-responsabbiltà tagħhom li jiżguraw l-implimentazzjoni effettiva tar-riforma tal-politika agrikola. Għaldaqstant, il-Parlamenti Nazzjonali ser ikollhom rwol sinjifikanti fl-implimentazzjoni tar-riforma.

Bejn is-16 u s-17 ta' Ottubru 2013 il-President tal-Kumitat Permanenti dwar l-Affarijiet Ekonomiċi u Ewropej, l-Onor. Silvio Schembri, u l-Onor. Tonio Fenech, President tal-Kumitat Permanenti dwar il-Kontijiet Pubbliċi, attendew għal-laqgħa inawgurali tal-konferenza interparlamentari dwar l-iggvernar ekonomiku u finanzjarju fl-Unjoni Ewropea li nżammet ġewwa Vilnjus, il-Litwanja.

Din il-Konferenza ġiet imwaqqfa skont il-provvedimenti ta' Artiklu 13 tat-Trattat dwar l-Istabilità,Koordinazzjoni u Gvernar fl-Unjoni Monetarja Ewropea, magħruf ukoll bħala l-Patt Fiskali li daħal fis-seħħ fl-ewwel ta' Jannar ta' din is-sena. L-għan ta' dan il-Patt huwa li l-pajjiżi membri taż-żona ewro jilħqu baġit bilanċjat, li hija rekwiżit sabiex il-finanzi ta' pajjiż ikunu sostenibbli fit-tul u b'hekk jiġu evitati kriżijiet oħra bħal dawk li għadha tiġġieled magħhom l-Unjoni Ewropea. Artiklu 13 jipprovdi għat-twaqqif ta' konferenza interparlamentari sabiex il-parlamenti jiddiskutu bejniethom il-politiki baġitarji u materji oħra koperti mill-istess Trattat. It-tnedija ta' din il-Konferenza ġiet maqbula mill-iSpeakers tal-Parlamenti Ewropej fil-laqgħa annwali tagħhom li din is-sena nżammet ġewwa Ċipru f'April 2013, u li fiha kien ħa sehem l-iSpeaker tal-Parlament Malti l-Onor. Anġlu Farrugia.

Interparliamentary Meetings Abroad (Cont.)

Hon. Anthony Agius Decelis and Hon. Censu Galea at the Meeting of the Chairpersons of the Committees on Rural Affairs on the Reform of the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) in Vilnius

Hon. Anthony Agius Decelis and Hon. Joe Cassar took part in the Meeting of the Chairpersons of the Committees on Education, Science and Culture and the Committees on the Development of Information Society, organised by the Lithuanian Presidency of the Council of the European Union on 26 and 27 September 2013 in Vilnius. The theme was United in Diversity: Political and Social Development Aspects of EU Languages and Cultures. The Meeting focused on two topics: Machine translation of European languages: problems, challenges, prospects and Digitalisation of a language as a part of cultural heritage.

Mr Mindaugas Bastys, Chair of the Seimas Committee on the Development of Information Society, concluded the meeting by expressing his hopes that the Meeting and the adoption of the Conclusions would serve as one of the necessary steps in fully and consistently implementing the policy on multilingualism, saying that hopefully the Members of Parliament will present these Conclusions to the respective national governments and take necessary measures of parliamentary scrutiny so that, on the level of national policies, governments place a particular focus on ensuring linguistic diversity, machine translation and digitalisation of a language as part of their countries' cultural heritage.

Hon. Anthony Agius Decelis and Hon. Ċensu Galea took part in the Meeting of the Chairpersons of the Committees on Rural Affairs on the Reform of the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) organised by the Lithuanian Presidency of the Council on 21 22 July 2013 in Vilnius. The meeting focused on two topics: The Common Agricultural Policy after 2013 and Small Farming: Current Situation and Future Prospects.

In conclusion to the debates the Chair of the meeting, Saulius Bucevičius, President of the Committee on Rural Affairs of the Seimas of the Republic of Lithuania, said that agreement on the reform of the CAP after 2013 has been finally reached after nearly two years of negotiations. The new reform has taken into account the existing differences between various agricultural regions in the EU, the need to reform the CAP in a gradual way, and the fact that the agricultural sector in the EU is closely linked to the economy as a whole.

He added that the future of the CAP largely depends on the individual Member States, since it is their responsibility to ensure effective implementation of the reform of the agricultural policy. National Parliaments will therefore play a significant role in implementing the reform.

Between 16 and 17 October 2013 the Chairman of the Economic and Financial Affairs Committee, Hon. Silvio Schembri, and Hon. Tonio Fenech, Chairman of the Public Accounts Committee, attended the inaugural meeting of the interparliamentary conference on economic and financial governance in the European Union which was held in Vilnius, Lithuania.

This Conference was established in terms of the provisions of Article 13 of the Treaty on Stability, Coordination and Governance in the Economic and Monetary Union, also known as the Fiscal Compact, which came into force on 1 January this year. The Fiscal Compact requires members of the Euro area to reach a balanced budget, which is required for long-term financial stability thereby avoiding the recurrence of crises similar to that with which the European Union is still dealing. Article 13 provides for the establishment of an interparliamentary conference where parliaments can discuss budgetary policies and related matters covered by the same Treaty. The Speakers of European parliaments had agreed to the launching of this Conference during their annual meeting, which this year was held in April in Cyprus. Speaker Anġlu Farrugia represented the Maltese Parliament at this meeting.

Laqgħat Interparlamentari barra minn Malta (Kont.)

L-iSpeaker Anġlu Farrugia, fuq stedina uffiċjali mill-President tal-Parlament Rumen Valeriu Stefan Zgonea, mexxa delegazzjoni tal-Parlament Malti ġewwa Bucharest, fir-Rumanija, bejn il-15 u t-18 ta' Settembru 2013, magħmula mill-Whip tal Gvern, l-Onor. Carmelo Abela, u mill-Whip tal-Oppożizzjoni, l-Onor. David Agius.

Matul din iż-żjara, id-delegazzjoni Maltija kellha diversi laqgħat fosthom mal-istess President tal-Parlament Rumen fejn, fost oħrajn, iddiskutew il-Grupp Konġunt bejn iż-żewġ parlamenti, ħidma flimkien li tinkludi skambji interparlamentari sabiex iwittu t-triq għal proġetti bi sħab f'bosta oqsma. L-iSpeaker iltaqa' wkoll mal-Viċi President tas-Senat Rumen, Liviu Voineam, fejn iż-żewġ naħat tkellmu dwar il-mixja kostituzzjonali fiż-żewġ pajjiżi.

Mal-Ministru responsabbli mill-baġit, id-delegazzjoni Maltija tkellmet dwar is-setturi ekonomiċi li fihom jista' jkun hemm kooperazzjoni bejn iż-żewġ naħat, u l-iSpeaker Farrugia ssuġġerixxa li, kif kien sar mas-Slovakkja, Malta tgħin meta r-Rumanija tiġi biex tadotta l-ewro. Id-delegazzjoni Maltija ltaqgħet ukoll mal-Viċi Prim Ministru, Gabriel Oprea. Fil-laqgħa, in-naħa Maltija wriet l-apprezzament tagħha għall-fatt li l-Gvern Rumen offra li jieħu 10 refuġjati minn Malta f'ġest ta' solidarjetà ma' Malta fil-problema li qed taffaċċja ta' immigrazzjoni irregolari. L-iSpeaker Farrugia tenna li dan il-ġest, meta jiġi attwat jibgħat messaġġ ċar lill-Istati Membri l-oħra ta' kif għandha tkun is-solidarjetà bejn il-pajjiżi.

Żjara ta' Kortesija minn Delegazzjoni Parlamentari Maltija mmexxija minn l-iSpeaker lil Presdient tal-Parlament Rumen - 18.9.13

Bejn il-31 ta' Lulju u t-3 ta' Awwissu 2013, l-iSpeaker Anġlu Farrugia mexxa delegazzjoni parlamentari magħmula mill-Onor. Chris Agius u mill-Onor. Claudette Buttigieg lejn Varsavja, il-Polonja.

L-ewwel laqgħa tad-delegazzjoni kienet mal-Ministru tal-Affarijiet Barranin Pollakk responsabbli mill-Affarijiet Parlamentari u d-Drittijiet Umani, Henryka Moscicka Dendys. Fost it-temi diskussi kien hemm il-kooperazzjoni bejn iż-żewġ pajjiżi f'dak li hu tagħlim tal-Ingliż f'Malta minn studenti ġejjin minn pajjiżi tal-Lvant, u li jistgħu jkollhom il-vjaġġ tagħhom lejn u d-dħul tagħhom f'Malta ffaċilitat permezz ta' arranġamenti speċjali garantiti mill-Gvern Pollakk.

Id-delegazzjoni kellha wkoll laqgħa mad-Deputat Speaker (Vice Marshall) tas-Sejm Pollakk Eugeniusz Grzeszczak fejn fiha l-iSpeaker semma l-kontribut li gruppi interparlamentari jistgħu jagħtu għat-tħaddim tad-diplomazija interparlamentari. L-Ispeaker Farrugia pparteċipa wkoll, waqt li kien Varsavja, fl-Għaxar Konferenza tal-International Parliamentarians' Coalition for North Korean Refugees and Human Rights, li nżammet ġewwa l-Parlament Pollakk. L-istqarrija konġunta finali ġiet adottata wara li emenda mressqa mill-istess Speaker, li kienet tħeġġeġ lill-Ġnus Magħquda sabiex, flimkien ma' organizzazzjonijiet internazzjonali oħra, iżżid b'kull mezz il-ħidma internazzjonali favur id-drittijiet tal-bniedem tar-refuġjati tal-Korea ta' Fuq, ġiet aċċettata u inkluża.

Id-delegazzjoni Maltija, li tul iż-żjara kienet akkumpanjata mis-Sur Gaetan Naudi, li kien l-ewwel ambaxxatur Malti residenti fil-Polonja, żaret ukoll l-Ambaxxata Maltija ġewwa Varsavja.

Interparliamentary Meetings Abroad (Cont.)

Following an official invitation extended to him by the President of the Romanian Parliament Valeriu Stefan Zgonea, Speaker Anġlu Farrugia led a Maltese Parliament delegation comprising the Government Whip, the Hon. Carmelo Abela, and the Opposition Whip, the Hon. David Agius, to Bucharest, Romania, between the 15 and 18 September 2013.

During the meeting held with the President of the Romanian Parliament, the Maltese delegation discussed, among other matters, the setting up of a Joint Friendship Group between the two parliaments in a move to facilitate interparliamentary exchanges to pave the way for joint projects in a number of areas. The Speaker also met with the Vice President of the Romanian Senate, Liviu Voinea, where constitutional developments in both countries were discussed. With the Minister responsible for the Budget, the Maltese delegation spoke about the economic sectors in which the two countries could cooperate, and Speaker Farrugia suggested that, as had been done with Slovakia, Malta could in due course help Romania in the country's eventual adoption of the Euro. The Maltese delegation also met with Deputy Prime Minister, Gabriel Oprea. During this meeting, the Maltese party expressed its appreciation at the Romanian Government for offering to take 10 refugees from Malta in a gesture of solidarity with Malta in the illegal immigration problem it is facing. Speaker Farrugia reiterated that, once this promise is implemented, a clear message to other Member States would be sent out showing them how solidarity should work in practice.

The Speaker addressing the Tenth Conference of the International Parliamentarians' Coalition for North Korean Refugees and Human Rights

Between the 31 July and the 3 August 2013, Speaker Anġlu Farrugia led a parliamentary delegation, made up of the Hon. Chris Agius and the Hon. Claudette Buttigieg, to Warsaw, Poland.

