



Press Release

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Maltese delegation participates in the 27th Annual Session of the OSCE PA

A delegation of the Maltese Parliament took part in the 2018 Annual Session of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE PA) in Berlin, Germany, between 7 and 11 July. This annual session brought together around 300 parliamentarians from the 57 OSCE participating states, to discuss the theme 'Implementing OSCE Commitments: The Role of Parliaments'. The Maltese delegation was led by Etienne Grech and comprised Silvio Grixti and Godfrey Farrugia.

The 27th annual session of the OSCE PA started with a meeting of the Standing Committee during which several reports of the OSCE PA ad hoc committees and election observation missions were discussed. The speakers lamented deviations from international rules and standards and noted that at times of heightened mistrust, the encounters of parliamentarians facilitate mutual understanding and promote the full adherence to OSCE principles such as sovereign equality, territorial integrity of States, the peaceful settlement of disputes, inviolability of frontiers, and human rights.

On 8 and 9 July each General Committee presented reports which underpinned the draft resolutions presented by each of the committees. The Report of the First General Committee emphasized that security challenges such as terrorism, cyber threats, protracted conflicts and nuclear disarmament, require multilateral organizations to bridge divides and facilitate dialogue between governments, parliaments and civil society in security matters. Additionally, the Report of the Second General Committee stressed that climate change has pushed the earth into uncharted territory, contributing to extreme weather and migration. However, it also underlined that environmental and economic migration should not overshadow migration and internal displacement caused by conflicts and urged greater attention to this. The Report of the Third General Committee highlighted the importance of upholding human rights even in conflict areas and emergency situations and focused on the rights of children and young people, migrants and refugees. The Report also focused on the human trafficking, cyber warfare, propaganda and fake news, as well as the crucial role of parliamentarians in election observation.

The Maltese delegation actively participated in the meetings of the General Committees of the OSCE PA, notably the Second General Committee on Economic Affairs, Science, Technology and the Environment. Participating in the debate on the Report of the Second General Committee Godfrey Farrugia highlighted the seriousness of climate change, air pollution and its impact on the availability of water, emphasised the importance of a green economy, and referred to the resolution on drinking water, which he presented in 2017, and which was adopted by the 26th annual session of the OSCE PA and included in the Minsk Declaration.

Attachments: photos

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In addition to the reports and draft resolutions of the three General Committees, the members discussed 16 supplementary items on matters ranging from human trafficking and migration to gender equality and human rights to the digital economy, transportation, war and demography. One such supplementary item, which was discussed in the Second General Committee, was a draft resolution on prioritising youth and supporting young people to reach their potential, submitted by Godfrey Farrugia. This draft supplementary item posits that young people, as the backbone of today's society and the leaders of the future, are integral to building sustainable peace, preventing conflict, countering extremism and overcoming the world's challenges. Thus, young people must be given the necessary support to develop with a sense of wellbeing and civic commitment, as well as adequate opportunities to be able to contribute to all peace-building and security efforts. The supplementary item was approved with one amendment. It was then included in the Final Declaration of the Annual Session, a copy of which will be presented to the Ministerial Council of the OSCE later this year, with the aim of bringing to the ministers' attention issues of major importance, and to call on the OSCE to take action and address identified shortcomings and problems.

Prior to being submitted to the OSCE PA, the Maltese draft resolution needed to obtain the necessary number of signatures from foreign delegations. In fact, the draft resolution had received the support from 41 parliamentarians from 29 different delegations. The Maltese delegation also supported a number of draft resolutions presented by other delegations, including the American resolution on implementing trafficking-free communities, the Belgian resolution on migrants who are minors, and the Spanish resolution on demographic challenges posed by an ageing population.

Etienne Grech and Godfrey Farrugia also participated actively in the general debate organised in plenary on 10 and 11 July, during which they both spoke on the topic of migration. While Etienne Grech called for increased burden-sharing and for the creation of legal corridors for migration, including asylum seekers, Godfrey Farrugia lamented the track-record of the OSCE's Ministerial Council in implementing the resolutions and recommendations made by the OSCE PA.

The members of the Maltese delegation also participated in side events organised in the margins of the 27th annual session. Such events included a panel discussion organised by the Swedish delegation, entitled "Defeat corruption in order to build stable democracies", a working lunch on "Combating Violence Against Women", organised by the OSCE PA and a debate on "the Role of Parliaments in Scrutiny and Oversight in the OSCE Regional Context" organised by the Georgian delegation and ODIHR.

The annual session also included the election of a number of officers of the OSCE PA, including the President, Vice-Presidents as well as Chair, Vice-Chairs and Rapporteurs of the three General Committees. Apart from voting in these elections, the Maltese delegation personally congratulated the newly-elected officers.

The next meeting of the OSCE PA will take place in Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan, in October 2018.