The delegation's first meeting was with the Polish Under Secretary of State in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs responsible for Parliamentary Affairs and Human Rights, Henryka Mościcka Dendys. Amongst the topics discussed was possible cooperation between the two countries to facilitate travel for Eastern European students going to study English in Malta through special arrangements guaranteed by the Polish authorities.

The delegation also had a meeting with the Deputy Speaker (Vice Marshall) of the Polish Sejm Eugeniusz Grzeszczak, during which the Speaker highlighted the positive contribution that the setting up of a Joint Parliamentary Friendship Group between the two parliaments could make towards an effective policy of interparliamentary diplomacy.

Whilst in Warsaw, Speaker Farrugia also participated in the Tenth Conference of the International Parliamentarians' Coalition for North Korean Refugees and Human Rights, held within the premises of the Polish Parliament. The Final Joint Statement was adopted following the acceptance and inclusion of an amendment put forward by the Maltese Speaker, who urged the United Nations and other international organizations to increase by any possible means the international effort in favour of the human rights of refugees from North Korea.

The Maltese delegation, which throughout the visit was accompanied by Mr. Gaetan Naudi, who had been the first Maltese resident Ambassador in Poland, also visited the Maltese Embassy in Warsaw.

Laqgħat Interparlamentari barra Minn Malta (Kont.)

L-Onor. Chris Fearne, President tal-Kumitat Permanenti dwar l-Affarijiet Barranin u Ewropej, u l-Onor. Francis Zammit Dimech, Membru tal-istess Kumitat, ipparteċipaw fil-50 Laqgħa ta' COSAC li nżammet ġewwa Vilnjus, fil-Litwanja, bejn is-27 u d-29 ta' Ottubru 2013.

L-Onor. Fearne intervjena dwar is-suġġett tal-implimentazzjoni tal-prijoritajiet tal-Presidenza Litwana fejn tkellem dwar il-kriżi tal-immigrazzjoni fil-Mediterran u t-telf ta' ħajjiet umani li qed iseħħu b'mod regolari, u għamel referenza għat-Task Force dwar il-Mediterran li kien għadu kif intlaħaq qbil dwarha fil-Kunsill Ewropew. Hu ppropona erba' miżuri li għandhom jittieħdu sabiex tiġi indirizzata b'mod serju l-problema tal-immigrazzjoni: (a) it-tisħiħ ta' FRONTEX b'mod illi jitnaqqas il-piż ta' dawk l-Istati Membri involuti f'missjonijiet ta' salvataġġ; (b) illi jiġi emendat ir-Regolament Dublin II sabiex fl-ispirtu tal-prinċipju tas-solidarjetà jkun hemm *burden sharing* mandatorju; (ċ) għandu jkun hemm assistenza materjali u finanzjarja u tanġibbli lil dawk l-Istati Membri li jġorru l-piż tal-immigrazzjoni, u (d) li jkun hemm impenn fit-tul mal-pajjiżi ta' tranżitu fl-Afrika ta' Fuq u mal-pajjiżi tas-Subsahara u tal-Lvant Nofsani. Huwa kkonkluda billi qal illi f'għajnejn Malta, l-Ewropa u l-bqija tad-dinja l-Presidenza Litwana titqies li kienet ta' suċċess jekk jintlaħaq qbil dwar dawn il-miżuri.

Huwa tkellem ukoll dwar is-suġġett tal-Ġublew ta' COSAC fejn semma' l-isfidi li qed taffaċċja l-Ewropa minħabba l-perċezzjoni taċ-ċittadini li l-problemi li jkunu għaddejjin minnhom l-Istati Membri, bħal pereżempju rati ta' qgħad għoljin u miżuri ta' awsterità, huma ħtija ta' politiki Ewropej. L-Onor. Fearne qal illi biex tkun indirizzata din is-sitwazzjoni għandu jkun hemm tisħiħ tal-kontabbiltà demokratika tal-istituzzjonijiet Ewropej. Huwa għalaq billi qal illi l-politiċi għandhom l-isfida li juru liċ-ċittadini kif xogħol l-istess politiċi huwa relevanti u jista' jinfluwenza d-deċiżjonijiet li jittieħdu fuq livell Ewropew.

L-Onor. Zammit Dimech tkellem dwar is-suġġett tal-aġenda diġitali, u saħaq dwar ir-relevanza tal-oqsma diġitali għas-swieq bankarji u finanzjarji, bħala eżempju ta' kif dawn it-teknoloġiji huma realtajiet ta' kuljum taċ-ċittadini, u għaldaqstant l-Ewropa għandha tkun protagonista attiva f'dan il-qasam. Huwa qal illi laqa' b'mod pożittiv il-kumment tas-Sur Rudolf Roy uffiċjal tas-Servizz Ewropew għall-Azzjoni Estera, meta fid-diskors tiegħu qal illi dan mhuwiex qasam illi jista' jkun ikkontrollat minn entità waħda u għaldaqstant id-drittijiet tal-bniedem fil-kuntest tal-qafas legali tas-cyberspace huma essenzjali. Dawn jistgħu jkunu mħarsa billi jkun żgurat ir-rispett tal-libertà tal-espressjoni, speċjalment meta qed tiżdied ir-rabta bejn il-media u l-qasam diġitali.

L-Onor. Joe Debono Grech mexxa delegazzjoni magħmula mill-Onor. Beppe Fenech Adami, l-Onor. Charlò Bonnici u l-Onor. Deborah Schembri għar-Raba' Parti tas-Sessjoni Ordinarja tal-2013 tal-Assemblea Parlamentari tal-Kunsill tal-Ewropa ġewwa Strażburgu bejn it-30 ta' Settembru u l-4 ta' Ottubru 2013. L-Onor. Debono Grech ħa sehem fil-laqgħat tal-Bureau u tal-Kumitat Permanenti tal-Assemblea, u ltaqa' ma' rappreżentanti tar-refuġjati Iranjani li jgħixu f'Camp Ashraf u f'Liberty Camp fl-Iraq, li tkellem miegħu dwar il-qtil u l-ħtif li jseħħu f'dawn il-kampijiet.

Il-Membri tad-delegazzjoni attendew għad-diskussjonijiet u l-votazzjonijiet fil-Plenarja, inkluż waqt l-elezzjoni tal-imħallef Rumen bħala membru tal-Qorti Ewropea tad-Drittijiet tal-Bniedem. It-temi l-oħra prinċipali fis -sessjoni kkonċernaw is-sitwazzjoni fis-Sirja, is-sinerġiji minflok id-duplikazzjoni bejn l-aġendi dwar id-drittijiet tal-bniedem tal-Unjoni Ewropea u tal-Kunsill tal-Ewropa, id-dritt tat-tfal għall-integrità fiżika, is-sigurtà nazzjonali u l-aċċess għall-informazzjoni, l-istituzzjonijiet demokratiċi ġewwa l-Bożnja u Herzegovina, is-sigurtà tal-ikel u l-persuni nieqsa minħabba l-kunflitti fl-Ewropa.

Il-Kumitat dwar il-Migrazzjoni, Refuġjati u Persuni Spostati ddiskuta rapport bl-isem *Resettlement of refugees: an efficient tool for greater solidarity in Europe* li fih issir referenza speċifika għall-proġetti EUREMA 1 u 2 li ġew imnedija sabiex jassistu lil Malta fil-problema ta' pressjoni migratorja sproporzjonata. Is-segretarjat ta' dan il-Kumitat indika illi r-rapporteur jista' jkun mitlub iżur lil Malta sabiex jara aktar mill-qrib il-ħidma ta' dawn il proġetti pilota ta' risistemazzjoni.

Interparliamentary Meetings Abroad (Cont.)

Hon. Joe Debono Grech led a delegation comprising Hon. Beppe Fenech Adami, Hon. Charlò Bonnici and Hon. Deborah Schembri to the Fourth Ordinary Part Session of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe for 2013 in Strasbourg between 30 September and 4 October 2013.

Hon. Debono Grech took part in the Meeting of the Bureau and of the Standing Committee of the Assembly, and met with representatives of the Iranian regugees living in Camp Ashraf and Liberty Camp in Iraq, who spoke about the killings and kidnappings that happen there. The members of the delegation particpated in the dicussions and votes in Plenary, including on the election of a judge from Romania as member of the European Court of Human Rights. The other main subjects on the agenda of the sessions concerned the situation in Syria, synergies instead of duplication between the human rights agendas of the European Union and the Council of Europe, children's right to physical integrity, national security and access to information, democratic institutions in Bosnia and Herzegovina, food security and missing persons from Europe's conflicts.

The Committee on Migration, Refugees and Displaced Persons discussed the report Resettlement of refugees: an efficient tool for greater solidarity in Europe wherein specific reference is made to the EUREMA 1 and 2 projects which were launched in order to assist Malta to deal with the disproportionate migratory pressures it faces. The secretariat of this Committee indicated that the rapporteur could be asked to visit Malta in order to observe more closely the work of these two relocation pilot projects.

Hon. Chris Fearne, Chairman of the Committee on Foreign and European Affairs, and Hon. Francis Zammit Dimech, Member of the same Committee, participated in the 50th Meeting of COSAC which was held in Vilnius, Lithuania, between 27 and 29 October 2013.

Hon. Fearne spoke on the subject of the state of play of the priorities of the Lithuanian Presidency where he referred to the immigration crisis in the Mediterranean and the consequent regular loss of human life, and also referred to the Task Force on the Mediterranean which had just been agreed upon in the European Council. He proposed four measures which should be taken to seriously address the immigration problem: (a) the strengthening of FRONTEX in a way which reduces the burden of those Member States involved in rescue missions; (b) that the Dublin II Regulation be amended to introduce mandatory burden sharing in the spirit of solidarity; (c) tangible material and financial assistance to those Member States which carry the greatest burden of immigration, and (d) that there be long-term commitment with North African transit countries, with the Sub-Saharan countries and the countries in the Middle East. He concluded by saying that Malta, Europe and the rest of the world would consider the Lithuanian Presidency a success if agreement on these measures can be reached.

He also spoke on the subject of the COSAC Jubilee where he made reference to the challenges that Europe is facing due to the fact that citizens often associate the problems being experienced in the Member States, such as high unemployment rates and austerity measures, with European policies. Hon. Fearne said that this can be addressed by strengthening the democratic legitimacy of the European institutions. He concluded by saying that politicians have the challenge to demonstrate to the citizens how their work is relevant and can influence decisions taken at European level.

Hon. Zammit Dimech spoke about the subject of the digital agenda where he brought up the relevance of the digital agenda for the banking and financial sectors, for example, how these technologies are everyday realities for the citizens, and as such Europe should be an active protagonist in this field. He added that he welcomed the comment of Mr Rudolf Roy from the European External Action Service, when in his address he said that this is not a field which can be regulated by just one entity and thus human rights in the context of the legal frameowrk of cyberspace are essential. These can be safeguarded by ensuring the respect of the freedom of expression, especially with the growing link between the media and digital sector.

White Paper dwar il-Parlament Malti: Aktar Awtonomija, Aktar Kontabbiltá

Il-White Paper dwar l-Awtonomija u l-Kontabbiltà Parlamentari, li ġiet ippubblikata s-sena li għaddiet f'nofs Settembru, inevitabbilment intesiet xi ftit minħabba l-avvenimenti politiċi li żviluppaw lejn l-aħħar tal-ħarifa u li wasslu għall-elezzjonijiet ġenerali f'Marzu 2013. Madankollu, il-kontenut tagħha, inkluż abbozz ta' liġi dwar din il-kwistjoni li kien mehmuż magħha, jibqgħu validi anki f'xenarju ta' wara l-elezzjoni. Intant, hija tista' tifforma l-bażi ta' ftehim bejn iż-żewġ forzi politiċi rrappreżentati fil-Parlament għat-triq 'il quddiem. Il-White Paper hija wkoll konformi max-xewqat espressi mill-iSpeaker tal-Kamra, Dr Anġlu Farrugia, li, wara li mexa fuq il-passi tal-predeċessur tiegħu Dr Michael Frendo, talab għal awtonomija, istituzzjonalità u finanzjament akbar għal-leġiżlatura ta' Malta.

Is-suġġeriment tal-White Paper li jinfetaħ uffiċċju ta' Kummissarju Parlamentari għall-Istandards huwa wkoll konformi mar-Riżoluzzjoni li ġiet approvata riċentament mill-Parlament dwar it-twaqqif ta' mekkaniżmu ta' skrutinju għall-monitoraġġ tal-imġiba etika tal-Membri Parlamentari, u dwar il-ħatra ta' Kummissarju Parlamentari għall-Istandards fil-ħajja pubblika.

Fil-prefazju tagħha, il-White Paper tirreferi għal dictum eċċellenti mill-ex Speaker tal-Kamra tar-Rappreżentanti tal-Istati Uniti Tip O'Neil: O'Neil, li jibqa' famuż għall-battuta tiegħu "all politics is local", darba qal: *"the ethics of politics has changed. Politicians who do not realize that, are making trouble for themselves if they don't cross every 't' and dot every 'i' ".*

Id-dixxiplina tal-Membri eletti tal-leġiżlatura hija kwistjoni legalment ikkomplikata. Il-Membri tal-Parlament jiġu eletti mill-votanti u l-mandat demokratiku tagħhom jiskadi biss fl-elezzjoni ġenerali li jkun imiss. Għaldaqstant, korp leġiżlattiv kemm jista' jimponi dixxiplina fuq Membru li jkun qiegħed jiżbalja fl-aġir tiegħu? U x'tip ta' sanzjonijiet jistgħu jiġu imposti fuq rappreżentant elett tal-poplu? Il-Kostituzzjoni ta' Malta hija ċara ħafna fuq dan il-punt.

Il-pożizzjoni ta' Membru tal-Parlament issir vakanti biss f'ċerti ċirkostanzi speċifiċi, bħal jekk il-Membru jingħata sentenza ta' aktar minn sena priġunerija jew jekk il-kandidatura tiegħu fl-elezzjoni tiġi ddikjarata mill-Qorti bħala li kienet imtebbgħa minn prattika korrotta.

Iżda l-istandards etiċi obbligatorji huma indispensabbli fi kwalunkwe istituzzjoni sabiex tinżamm il-kredibbiltà; dan japplika aktar u aktar fil-każ tal-membri parlamentari, li fir-rwol tagħhom li jżommu lill-gvern responsabbli, u b'konformità mal-aktar libertà wiesgħa ta' dibattitu li għandha tingħata lilhom, igawdu minn immunità mill-proċedimenti fir-rigward tad-diskorsi li huma jagħmlu fil-Kamra tad-Deputati. Kif irrimarka ġurista Indjan rinomat:

"Elected representatives are not placed above the law by way of parliamentary privilege; they are simply granted certain advantages and basic exemptions from legal process in order that the House may function independently, efficiently and fearlessly... it is (therefore) difficult to digest that in case of abuse or misuse of such privilege by any Member, no action can be taken by the legislature, the parent body." (Basu: Kostituzzjoni Iqsar tal-Indja, l-14-il Edizzjoni (2009), paġna 730).

Iż-żamma ta' standards etiċi ċertament mhijiex limitata biss għall-monitoraġġ tal-imġiba tal-Membri Parlamentari fir-rigward tal-abbuż ta' privileġġ. Hija tkopri oqsma bħaż-żamma u l-monitoraġġ tal-operat tar-reġistru tal-interessi finanzjarji tal-Membri, il-monitoraġġ tal-operat ta' kwalunkwe kodiċi ta' mġiba applikabbli għall-Membri Parlamentari u r-riċeviment u l-investigazzjoni ta' ilmenti dwar il-membri mill-pubbliku ġenerali.

Il-White Paper tipproponi li jinħatar Kummissarju Parlamentari għall-Istandards, li s-sigurtà tal-impjieg tiegħu tkun ugwali għal dik li jgawdi l-Ombudsman, jiġifieri, il-ħatra u/jew it-tneħħija mill-ħatra tiegħu għandha tiġi approvata minn żewġ terzi tal-Membri kollha tal-Parlament. Il-Kummissarju Parlamentari jirċievi ilmenti mhux biss dwar imġiba illegali, iżda wkoll dwar aġir li jmur kontra l-etika. Hemm affarijiet li ma jsirux sempliċiment minħabba li mhuwiex xieraq jew aċċettabbli li jsiru, anki jekk ma jkunux espliċitament ipprojbiti mil-liġi.

Bħal fil-każ tal-Kummissarju tar-Renju Unit, kif propost fil-White Paper, il-Kummissarju Parlamentari għall-Istandards għandu jħejji wkoll linji gwida u joffri taħriġ lill-Membri fuq imġiba u etika xierqa u saħansitra joffri pariri kunfidenzjali lill-Membri dwar l-interpretazzjoni tal-Kodiċi tal-Etika fuq l-imġiba tal-Membri.

Tabilħaqq, l-aktar punt diffiċli li għandu jiġi stabbilit huwa: x'jiġri jekk jinstab mill-Kummissarju li l-Membru kiser il-prinċipju tal-etika, u min għandu jieħu d-deċiżjoni finali, il-Kummissarju jew il-Kamra? Għall-għajn legali mhux imħarrġa, din il-kwistjoni tista' titqies bħala waħda relattivament trivjali u t-tendenza li d-deċiżjoni finali tkun favur l-aħħar kelma tal-Kummissarju hija waħda naturali.

White Paper dwar il-Parlament Malti: Aktar Awtonomija, Aktar Kontabbiltá (Kont.)

Il-Liġi mehmuża mal-White Paper tipproponi li l-Kummissarju jħejji Rapport li jinkludi rakkomandazzjoni fir-rigward tal-miżuri dixxiplinarji, li mbagħad għandu jintbagħat lill-Kumitat Permanenti dwar il-Privileġġi. Jekk jiġi kkonfermat, ir-Rapport imbagħad jintbagħat lill-iSpeaker sabiex ikun jista' jsir dibattitu u tittieħed deċiżjoni dwaru f'sessjoni plenarja. Is-sanzjonijiet li jistgħu jiġu rrakkomandati jinkludu: twissija, ċensura u sospensjoni mill-Kamra għal perjodu ta' mhux aktar minn 30 jum.

Iżda fil-fatt hija l-Kamra li għandha l-kelma finali; u tabilħaqq dan huwa naturali, mhux biss minħabba l-limitazzjonijiet kostituzzjonali, iżda wkoll minħabba li l-leġiżlaturi kollha jridu jżommu kontroll fuq id-dixxiplinar tal-Membri. Tabilħaqq, il-mudell ta' skrutinju tar-Renju Unit, li fuqu huwa mfassal l-Abbozz, iħalliha f'idejn il-House of Commons sabiex tieħu deċiżjoni finali dwar wieħed mill-Membri tagħha.

Min-naħa l-oħra, fl-Istati Uniti, il-House Committee on Standards of Official Conduct, jista' jagħmel biss rakkomandazzjonijiet lill-Kamra, u l-verdett finali huwa riżervat favur il-Kamra kollha. Ċertament, ikun politikament detrimentali għall-immaġini u l-kredibbiltà ta' kwalunkwe leġiżlatura jekk tiġi injorata b'mod kapriċċuż ir-rakkomandazzjoni ta' Kummissarju li, bħal fil-każ tal-abbozz ta' liġi mehmuż mal-White Paper, kellu l-ħatra tiegħu approvata minn żewġ terzi tal-Membri tal-leġiżlatura.

Il-White Paper tipproponi wkoll li jkun hemm awtonomija u indipendenza akbar fil-Kamra tar-Rappreżentanti. F'kull diskors kommemorattiv tas-Sette Giugno, l-iSpeakers suċċessivi tal-Kamra dejjem appellaw lill-Eżekuttiv għal aktar awtonomija.

Fl-2005, l-iSpeaker Anton Tabone kien irrimarka li kien jidher li l-Parlament – fl-istrutturi u l-operat tiegħu – irriżulta li huwa inqas awtonomu mill-uffiċċji rispettivi tal-uffiċjali parlamentari li huma subordinati għalih (pereżempju l-Ombudsman); filwaqt li, f'Ġunju 2012, l-iSpeaker Michael Frendo appella b'mod ferventi kif ġej:

"Jekk jogħġobkom ippermettuli nappella lill-forzi politiċi mhux biss sabiex jitkellmu dwar l-awtonomija tal-istituzzjonijiet parlamentari iżda wkoll sabiex iwiegħdu, fil-programmi elettorali tagħhom, li jagħtu, permezz tal-liġi, awtonomija eżekuttiva u finanzjarja lill-Parlament…"

F'Ġunju 2013, l-iSpeaker Anġlu Farrugia rrimarka li:

"Il-Parlament qatt ma jista' jkun liberru u ħieles minn kull irbit sakemm jibqa' jitqies b'mod amministrattiv bħala dipartiment tal-gvern. L-awtorità u l-awtonomija parlamentari, għalkemm huma differenti minn xulxin, huma intrinsikament marbuta ma' xulxin. Bil-għan li tinkiseb demokrazija parlamentari attiva, ma għandniex nibżgħu nieħdu l-pass li jmiss lejn parlament li jkun awtonomu."

Il-White Paper tipproponi li tiġi stabbilita bil-liġi entità bl-isem "Servizz Parlamentari", li l-Pjan tad-Dħul u l-Infiq tagħha jiġi approvat mill-Kumitat dwar ix-Xogħol tal-Kamra. Dan is-servizz għandu jkun awtonomu mill-Gvern u għandu jipprovdi l-appoġġ amministrattiv u konsultattiv meħtieġ għall-ħidma tal-Kamra. Din l-entità għandu jkollha personalità ġuridika distinta u għandha tkun responsabbli mill-ġestjoni u l-kunsinna tas-servizzi parlamentari kollha. Kull sena, l-iSpeaker jippreżenta Pjan Parlamentari, wara li jikkonsulta lill-Ministru tal-Finanzi.

L-Uffiċċju tal-Iskrivan tal-Kamra huwa msaħħaħ ukoll permezz ta' qafas legali rinfurzat. L-Iskrivan għandu jinħatar mill-President fuq il-parir tal-iSpeaker u l-kondizzjonijiet tal-impjieg ta' dan l-uffiċċju għandhom jiġu stabbiliti mill-Kumitat dwar ix-Xogħol tal-Kamra.

Kif għedt fil-Prefazju għall-White Paper f'Settembru 2012, il-White Paper mhijiex imnaqqxa fil-ġebel. Hija biss proposta, li tista' tifforma l-bażi għal dibattitu produttiv b'suġġerimenti, żidiet u emendi li għandhom igawdu l-aktar kunsens wiesa' possibbli. Billi fil-prinċipju kien hemm qbil mill-forzi politiċi kollha u mill-iSpeaker tal-Kamra, wieħed jittama li din ir-riforma tant mistennija tal-ogħla istituzzjoni tal-pajjiż tiġi implimentata mill-aktar fis. Sabiex jintlaħaq dan l-għan, jeħtieġ li jkun hemm ir-rieda tajba tal-Membri Parlamentari, immexxija b'għaqal mill-iSpeaker.

Dr Tonio Borg
Kummissarju Ewropew għas-Saħħa

White Paper on the Maltese Parliament: More Autonomy, more accountabilty

The White Paper on Parliamentary Autonomy and Accountability published last year in mid-September was inevitably engulfed and dwarfed by the political events which developed in late autumn leading to general elections in March 2013. Its contents however, including a draft Bill on the matter attached to it, remain valid even in a post-election scenario. Indeed it can form the basis of agreement between the two political forces represented in Parliament for the way ahead. The White Paper is also in line with the wishes expressed by House Speaker Dr Anġlu Farrugia, who, in line with his predecessor Dr Michael Frendo, has called for greater autonomy, institutionally and financially, for Malta's legislature.

The White Paper's suggestion to set up an office of a Parliamentary Commissioner for Standards is also consonant with the Resolution recently approved by Parliament on the setting up of a scrutiny mechanism to monitor ethical behaviour of MPs, and the appointment of a Parliamentary Commissioner for Standards in public life.

The White Paper, in its preface, refers to an excellent dictum by former Speaker of the US House of Representatives Tip O'Neil: O'Neil who remains famous for his quip that "all politics is local", once said: "the ethics of politics has changed. Politicians who do not realize that, are making trouble for themselves if they don't cross every 't' and dot every 'i' ".

Disciplining elected Members of the legislature is a legally thorny question. Members of Parliament are elected by voters and their democratic mandate expires only at the next general election. To what extent therefore can a legislative body impose discipline on any errant Member? And what kind of sanctions can be imposed on an elected representative of the people?

The Constitution of Malta is amply clear on this point. The position of a Member of Parliament becomes vacant only in certain specific circumstances, such as the Member being sentenced to more than one year's imprisonment or his election being declared by the Court to have been tainted by corrupt practices.

But mandatory ethical standards are indispensable in any institution in order to maintain credibility; the more so in the case of parliamentarians, who in virtue of their role in holding government to account, and in line with the widest freedom of debate to be accorded to them, enjoy immunity from proceedings regarding any speeches which they deliver in the House. As one renowned Indian jurist remarked:

"Elected representatives are not placed above the law by way of parliamentary privilege; they are simply granted certain advantages and basic exemptions from legal process in order that the House may function independently, efficiently and fearlessly… it is (therefore) difficult to digest that in case of abuse or misuse of such privilege by any Member, no action can be taken by the legislature, the parent body." (Basu: Shorter Constitution of India 14th Edition (2009) page 730).

Certainly maintaining ethical standards is not limited only to monitoring of MPs' behaviour regarding abuse of privilege. It covers such areas as maintaining and monitoring the operation of the Register of Members' financial interests, monitoring the operation of any Code of Conduct applicable to parliamentarians, receiving and investigating complaints about Members from the general public.

The White Paper proposes the appointment of a Parliamentary Commissioner for Standards, whose security of tenure would be equal to that enjoyed by the Ombudsman, namely, his appointment and or removal must be endorsed by two-thirds of all the Members of Parliament. The Parliamentary Commissioner would receive complaints not only about illegal behaviour, but also unethical demeanour. There are things that are simply not done because it is not right or acceptable to do them, even though they are not expressly prohibited by law.

As in the case of the UK Commissioner, the Parliamentary Commissioner for Standards, as proposed in the White Paper, would also prepare guidelines and offer training to Members on proper behaviour and ethics and even offer confidential advice to Members on the interpretation of the Code of Ethics on Members' behaviour.

The most difficult point to determine then is: what happens if the Member is found by the Commissioner to be in breach of ethics, and who should take the final decision, the Commissioner or the House?

To the untrained legal eye, this can be considered as relatively trivial, and the tendency to rule in favour of a Commissioner's final say, is natural.

The Bill attached to the White Paper proposes that the Commissioner prepares a Report including a recommendation as to disciplinary measures, which is sent to the Standing Committee on Privileges. If confirmed, the Report is

White Paper on the Maltese Parliament: More Autonomy, more accountabilty (Cont.)

then sent to the Speaker for it to be debated and decided recommended upon at a plenary session. The sanctions which may be include: reprimand, censure and suspension from the House for a period not exceeding 30 days.

But it is the House which retains a final say; and it is natural that this is so, not only because of constitutional constraints, but also because the right of discipline over Members is jealously guarded by all legislatures. Indeed, the UK model of scrutiny, on which the Bill is more or less based, leaves it up to the House of Commons to take a final decision on one of its Members.

Again, in the United States, the House Committee on Standards of Official Conduct, can only make recommendations to the House, and final verdict is reserved in favour of the whole House. Certainly it would be politically detrimental to the image and credibility of any legislature to capriciously ignore the recommendation of a Commissioner who, as in the case of the draft law attached to the White Paper, had his appointment endorsed by two-thirds of the Members of the legislature.

The White Paper also proposes greater autonomy and independence to the House of Representatives. At every Sette Giugno commemoration speech, successive Speakers of the House have appealed to the Executive for more autonomy.

In 2005, Speaker Anton Tabone had remarked that it jarred that Parliament – in structures and operations – emerged as less autonomous than the respective offices of parliamentary officials which are subordinate to it (e.g. Ombudsman); and Speaker Michael Frendo fervently appealed as follows in June 2012:

"Please allow me to challenge the political forces not only to speak about the autonomy of parliamentary institutions but also to pledge, in their electoral programmes, to grant by law to Parliament, executive and financial autonomy…"

Speaker Anġlu Farrugia, in June 2013, remarked that:

"Parliament can never be free or unshackled unless it is no longer considered administratively as a government department. Parliamentary authority and autonomy, though different, are intrinsically linked to each other. To achieve an active parliamentary democracy, we should not be afraid of taking the next step towards an autonomous parliament."

The White Paper proposes that a body corporate be established by law entitled "Parliamentary Service" whose income and Expenditure Plan is approved by the House Business Committee. This service shall be autonomous from Government and shall provide administrative and consultative support required for the functioning of the House. It shall have a distinct legal personality, and shall be responsible for the management and delivery of all parliamentary services. Every year the Speaker presents a Parliamentary Plan, after consulting the Minister of Finance.

The Office of the Clerk of the House is also strengthened through a reinforced legal framework. The Clerk shall be appointed by the President on the advice of the Speaker, and conditions of employment of this office shall be determined by the House Business Committee.

As I stated in the Preface to the White Paper in September 2012, the White Paper is not inscribed in stone. It is just a proposal, which can form the basis of a fruitful debate with suggestions, additions and amendments which would enjoy the widest consensus possible. Since all political forces and the Speaker of the House have agreed in principle, it is augured that this much-awaited reform of the highest institution of the land is only round the corner. It depends on the goodwill of parliamentarians, ably guided by the Speaker, to achieve this aim.

Dr Tonio Borg
European Commissioner for Health

Il-Kumitat Permanenti dwar l-Affarijiet Soċjali

Il-Kumitat Permanenti dwar l-Affarijiet Soċjali, li jiena ilni issa nippresjedi sa mill-bidu tal-leġiżlatura attwali, huwa kumitat attiv u enerġetiku ħafna, li l-mandat tiegħu jinkludi d-diskussjoni ta' kwistjonijiet li huma relatati mal-politika soċjali. Fi ħdan dan il-Kumitat, li nħatar mill-ġdid permezz tal-Mozzjoni Nru. 19 fil-bidu ta' din it-Tnax-il Leġiżlatura, u li huwa kompost minn tliet membri tal-Oppożizzjoni u minn erba' membri tal-Gvern, jiġu diskussi b'mod regolari materji li jvarjaw minn vjolenza domestika sal-uniformijiet tal-iskola.

Bħalissa, il-Kumitat qiegħed jiddiskuti l-mod kif qegħdin jiġu ttrattati l-vittmi tal-vjolenza domestika mill-istituzzjonijiet Maltin. Wieħed invarjabbilment jisma' ilmenti dwar in-nuqqas ta' strutturi adegwati, in-nuqqas ta' miżuri effettivi, in-nuqqas ta' protezzjoni legali jew altrimenti fir-rigward tal-protezzjoni ta' vittmi innoċenti minn membri tal-familji tagħhom stess, in-nuqqas ta' linji politiċi jew ħaddiema li jirċievu taħriġ speċjali sabiex joffru servizzi lill-vittmi, kif ukoll nuqqas ġenerali ta' għarfien dwar dak li tgħaddi minnu l-vittma fuq livell emozzjonali u psikoloġiku, sabiex tikxef lil min ikun abbuża minnha.

Il-Kumitat iddeċieda li jisma' x'għandhom xi jgħidu l-vittmi nfushom dwar il-kwistjoni u qiegħed jagħmel sforz kbir sabiex saħansitra jitkellem ma' dawk il-vittmi li ma jixtiqux jew li jibżgħu jesponu lilhom infushom. Fil-fatt, matul il-btajjel tas-sajf, il-Kumitat kellu laqgħa informali f'Dar Qalb ta' Ġesù, xelter għan-nisa msawta u għat-tfal tagħhom, filwaqt li qiegħed jippjana li jagħmel żjara oħra sabiex jitkellem mal-membri ta' SOAR.

Il-membri li kienu preżenti waqt iż-żjara f'Dar Qalb ta' Gesù tkellmu ma' bosta nisa li kienu lesti jaqsmu magħhom l-esperjenzi, id-diffikultajiet u t-tħassib tagħhom, fejn anki kellhom l-opportunità li jidentifikaw in-nuqqasijiet fis-sistema li saru jafu tant tajjeb bit-tama li xi darba din tittejjeb għall-ġid tagħhom u tal-oħrajn. Barra minn hekk, kien hemm organizzazzjonijiet oħrajn interessati, inklużi NGOs, li ntalbu jagħtu l-kontribut tagħhom u l-Kumitat kellu l-pjaċir li jara kemm intlaqgħet tajjeb id-diskussjoni tiegħu dwar il-kwistjoni.

Laqgħa Nru 7 tal-Kumitat Permanenti dwar l-Affarijiet Soċjali tas-17 ta' Ottubru 2013, fejn ġew diskussi żewg rapporti ppreżentati mill-GWU u ittra mill-Onor. Bezzina dwar inċidenti tat-traffiku.

Fil-ġimgħat illi ġejjin, il-Kumitat sejjer jiffinalizza d-diskussjoni tiegħu billi jitkellem mal-fornituri tas-servizzi, bħall-pulizija u l-aġenziji tal-gvern. Huwa ser ikun qiegħed ukoll jisma' x'għandha xi tgħid l-analista tar-riċerka tal-Kumitat, Dr Elaine Buttigieg Burmingham, li mistennija tinforma lill-kumitat dwar id-dimensjoni internazzjonali tas-suġġett. Il-Kumitat huwa impenjat li jiffinalizza d-diskussjoni u jipproduċi rapport dettaljat u bbilanċjat tajjeb, kif ukoll ġabra ta' rakkomandazzjonijiet sal-bidu tas-sena d-dieħla.

Il-Kumitat Permanenti dwar l-Affarijiet Soċjali (Kont.)

Wieħed għandu japprezza li hemm firxa wiesgħa ħafna ta' suġġetti li jaqgħu taħt il-mandat ta' dan il-Kumitat, iżda li lkoll huma importanti fihom infushom. Il-Kumitat, li huwa konxju mir-restrizzjonijiet taż-żmien u limitazzjonijiet oħrajn, ħejja programm ta' ħidma għas-sena li ġejja, li jinkludi diskussjonijiet ewlenin dwar il-ħxuna żejda u l-isport, id-donazzjoni tal-organi u d-djar. Il-Kumitat jiltaqa' darba fix-xahar sabiex jiddiskuti kwistjonijiet oħrajn ta' importanza. Dawn jinkludu rapporti li jkunu ntbagħtu lilu mill-iSpeaker tal-Kamra, mill-Kumitat dwar ix-Xogħol tal-Kamra jew inkella materji li joħorġu minn xi korrispondenza li jkun irċieva l-Kumitat. F'dawn l-aħħar ftit ġimgħat, il-Kumitat iddiskuta rapporti dwar ix-xogħol prekarju u l-istrateġija tal-Gvern intiża biex tiġġieled il-problema tal-waqfien kmieni mill-iskola f'Malta, kif ukoll il-kwistjoni tal-faqar, li dwarha bħalissa qiegħed jitħejja rapport strateġiku mill-Gvern. Il-Kumitat iddiskuta wkoll il-politika dwar it-traffiku u l-infrastruttura tat-toroq fid-dawl tat-tħassib li jirrigwardja l-inċidenti fatali frekwenti, kif ukoll il-konġestjoni tat-traffiku fit-toroq Maltin.

Il-Kumitat għall-Affarijiet Soċjali kellu l-pjaċir li jistieden lill-Ministru għall-Familja u s-Solidarjetà Soċjali, l-Onor. Marie Louise Coleiro Preca, u lill-Ministru għat-Trasport u l-Infrastruttura, l-Onor. Joe Mizzi, sabiex jissieħbu fid-diskussjonijiet rigward il-ministeri rispettivi tagħhom fi sforz sabiex tinbena relazzjoni b'saħħitha bejn id-diversi ministeri u l-Kumitat.

Jiena nippresjedi wkoll sottokumitat tal-Kumitat għall-Affarijiet Soċjali, li huwa kompost minn persuni differenti u li jiltaqa' sabiex jiddiskuti kwistjonijiet li jirrigwardjaw l-immigrazzjoni. Dan il-mandat ingħata permezz ta' deċiżjoni li ttieħdet mill-Kumitat dwar ix-Xogħol tal-Kamra fil-Leġiżlatura preċedenti u li l-Kumitat dwar ix-Xogħol tal-Kamra attwali estenda, f'Ottubru 2013, għal-Leġiżlatura preżenti.

Sa issa, dan il-Kumitat iltaqa' darba, meta laqa' bħala kelliem mistieden lill-Ministru għall-Intern u s-Sigurtà Nazzjonali, l-Onor. Manuel Mallia, li għamel preżentazzjoni b'mod ġenerali fuq id-diversi kwistjonijiet relatati mal-immigrazzjoni irregolari. Il-firxa ta' kwistjonijiet li jirrigwardjaw l-immigrazzjoni irregolari hija wiesgħa ħafna, tant li tkopri kwistjonijiet bħal minn fejn isalpaw l-immigranti irregolari, il-kwistjoni tal-vjaġġi bil-baħar fuq dgħajjes li mhumiex tajbin għat-tbaħħir, l-aspetti kriminali tat-traffikar tal-bnedmin, l-obbligi ta' tfittxija u ta' salvataġġ, il-konvenzjonijiet internazzjonali, il-politika ta' detenzjoni u materji bħal dawn. Sabiex tingħata struttura lid-diskussjonijiet li ġejjin, il-Kumitat għandu jiltaqa' dalwaqt sabiex ifassal programm ta' ħidma u ħalli jħejji skeda ta' żjarat fiċ-ċentri ta' detenzjoni għax-xhur li ġejjin.

Bħala Chairperson tal-Kumitat għall-Affarijiet Soċjali, jiena nattendi wkoll konferenzi internazzjonali u nagħmel dak kollu li nista' sabiex inżomm lill-Kumitat informat bil-konklużjonijiet milħuqa u r-rakkomandazzjonijiet li jsiru.

Onor. Deborah Schembri Chairperson - Kumitat Permanenti dwar l-Affarijiet Soċjali

Wieħed jista' jsegwi l-proċedimenti tal-Kumitat Permanenti dwar l-Affarijiet Soċjali fuq: *www.parlament.mt/socialaffairscommittee*

Il-Kumitat Permanenti dwar l-Affarijiet Soċjali huwa kompost mill-Onor. Deborah Schembri (Chairperson), l-Onor. Anthony Agius Decelis, l-Onor. Claudette Buttigieg, l-Onor. Robert Cutajar, l-Onor. Etienne Grech, l-Onor. Silvio Parnis u l-Onor. Marthese Portelli.

Is-Sotto-Kumitat tal-Kumitat għall-Affarijiet Soċjali (dwar l-Immigrazzjoni) huwa kompost mill-Onor. Deborah Schembri (Chairperson), l-Onor. Jason Azzopardi, l-Onor. Claudette Buttigieg, l-Onor. Michael Falzon, l-Onor. Marlene Farrugia, l-Onor. Christopher Fearne u l-Onor. Carmelo Mifsud Bonnici.

The Standing committee on Social Affairs

The Standing Committee on Social Affairs, which I have been chairing since the beginning of the current legislature, is a very energetic and active committee which has as its remit the discussion of matters relating to social policy. Within it, the three members of the Opposition and four Government members, of whom it is composed, have been discussing issues from domestic violence to school uniforms on a regular basis since the Committee was appointed afresh by way of Motion No. 19 at the beginning of the twelfth legislature.

The Committee is currently discussing the manner in which victims of domestic violence have been treated by Maltese institutions. One invariably hears complaints about the lack of adequate structures, lack of effective measures, legal or otherwise, when it comes to protecting innocent victims from members of their very own families, lack of policies or specially trained personnel when it comes to the offering of services to victims and a general lack of comprehension of what a victim goes through, emotionally and psychologically to expose a perpetrator.

The Committee decided to listen to what the victims themselves have to say about the matter and is making an extra effort to reach out to victims who do not wish to, or are afraid to, expose themselves. In fact during the summer recess the Committee held an informal meeting at Dar Qalb ta' Ġesù, a shelter for battered women and their children and is planning another visit to speak to members of SOAR.

The members who were present on the visit to Dar Qalb ta' Ġesù spoke to several women who shared with them their experiences, their difficulties and their concerns, pinpointing pitfalls in the system they have come to know so well in the hope of one day bettering it for their very own sake and that of others. Other interested parties, including NGOs have also been asked to give their contribution and the Committee was pleased to see how well its discussion on the matter was being received.

In the coming weeks the Committee will finalise its discussion by speaking with the service providers such as the police force and government agencies. It will also be listening to the Committee's research analyst Dr Elaine Buttigieg Burmingham who will inform the committee on the international dimension of the subject. The Committee is committed to finalise the discussion and produce a well-balanced and detailed report as well as a set of recommendations by early next year.

One must appreciate that the spectrum of subjects falling under the remit of this Committee, all of which are important in their own right, are innumerable. The Committee, aware of its time constraints and limitations, prepared a work program for the coming year which includes major discussions on obesity and sport, organ donation and housing.

Once a month the Committee meets to discuss other matters of importance. These include reports which have been handed to it by the Speaker of the House, the House Business Committee or matters arising from correspondence. In the past few weeks the Committee discussed reports on precarious employment and the Government's strategy to combat the problem of early school leaving in Malta as well as the issue of poverty, on which a government strategy report is being currently drawn up. The Committee also discussed road infrastructure and traffic policies in view of concerns regarding frequent fatal accidents and traffic congestion.

The Standing committee on Social Affairs (Cont.)

The Social Affairs Committee has had the pleasure of inviting the Minister for the Family and Social Solidarity, Hon. Marie Louise Coleiro Preca, and the Minister for Transport and Infrastructure, Hon. Joe Mizzi, to join in discussions regarding their respective ministries in an effort to build a healthy relationship between the various ministries and the Committee.

I also chair the Social Affairs Committee, differently composed, which meets to discuss issues regarding immigration. This mandate came by through a decision taken by the House Business Committee in the previous legislature which the current House Business Committee extended, in October 2013, for the present legislature.

This Committee has met once since, when it welcomed the Minister for Home Affairs and National Security, Hon. Manuel Mallia, as a guest speaker who gave a general exposition on the various matters relating to irregular immigration. The issues regarding irregular immigration are wide-ranging, starting from issues regarding the point of departure of an irregular immigrant, the issue of sea voyages on unseaworthy vessels, criminal aspects of human trafficking, search and rescue obligations, international conventions, detention policy and many more. In order to give structure to forthcoming discussions the Committee will meet shortly to discuss a work program and schedule of visits to detention centres for the coming months.

Social Affairs Committee Meeting No. 12 of 27 November 2013, discussing the effect of domestic violence.

As Chairperson of the Social Affairs Committee I also attend international conferences and do my utmost to keep the Committee informed of conclusions reached and recommendations made.

The proceedings of the Social Affairs Committee can be followed at:
www.parlament.mt/socialaffairscommittee

The Social Affairs Committee is composed of Hon. Deborah Schembri (Chairperson), Hon. Anthony Agius Decelis, Hon. Claudette Buttigieg, Hon. Robert Cutajar, Hon. Etienne Grech, Hon. Silvio Parnis and Hon. Marthese Portelli.

The Social Affairs Committee (Immigration) is composed of Hon. Deborah Schembri (Chairperson), Hon. Jason Azzopardi, Hon. Claudette Buttigieg, Hon. Michael Falzon, Hon. Marlene Farrugia, Hon. Christopher Fearne and Hon. Carmelo Mifsud Bonnici.

Hon. Deborah Schembri
Chairperson - Social Affairs Committee

Id-Diplomazija Parlamentari - mezz sabiex jintlaħaq skop

Dawk li mhumiex daqstant intiżi mad-dinja tad-diplomazija jafu jinstarmu bil-kbir minn kif Sir Winston Churchill jiddeskrivi b'mod pjuttost leġġer li d-diplomazija hija dik l-arti ta' kif tibgħat lil xi ħadd jixxejjer hekk li dak li jkun jaqbad u innoċentement jistaqsik x'għandu jagħmel biex jobdik. B'rispett għall-istatura leġġendarja ta' dan il-politiku Ingliż, jista' jiġri wkoll li min ma jkunx biżżejjed attent faċilment jibda jimmaġina li d-diplomazija parlamentari tixbah ħafna t-tifsira żbaljata li taha Josef Stalin meta stqarr li "is-sinċerità fid-diplomazija żgur mhix possibbli, għaliex kif jista' jkollok ilma niexef jew ħadid tal-injam?"

L-għeruq etimoloġiċi tal-kelma 'diplomazija' jmorru lura għall-kelma bil-Grieg diploma li tfisser 'karta mitwija fi tnejn'. Mill-banda l-oħra, il-kelma 'parliament' bl-Ingliż taf l-oriġini tagħha għall-kelma 'parlement' fil-Franċiż Qadim, li letteralment tfisser 'taħdita'.

Ilkoll nafu li l-ewwel kuntatti diplomatiċi seħħew permezz ta' messaġġiera jġorru dokumenti miktuba li kienu jaqsmu l-fruntieri sabiex jagħtu jew jirċievu l-informazzjoni. F'din l-era moderna meta d-diplomazija virtwali hija wieħed mill-modi kif tiġi mħaddma d-diplomazija, l-użu tal-karta qiegħed dejjem jonqos. Madankollu, iż-żewġ funzjonijiet ewlenin tad-diplomazija, jiġifieri n-nisġa bejn l-Informazzjoni u l-Komunikazzjoni, għadhom xorta jiffurmaw dak il-kunċett fundamentali li d-diplomazija hija kawża nobbli li għandha l-għan li tressaq lin-nies aktar qrib ta' xulxin.

Hekk kif jagħmlu l-ħiliet diplomatiċi taħt il-ħafna forom u fil-bosta setturi fejn dawn jiġu pprattikati, id-diplomazija parlamentari tikkumplimenta aktar milli xxekkel id-diplomazija tradizzjonali mħaddma bejn Stat u ieħor. Mal-milja taż-żmien, il-parlamenti nazzjonali qegħdin iħossu l-bżonn li jifirxu ħidmiethom aktar 'il barra fl-isfera internazzjonali.

Il-Parlament ta' Malta ma baqax lura f'dan l-eżerċizzju, u hekku li l-abbiltajiet, l-esperjenza u l-kompetenza tal-parlamentari Maltin qed jgħaddu bil-kbir mis-siegħa tal-prova lil hinn minn xtutna.

Iżda l-istorja ma tiqafx hawn. Is-sħubija fl-Unjoni Ewropea ġabet magħha bosta impenji u responsabbiltajiet diffiċli. Il-parteċipazzjoni ta' Membri Parlamentari Maltin fil-laqgħat li fihom jieħdu sehem ukoll rappreżentanti tal-popli ta' pajjiżi membri oħrajn tal-Unjoni hija kemm meħtieġa kif ukoll ta' benefiċċju għal dawk kollha li jagħmlu parti mill-miġemgħa li qed tiltaqa'. Sehem sħiħ fil-laqgħat konġunti tal-Kumitati tal-Presidenza u tal-Parlament Ewropew, kif ukoll parteċipazzjoni f'laqgħat tal-COSAC, CFSP/CSDP, fil-Konferenzi dwar Governanza Ekonomika u f'laqgħat oħra simili saru, wara s-sena 2004, xi ħaġa ta' kuljum għall-parlamentari Maltin.

Il-membri tal-parlamenti nazzjonali tipikament ikunu jħaddnu opinjonijiet politiċi differenti, fejn uħud ikunu jaqblu mal-pożizzjonijiet li qed jieħdu l-gvernijiet f'pajjiżhom, filwaqt li oħrajn le. L-Unjoni Interparlamentari (IPU) tqis id-diplomazija parlamentari bħala forma importanti ta' kooperazzjoni parlamentari. Twemmin politiku differenti għalhekk joffri tiżwiq u fehmiet interessanti li jarrikkixxu u jsaħħu d-diskussjoni li tqum f'laqgħat interparlamentari, b'mod speċjali fejn il-ħafna kulturi u drawwiet li tant jgħaqqdu l-popli fid-diversitajiet kollha tagħhom ifeġġu fid-dibattitu li jkun hemm madwar il-mejda.

Id-daqs qatt ma għandu jkun fattur li jaffettwa meta wieħed jibda biex joħloq kuntatt fuq livell parlamentari. Kull darba li jitqajjem dan il-punt, niftakar f'dik il-frażi għaqlija u konċiża li wieħed Ċiniż, li kien qed jospita delegazzjoni parlamentari mmexxija mill-iSpeaker Malti li kienet qed iżżur dak il-pajjiż Asjatiku s-sena l-oħra, kien stqarr b'tant apprezzament: 'Il-pied għandu l-qosor tiegħu hekk kif il-pulzier ukoll għandu t-tul tiegħu.' Verità lampanti mfissra b'daqstant għaqal: fil-ħajja kulħadd bżonn ħaddieħor, kulħadd jista' jitgħallem wieħed mill-ieħor.

Id-diplomazija parlamentari, fil-milja kollha tagħha, tibda tinħema minn fuq. Aktar ma jgħaddi ż-żmien, aktar qegħdin jiżdiedu l-kuntatti bejn l-iSpeaker tal-Parlament f'Malta u l-kontraparti tiegħu f'parlamenti oħrajn, u hekku li kull min jidħol biex jokkupa s-Sedja, oqgħod ċert li se jġorr miegħu jew magħha modi differenti, għalkemm ukoll komplementari għal xulxin, ta' kif jindirizzaw dan l-eżerċizzju, stili ta' tmexxija li għad li ma jixxibhux xorta jwieżnu lil xulxin.

L-ewwel passi ġeneralment jittieħdu meta Ambaxxaturi u rappreżentanti oħrajn diplomatiċi minn pajjiżi oħrajn jagħmlu żjarat ta' kortesija għand l-iSpeaker tal-Kamra. Invarjabbilment, titqajjem it-tema ta' kif tissaħħaħ il-kooperazzjoni bejn il-Parlament ta' Malta u l-Kmamar Leġiżlattivi tal-pajjiż li jkun. Meta ż-żewġ naħat ikollhom rieda qawwija u jagħmlu l-almu tagħhom sabiex ixettluha, din iż-żerriegħa li tkun tat bidu għal djalogu interparlamentari tista' tinbet malajr u fi żmien relattivament qasir kapaċi tagħti l-frott.

Mal-milja taż-żmien, kull Speaker tal-Parlament Malti li nħatar s'issa ngħaqad ma' Speakers oħrajn f'bosta konferenzi u laqgħat li nżammu fil-kuntest ta' diversi konvenzjonijiet internazzjonali u reġjonali. Bħalissa, il-fora l-aktar importanti li fihom jieħdu sehem l-iSpeakers huma:

Id-Diplomazija Parlamentari - mezz sabiex jintlaħaq skop (Kont.)

- Il-Konferenza annwali tal-iSpeakers tal-Unjoni Ewropea, li tkun ospitata mill-pajjiż li jkun ippresjeda l-Kunsill fit-tieni nofs tas-sena ta' qabel. (Ċipru kien ospitaha f'April 2013, filwaqt li l-Litwanja jkun imissha tospita din il-Konferenza fis-sena 2014.)

- Il-Konferenza, li tinżamm kull sentejn, tal-iSpeakers tal-Parlamenti tal-Kunsill tal-Ewropa, li mistennija tiltaqa' f'Oslo f'Settembru 2014.

- Il-Konferenza tal-iSpeakers u tal-Presidenti tal-Parlamenti tal-pajjiżi tal-Commonwealth (CSPOC), li wkoll tiltaqa' kull sentejn, u li l-iSpeaker Anġlu Farrugia mistenni jieħu sehem fiha fl-edizzjoni li jmiss tagħha, dik li se tinżamm fl-aħħar ta' Jannar 2014 ġewwa Wellington, New Zealand.

- Forum ieħor, il-Konferenza tal-Presidenti tal-Parlamenti tal-Pajjiżi ż-Żgħar Ewropej, li kienet ġiet imwaqqfa f'Monako fis-sena 2006, se ttemm l-ewwel ċiklu tagħha f'Settembru 2014 ġewwa Andorra. Id-Deputat Speaker Ċensu Galea kien attenda l-edizzjoni ta' din il-Konferenza fis-sena 2013 li nżammet ġewwa Reykjavik, l-Iżlanda.

Fil-bidu ta' kull leġislatura, deputati tal-Parlament miż-żewġ naħat tal-Kamra tad-Deputati f'Malta, jinħatru b'mozzjoni li tkun approvata fil-Kamra sabiex jieħdu sehem f'laqgħat tal-Assemblea Parlamentari tal-Mediterran (PAM), li għandha s-sede tagħha f'Malta; l-Assemblea Parlamentari tal-Unjoni għall-Mediterran (PA UfM); dik għall-Kunsill tal-Ewropa(PACE); l-Assemblea Parlamentari tal-OSCE u għall-Unjoni Interparlamentari (IPU). Fl-istess waqt, il-membri kollha tal-Parlament Malti li jkunu qegħdin iservu fil-kariga awtomatikament isiru membri tal-Assoċjazzjoni Parlamentari tal-Commonwealth (CPA), u b'hekk insibu li diversi deputati Maltin, skont kif jiddeċiedu ż-żewġ Whips tal-gruppi parlamentari differenti, jattendu l-laqgħat tas-CPA li jinżammu f'pajjiżi differenti tal-Commonwealth matul is-sena.

Meta nitkellmu dwar laqgħat u konferenzi barra minn Malta fi ħdan il-kuntest tad-diplomazija parlamentari, mill-ewwel ifeġġu quddiem għajnejna l-kliem '*sidelines*' u '*fringes*'. Hija prassi normali li delegati minn pajjiżi differenti jiltaqgħu flimkien bilateralment barra mill-aġenda li tkun qed tiġi segwita fil-konferenza li tkun. Dawn il-laqgħat normalment isiru fuq talba ta' xi waħda mill-partijiet, u t-temi li jkunu diskussi fihom ikunu kemm komprensivi kif ukoll jagħtu riżultati effettivi, filwaqt li l-laqgħa tinżamm f'atmosfera li tkun tipikament informali u li fiha l-partijiet jitkellmu ma' xulxin bil-miftuħ.

Huwa ferm essenzjali li l-Membri Parlamentari Maltin u dawk barranin jibnu relazzjoni b'saħħitha fuq livell personali bejniethom għaliex din tgħin sabiex tissawwar rabta ta' armonija bejniethom anki fuq livell uffiċjali. Għal din ir-raġuni, l-iSpeaker Anġlu Farrugia daħal b'entużjażmu għall-missjoni li jitwaqqfu kemm jista' jkun Gruppi Konġunti ta' Ħbiberija Parlamentari bejn il-Parlament ta' Malta u parlamenti oħrajn. S'issa, wieħed u għoxrin Grupp minn dawn jew twaqqfu diġà, inkella qegħdin fil-proċess li jitwaqqfu, filwaqt li ġie propost it-twaqqif ta' tlettax oħra lil daqstant parlamenti barranin. Il-Parlament Malti din is-sena ospita żjarat ta' parlamentari Ġermaniżi mill-Bundestag u mis-Senat Franċiż. Sadattant, huwa antiċipat li jseħħu żjarat lill-parlament tal-Arabja Sawdita u mill-Knesset tal-Iżrael f'Malta.

Il-Parlament ta' Malta għandu uffiċċju sabiex jipprovdi servizzi ta' appoġġ lill-iSpeaker u lid-Deputati l-oħrajn parlamentari, skont it-talbiet li jsirulu, fuq materji ta' relazzjonijiet internazzjonali. Il-pariri li jingħataw lill-politiċi jvarjaw minn għajnuna fuq il-mod kif wieħed għandu jindirizza dinjitarji barranin meta tinkitbilhom xi ittra, sa assistenza biex jiġu organizzati żjarat uffiċjali parlamentari barra minn Malta, jew meta mistednin tal-Parlament Malti jżuru pajjiżna.

L-astronawta Amerikan John David Bartoe kien ġabar ir-riżultati pożittivi li jagħti l-eżerċizzju ta' diplomazija parlamentari li jintemm b'suċċess f'kelmtejn konċiżi: "Malli ħarist 'l isfel, rajt xmara twila sserrep bil-mod il-mod għal bosta mili, tgħaddi minn pajjiż għall-ieħor bla ma tieqaf. Rajt ukoll foresti kbar, jinfirxu fuq bosta fruntieri. U rajt kif oċean wieħed kien qiegħed iħabbat fuq il-kosta ta' kontinenti diversi. Żewġ kelmiet mill-ewwel feġġew f'moħħi hekk kif kont qed inħares lejn din ix-xena: komunalità u interdipendenza. Aħna dinja waħda." Jalla dejjem ikun hekk.

Artiklu ta' Gaetan Naudi
Kap tal-Uffiċċju għall-Affarijiet Barranin, Parlament ta' Malta 2010 – 2013

L-Ambaxxatur Naudi serva fl-Eġittu, fi Spanja u fil-Polonja. Bejn l-2001 u l-2004 kien Segretarju Permanenti fil-Ministeru għall-Affarijiet Barranin.

Parliamentary Diplomacy - a means to an end

Those less conversant with the world of diplomacy might be whole-heartedly taken in by Sir Winston Churchill's flippant description of it being the art of telling people to go to hell in such a way as to naively coax them into asking for directions to actually do so. Respecting the legendary stature of that British politician could in turn illude the unwary into imagining parliamentary diplomacy as being closer to Josef Stalin's own errant conviction that 'sincere diplomacy is no more possible than dry water or wooden iron.'

The etymological roots of 'diplomacy' go back to the Greek word diploma meaning 'paper folded in two'. The word 'parliament' in English, on the other hand, owes its origins to the Old French '*parlement*', literally 'a talk'.

We all know that first diplomatic contacts were made by using emissaries carrying paper documents who crossed borders to convey or to receive information. In a modern age where virtual diplomacy is one way of transacting diplomatic business, paper plays an ever receding role. Yet, the two core functions of diplomacy, a mesh of Information and Communication, still constitute the underlying concept of diplomacy being that noble cause of bringing people closer together.

In keeping with the exercise of diplomatic skills in its many sectors and formats, parliamentary diplomacy complements rather than engages traditional State-to-State diplomacy in contest. With the passage of time, national parliaments are intentionally becoming increasingly internationally oriented. The Parliament of Malta is no newcomer to this arena where the abilities, experience and competence of its key players are arduously put to the litmus test beyond Malta's shores.

But this is not the end of the story. Accession to the European Union has brought in its wake a series of onerous tasks and responsibilities. Participation by Malta's parliamentarians in the fora populated by other people's representatives from the other Member States have been equally necessary as well as beneficial for those taking part. Frequenting joint Committee meetings of the Presidency and of the European Parliament, besides participating in COSAC, CFSP/CSDP, Economic Governance Conferences and similar convocations by Maltese parliamentarians have become, since 2004, the order of the day.

Disparate political creeds provide interesting arrays and viewpoints that enrich and enhance the discussions, especially when the many cultures and customs that unite peoples in their diversities are drawn into the equation.

Size never matters when it comes to establishing parliamentary contacts. Whenever confronted with this argument, I am reminded of that pithy saying fondly proclaimed by one Chinese host to a parliamentary delegation, led by the Maltese Speaker, visiting the Asian country last year: 'A foot has its shortness inasmuch as an inch has its length'. A stark truth so adroitly explained: everybody needs one another, whilst everyone can learn from each other in life.

Parliamentary diplomacy in its mellowest form starts at the top. In Malta, Speaker-to-Speaker contacts have been steadily increasing the more time passes, with each new occupier of the Chair bringing to this worthy exercise different yet complementary approaches, unlike though supportive management styles.

Initial approaches are usually started when Ambassadors and other diplomatic representatives of other countries pay courtesy calls on the Speaker of the House. Invariably, the issue of enhancing cooperation between the Malta Parliament and the Legislative Chambers of the country concerned is brought up. When actively cultivated by both sides, this seed of interparliamentary dialogue can germinate quickly and flourish in a relatively short time.

Over time, all past and present Speakers of the Maltese Parliament have attended Conferences and Meetings of their homologues within the context of a number of international and regional conventions. Currently, the most important assemblies for Speakers being convened are:

- The yearly Conference of Speakers of the European Union, which is hosted by the country holding the Presidency in the second half of the previous year. (Cyprus did the honours in April 2013, whilst Lithuania's turn will come up as host to the 2014 edition.)

- The biannual Conference of Council of Europe Speakers, with its next meeting scheduled to be held in Oslo in September 2014.

- The Conference of Speakers and Presiding Officers of the Commonwealth (CSPOC) is also held every two years, and Speaker Anġlu Farrugia is set to participate in the next meeting, at the end of January 2014, in Wellington, New Zealand.

Parliamentary Diplomacy - a means to an end (Cont.)

- Another forum, the Conference of Presidents of Parliaments of the Small European States, formed by Monaco in 2006, will come to the end of its first cycle in September 2014 in Andorra. Deputy Speaker Ċensu Galea attended the 2013 edition held in Reykjavik, Iceland.

Members of Parliament, drawn from both sides of the House of Representatives of Malta, are, at the start of each new legislature, appointed by motion passed in the House to participate in the meetings of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Mediterranean (PAM), which has its headquarters in Malta; the Parliamentary Assembly of the Union for the Mediterranean (PA-UfM); that for the Council of Europe (PACE); the Parliamentary Assembly of the OSCE and the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU). In turn, all serving members of the Maltese Parliament automatically become members of the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association (CPA) at the legislature's beginning, and so CPA meetings held in different Commonwealth countries throughout the year are attended by different Maltese MPs as the two Whips of the different parliamentary groupings prescribe.

When one speaks about meetings and conferences abroad within the parliamentary diplomacy context, the words 'sidelines' and 'fringes' spring readily to mind. It is not unknown for delegates from different countries to hold bilateral get-togethers aside of the official agenda being followed at the convocation. These reunions are generally held at the request of one of the parties, and the subject matter transacted in them is comprehensive inasmuch as it is effective, whilst the atmosphere of the discussion is kept at a frank and characteristically informal level.

A healthy rapport on the personal level between Maltese and foreign MPs is essential for building a smooth working relationship on an official plane between parliamentarians. For this reason, Speaker Anġlu Farrugia has successfully embarked on an enthusiastic mission to form Joint Parliamentary Friendship Groups between the Parliament of Malta and other foreign parliaments. Currently, twenty one such Groups have been, or are in the process of being formed, with another thirteen having been proposed already to foreign parliaments. The Parliament of Malta has hosted this year visits by German parliamentarians from the Bundestag and the French Senate. In the meantime, visits to the parliament of Saudi Arabia and by the Knesset of Israel to Malta are in the works.

The Parliament of Malta has an Office dedicated to providing support services to the Speaker and to the other Members of Parliament, on request, on international affairs issues. The advice extended to politicians varies from assistance with the mode of address to be used when writing to foreign dignitaries, to helping out with organizing official parliamentary visits abroad or welcoming guests of the Parliament of Malta visiting the country.

The American astronaut John-David Bartoe had aptly summed up in one brief statement the positive outcomes of the successful exercise of parliamentary diplomacy: "As I looked down, I saw a large river meandering slowly along for miles, passing from one country to another without stopping. I also saw huge forests, extending along several borders. And I watched the extent of one ocean touch the shores of separate continents. Two words leaped to mind as I looked down on all this: commonality and interdependence. We are one world." May it always be so.

Penned by Gaetan Naudi
Head of the Office for International Affairs, Parliament of Malta 2010 – 2013

Ambassador Naudi served in Egypt, in Spain and in Poland. Between 2001 and 2004 he was Permanent Secretary in the Ministry for Foreign Affairs.

Attivitajiet tal-Parlament

Membru Parlamentari Ġdid

Fl-elezzjoni każwali li saret fis-seba' distrett elettorali biex jimtela l-post vakat wara r-riżenja ta' Dr Lawrence Gonzi minn membru parlamentari, ġie elett is-Sur Antoine Borg. Il-ġurament tal-ħatra tiegħu bħala Membru għan-naħa tal-Oppożizzjoni saret fl-ewwel seduta li saret wara l-vaganzi tas-sajf, fit-30 ta' Settembru 2013. Qabel ma ngħata l-ġurament is-Sur Borg, akkumpanjat mill-familja tiegħu, kien milqugħ mill-Ispeaker tal-Kamra, l-Onor. Anġlu Farrugia fl-uffiċċju tiegħu. Għal din il-laqgħa kienu preżenti wkoll il-Whips taż-żewġ gruppi parlamentari, l-Onor. Carmelo Abela u l-Onor. David Agius.

Notte Bianca 2013

It-tmien edizzjoni tan-Notte Bianca din is-sena saret is-Sibt, 5 ta' Ottubru 2013, u bħas-snin ta' qabel il-Parlament kien wieħed mill-postijiet pubbliċi fil-Belt li nfetħu għall-pubbliku. Din is-sena l-għadd ta' persuni li żaru l-Parlament laħaq it-8,588 ruħ. Id-Deputy Speaker, l-Onor. Ċensu Galea, il-Kap tal-Oppożizzjoni, l-Onor. Simon Busuttil u l-Whips taż-żewġ gruppi parlamentari, l-Onor. Carmelo Abela u l-Onor. David Agius ħadu l-okkażjoni biex jiltaqgħu man-nies b'mod informali u jitkellmu magħhom dwar ir-rwol tagħhom fil-Parlament. Diversi impjegati mill-Uffiċċju tal-Iskrivan tal-Kamra wkoll kienu preżenti biex iwieġbu mistoqsijiet tal-pubbliku dwar il-Parlament u l-Kumitati tiegħu kif ukoll jispjegaw ix-xogħol li jagħmlu huma f'din l-istituzzjoni.

Parliament Outreach - Żjara miċ-Ċentru Internazzjonali tat-Taħriġ ta' Malta

Bħala parti mill-programm Parliament Outreach, iċ-Ċentru Internazzjonali tat-Taħriġ ta' Malta organizza żjara lill-Parlament fit-23 ta' Ottubru 2013, waqt li kienet għadejja seduta parlamentari. Wara li segwa l-ħin tal-Mistoqsijiet Parlamentari mill-iStrangers' Gallery tal-Kamra tad-Deputati, il-grupp iltaqa' mal-iSpeaker tal-Kamra, l-Onor. Anġlu Farrugia, kif ukoll il-Whips Parlamentari, l-Onor. Carmelo Abela u l-Onor. David Agius li spjegawlhom il-proċedura parlamentari u x-xogħol li jwettqu. Il-parteċipanti mbagħad ittieħdu għal dawra mal-Palazz.

Żjara minn uffiċjali tal-Kummissjoni Ewropea

Fil-11 ta' Novembru 2013, grupp ta' 17-il uffiċjal tal-Kummissjoni Ewropea żaru l-Parlament u ltaqgħu mal-Ispeaker, l-Onor. Anġlu Farrugia, u mal-Iskrivan tal-Kamra, is-Sur Ray Scicluna, li tawhom tagħrif dwar is-*setup* tal-Kamra tad-Deputati u l-proċess leġiżlattiv f'Malta. Il-grupp ta' uffiċjali kien fuq żjara ta' familjarizzazzjoni f'Malta organizzata miċ-Ċentru għall-Iżvilupp, Riċerka u Taħriġ (CDRT) fl-Uffiċċju tal-Prim Ministru, bil-għan li tgħin lil uffiċjali fil-Kummissjoni Ewropea jifhmu aħjar is-sistema politika u amministrattiva ta' Malta.

Ċerimonja simbolika b'rabta ma' Jum ir-Repubblika

Fit-12 ta' Diċembru 2013, numru ta' studenti Għawdxin ħadu post il-Membri Parlamentari fil-Kamra tad-Deputati, waqt ċerimonja simbolika li saret b'rabta ma' Jum ir-Repubblika. Matul iċ-ċerimonja li saret fuq inizjattiva tal-Kumitat Ċelebrazzjonijiet Nazzjonali u Reġjonali, il-President tal-istess Kumitat, Monsinjur Joe Vella Gauci, ippreżenta lill-iSpeaker, l-Onor. Anġlu Farrugia u lill-Kap tal-Oppożizzjoni, l-Onor. Simon Busuttil arma żgħira tar-Repubblika ta' Malta li tintlibes fuq il-pavru. L-istess arma kellha tiġi ppreżentata lill-Prim Ministru aktar tard.

Laqgħa konġunta tal-Kumitat Permanenti dwar l-Affarijiet Barranin u Ewropej u l-Kumitat dwar il-Kontijiet Pubbliċi

F'laqgħa konġunta li saret tal-Kumitat Permanenti dwar l-Affarijiet Barranin u Ewropej u l-Kumitat dwar il-Kontijiet Pubbliċi fit-2 ta' Diċembru 2013, Dr Louis Galea, membru tal-Qorti Ewropea tal-Awdituri (ECA), ippreżenta r-Rapport Annwali tal-ECA u l-Baġit għas-Sena Finanzjarja 2012, u tkellem dwar il-ħidma tiegħu fi ħdan l-ECA.

Attivitajiet tal-Parlament (Kont.)

Seminar dwar Żviluppi fl-Unjoni Ewropea u l-implikazzjonijiet tagħhom fuq il-kontabilità pubblika

Fit-3 ta' Diċembru 2013 l-Uffiċċju Nazzjonali tal-Verifika (NAO), flimkien mal-Qorti Ewropea tal-Awdituri (ECA), organizzat seminar ta' nofs ta' nhar għall-awdituri u l-uffiċjali tal-NAO u d-Dipartiment tal-Awditjar Intern u Investigazzjonijiet fl-Uffiċċju tal-Prim Ministru. Is-seminar sar fil-Kamra tal-Kumitati, il-Palazz, u kien ippresedut mid-Deputat Speaker, l-Onor. Ċensu Galea, u l-Awditur Ġenerali, is-Sur Anthony C. Mifsud. Is-suġġett ittrattat fis-seminar kien "L-iżviluppi li kien hemm fl-Unjoni Ewropea b'reazzjoni għall-kriżijiet finanzjarji u ekonomiċi: Implikazzjonijiet fuq il-Kontabilità Pubblika" kemm fuq livell nazzjonali kif ukoll fuq livell Ewropew. Is-seminar kien indirizzat minn Dr Louis Galea, Membru (ECA), Mr Zacharias Kolias, Direttur (ECA) and Mr Jacques Sciberras, Kap tas-Segretarjat (ECA).

Parlament għal Persuni b'Diżabilità

Għall-għaxar sena konsekuttiva, il-Kummissjoni Nazzjonali Persuni b'Diżabilità (KNPD) laqqgħet il-Parlament għal-Persuni b'Diżabilità fl-10 ta' Diċembru 2013. Din hija inizjattiva maħsuba biex tippromwovi l-inklużjoni billi tqarreb il-proċess demokratiku lejn in-nies b'diżabilità. Is-seduta saret fil-Kamra tal-Kumitati, fil-Palazz u kienet ippreseduta mill-iSpeaker tal-Kamra, l-Onor. Anġlu Farrugia. Fost dawk li pparteċipaw fid-dibattitu kien hemm iċ-Chairman tal-KNDP, is-Sur Joseph M. Camilleri, l-Aġent Prim Ministru, l-Onor. Louis Grech, il-Kap tal-Oppożizzjoni, l-Onor. Simon Busuttil u diversi Membri Parlamentari oħrajn.

Rikonoxximent lin-Nanniet

Il-Kamra tad-Deputati ħadet xejra mhux tas-soltu nhar it-Tlieta, 17 ta' Diċembru 2013, meta għadd sabiħ ta' nanniet u neputijiet, kif ukoll diversi Membri Parlamentari u tfal minn skejjel differenti ħadu sehem f'seduta speċjali ppreseduta mill-iSpeaker, l-Onor. Anġlu Farrugia, li fiha ngħata ġieħ ix-xogħol li jwettqu n-nanniet. Waqt id-dibattitu ġiet proposta mozzjoni, li għaddiet unanimament, biex it-tieni Ħadd ta' Ottubru jibda jkun magħruf bħala 'Jum in-Nanniet'. Fost dawk li attendew għas-seduta kien hemm il-Ministru għall-Affarijiet Barranin, l-Onor. George Vella, u l-President Emeritus Edward Fenech Adami, li wkoll huma nanniet.

Ġieħ lil Nelson Mandela

Fis-seduta parlamentari tal-10 ta' Diċembru 2013, il-Membri Parlamentari Maltin ingħaqdu biex taw ġieħ lill-memorja tal-eks-President tal-Afrika t'Isfel Nelson Mandela li miet fl-età ta' 95 sena.

Is-Sena Ewropea taċ-Ċittadini 2013

Fl-okkażjoni tas-Sena Ewropea taċ-Ċittadini, nhar is-Sibt, 23 ta' Novembru 2013, saret sessjoni speċjali tal-Parlament bejn il-Membri Parlamentari, il-Membri Parlamentari Ewropej u rappreżentanti tas-soċjetà ċivili dwar proposti li joħorġu minn abbozz ta' Ċarter dwar iċ-Ċittadinanza tal-Unjoni Ewropea u dwar ir-Rapport tal-Kummissjoni Ewropea dwar iċ-Ċittadinanza 2013. Din l-attività kienet parti mill-Fiera taċ-Ċittadini organizzata mill-Malta-EU Steering and Action Committee (MEUSAC), li huwa l-koordinatur nazzjonali tas-Sena Ewropea taċ-Ċittadini 2013. Waqt id-dibattitu, ippresedut mid-Deputat Speaker, l-Onor. Ċensu Galea, tqajmu diversi punti li l-MEUSAC kienet se tressaqhom quddiem l-awtoritajiet konċernati bħall-European Citizen Action Service, l-organizzazzjoni li qed tipproponi ċ-Ċarter Ewropew taċ-Ċittadinanza.

L-iSpeaker jippresjedi l-Parlament tan-Nanniet li sar fis-17 ta' Diċembu 2013

Parliamentary Activities

A New Member of Parliament

Mr Antoine Borg was elected in a casual election to succeed Dr Lawrence Gonzi on the seventh electoral district. He was sworn in as Member of Parliament for the Opposition when the House reconvened after the summer recess, on 30 September 2013. Prior to his swearing-in, Mr Borg, accompanied by his family, was welcomed by the Speaker, Hon. Anġlu Farrugia in his office. Also present were the two parliamentary Whips, Hon. Carmelo Abela and Hon. David Agius.

Notte Bianca 2013

The eighth edition of Notte Bianca this year took place on Saturday, 5 October 2013, and as in previous years Parliament was one of the public places in Valletta to open its doors to the public. The number of people who visited the House of Representatives this year reached the figure of 8,588. The Deputy Speaker, the Hon. Ċensu Galea, the Leader of the Opposition, the Hon Simon Busuttil, and the two Whips of the parliamentary groups, the Hon. Carmelo Abela and the Hon. David Agius, took the opportunity to informally meet with people and talk to them about their role in Parliament. Several employees from the Office of the Clerk of the House were also present to answer questions from the public about Parliament and its Committees and explain the work they do in this institution.

Parliament Outreach Programme – Visit by Malta International Training Centre

As part of the Parliament Outreach programme, the Malta International Training Centre organised a visit to Parliament on 23 October 2013. The group followed Question Time from the Strangers' Gallery of the Parliamentary Chamber. Afterwards they met the Speaker of the House, Hon. Anġlu Farrugia, and also the Parliamentary Whips, Hon. Carmelo Abela and Hon. David Agius who gave them an overview of parliamentary procedure and their respective roles. They were then taken on a brief tour of the Palace.

Visit by European Commission officers

A group of 17 European Commission Officers visited Parliament on the 11 November 2013 and met with the Speaker, Hon Anġlu Farrugia, and the Clerk of the House, Mr Ray Scicluna, who explained briefly to them the setup of the House of Representatives and the legislative process in Malta. The group was on a familiarisation visit to Malta organised by the Centre for Development Research & Training (CDRT) in the Office of the Prime Minister, aimed at helping officials in the European Commission to better understand the political and administrative system of Malta.

Republic Day symbolic ceremony

On 12 December 2013, a number of Gozitan students took the seats normally occupied by Members of Parliament in the House of Representatives during a symbolic ceremony commemorating Republic Day. During the ceremony, held on the initiative of the Gozo's National and Regional Festivities Committee, the Committee President Mon. Joe Vella Gauci presented lapel pins depicting the coat of arms of the Republic to the Speaker, Hon. Anġlu Farrugia, and the Leader of the Opposition, Hon. Simon Busuttil. The presentation to the Prime Minister was to be made on another day.

Joint meeting of the Standing Committee on Foreign and European Affairs and the Public Accounts Committee

During a joint meeting of the Standing Committee on Foreign and European Affairs and the Public Accounts Committee held on the 2 December 2013, Dr Louis Galea, member of the European Court of Auditors (ECA), presented the Annual Report of the ECA on the Budget for the Financial Year 2012 and reported about his work as a Member of this Court.

Parliamentary activities (Cont.)

Seminar on EU development implications for public audit

On the 3rd December 2013 the National Audit Office (NAO), in collaboration with the European Court of Auditors (ECA), organised a morning seminar for auditors and officers of the NAO and the Internal Audit and Investigations Department within the Office of the Prime Minister. The seminar was held at the Committee Room, the Palace, and was chaired by the Deputy Speaker, Hon. Censu Galea, and the Auditor General, Mr Anthony C. Mifsud. The theme of the seminar was "EU Developments in response to the financial and economic crises: Implications for Public Accountability" both at national and European level. The seminar was addressed by Dr Louis Galea, Member (ECA), Mr Zacharias Kolias, Director (ECA) and Mr Jacques Sciberras, Head of Secretariat (ECA).

Parliament for Persons with Disability

The National Commission Persons with Disability (KNPD) convened on the 10th December 2013 the 10th Parliament for Persons with Disability. This is an initiative aimed at promoting inclusion by bringing the democratic process closer to people with a disability. The sitting was held in the Committee Room, the Palace, and was chaired by the Speaker of the House, Hon. Anġlu Farrugia. Amongst those who participated in the debate were Mr Joseph M. Camilleri, Chairman KNDP, Hon. Louis Grech, Acting Prime Minister; Hon. Simon Busuttil, Leader of the Opposition, and several other Members of Parliament.

Grandparents' role paid tribute

The House of Representatives took an unusual turn on 17 December 2013, as a good number of grandparents and their grandchildren, along with several Members of Parliament and students from various schools, took part in a special sitting chaired by the Speaker, Hon. Anġlu Farrugia, and paid tribute to the work done by grandparents. During the debate a motion proposing that the second Sunday of October be dedicated as 'Grandparents Day' was passed unanimously. Amongst those who attended the sitting where the Minister for Foreign Affairs, Hon. George Vella, and President Emeritus Edward Fenech Adami, who are also grandparents.

Tribute to Nelson Mandela

During the parliamentary sitting of the 10th December 2013, Maltese Parliamentarians presented a united front in paying tribute to the former South African President Nelson Mandela who passed away at the age of 95.

European Year of Citizenship

A special session of Parliament was held on Saturday, 23 November 2013, to mark the European Year of Citizens. Members of Parliament were joined by Members of the European Parliament and representatives of the civil society to discuss proposals emanating from the draft European Union Citizenship Charter and also the European Commission Report on Citizenship 2013. This activity formed part of the Citizens Fair organised by the Malta-EU Steering and Action Committee (MEUSAC), which is the national co-ordinator of the European Year of the Citizen. During the session, chaired by the Deputy Speaker, Hon. Censu Galea, various points were raised which the MEUSAC will be referring to the authorities concerned, such as the European Citizen Action Service, the organisation that is proposing the European Citizenship Charter.

Parliament for persons with disability - 12 December 2013

Ħidma Parlamentari April – Diċembru 2013		Parliamentary Work April – December 2013
Seduti fil-Plenarju	105	Plenary Sittings
Laqgħat tal-Kumitati Permanenti	105	Meetings of Standing Committees
Stqarrijiet ministerjali	19	Ministerial statements
Mozzjonijiet	92	Motions
Mozzjonijiet Privati	5	Private Members' Motions
Mozzjonijiet għall-Ewwel Qari ta' Abbozzi ta' Liġi	32	Motions for First Reading of Bills
Liġijiet mgħoddija mill-Parlament	19	Acts enacted by Parliament
Liġijiet approvati b'votazzjoni	4	Acts approved upon division
Mistoqsijiet parlamentari	6,940	Parliamentary questions
Dokumenti mqiegħda fuq il-Mejda tal-Kamra	2,035	Documents laid on the Table of the House
Diskorsi tal-Aġġornament	69	Adjournment speeches
Deċizjonijiet tas-Sedja	15	Rulings by the Chair
Membri Parlamentari li siefru fuq xogħol parlamentari	116	Members of Parliament on parliamentary duties abroad
Delegazzjonijiet parlamentari barra minn Malta	66	Parliamentary delegations abroad