



HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

PARLIAMENT OF MALTA

ANNUAL REPORT

2017



PARLAMENT TA' MALTA

House of Representatives
Annual Report
2017

**House of Representatives
Parliament of Malta
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***'There shall be a Parliament of Malta which shall consist of
the President and a House of Representatives'.
[Article 51 of the Constitution of Malta]***

***'Subject to the provisions of this Constitution, Parliament may make laws for the peace,
order and good government of Malta in conformity with full respect for human rights,
generally accepted principles of international law and Malta's international and
regional obligations in particular those assumed by the treaty of accession to the
European Union signed in Athens on the 16th April, 2003'.
[Article 65 (1) of the Constitution of Malta]***

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FOREWORD

The year 2017 was a very busy one for the Maltese Parliament. Besides the work that was scheduled for the year, early general elections were called, which to an extent impacted on the ongoing parliamentary work. The Thirteenth Legislature opened on 24 June with the oath of office being taken by the Members of Parliament elected in the elections of 3 June, as well as the traditional speech of the President of the Republic. It should be noted that in this Legislature a considerable number of young Members were elected to Parliament for the first time.



Undoubtedly, the work which occupied a great part of our time and resources in the first half of the year were the six conferences organised by the Maltese Parliament within the framework of the parliamentary dimension of the first Maltese Presidency of the Council of the European Union. I have to admit that this experience was not an easy one for a small Parliament, but despite the challenges that we faced I am very satisfied that we were able to keep up with much larger parliaments. Of course, this work did not start in January, but had been going on for months in advance, enabling us to organise the first of a series of interparliamentary meetings at the end of January, with the last meeting being organised in May. Besides six formal meetings, the Maltese Parliament welcomed several delegations from the European Commission, the European Parliament and other national parliaments, which had all shown interest in the parliamentary aspect of the Maltese Presidency of the Council of the European Union.

It is also worth mentioning that, for the first time, in 2017 the Parliamentary Service established under the Parliamentary Service Act which came into force in January of the same year, adopted its first financial plan – that for the year 2018 – according to the provisions of this Act, namely after discussion in the House Business Committee and following the approval of the whole House. It is worth mentioning that both the Committee and the House adopted this budget unanimously.

The collaboration with the Artificial Intelligence Department of the University of Malta was also taken forward in 2017 with the further development of mobile apps for Parliament, including an app presenting parliamentary questions in a more interactive manner, the development of which is being done in several phases by way of a sponsorship from MITA.

Furthermore Parliament organised three other interparliamentary activities in the second half of the year: a seminar on the use of technology in parliaments among employees of national parliaments of the Council countries of Europe; a conference on migration in the Mediterranean organized jointly with the Inter-Parliamentary Union and in collaboration with the Parliamentary Assembly for the Mediterranean; and a meeting of the European Association of former MPs of countries of the Council of Europe who together discussed the topic of statelessness.

It is worth mentioning, however, that the legislative and scrutiny work, the work of the standing committees and overseas commitments continued, even at the time that Parliament was involved in activities related to the Presidency. In this annual report you will find more detail on all this work carried out in 2017.

I take this opportunity to thank all Members of Parliament for their cooperation to enable this work to be carried out efficiently; I have no doubt that this cooperation will continue in the months and years to come so that the highest institution of the country continues to fulfil its functions in a manner that not only meets but also anticipates the expectations of the people.

A handwritten signature in black ink, consisting of stylized, overlapping loops and lines, representing the name Anglu Farrugia.

Anglu Farrugia
Speaker

1. HOUSE BUSINESS

1.1 Overview

2017 was an especially busy year for the Maltese House of Representatives and its Members. During the first six months of the year, when Malta held the six-month rotating Presidency of the Council of the European Union, Parliament engaged in several activities related to the parliamentary dimension of the Maltese Presidency of the Council of the European Union. These included increased parliamentary diplomacy activities and the organisation of six meetings which brought together Chairpersons and Members from committees of the European Parliament and of national parliaments of EU Member States. These activities were carried out in parallel with the traditional legislative and parliamentary scrutiny functions carried out by the Parliament.

On 1 May, the President of Malta, Her Excellency Marie-Louise Coleiro Preca, dissolved Parliament, bringing the 12th Legislature to a close, with the 13th Legislature convening on 24 June 2017. This report covers activities taking place during the 12th Legislature in the first part of the year, as well as those taking place during the 13th Legislature, in the second part of the year. During the 12th Legislature the Parliament was composed of 71 Members, 38 sitting on the Government side, 31 on the Opposition side and two independent Members, while the 13th Legislature saw 65 Members elected to Parliament with two additional seats assigned to the Opposition in accordance with the proportional representation system, resulting in 37 Members sitting on the Government benches and 30 Members sitting on the Opposition benches.



1.1.1 New initiatives taken by Parliament in 2017

The year 2017 brought several challenges to the Maltese Parliament, which led to a number of new initiatives being taken. Such initiatives served to continue improving the transparency of the House of Representatives, increasing parliamentary autonomy from the Executive and, in so doing, strengthening democracy in Malta. As Malta held the Presidency of the Council of the

European Union for the first time in the first half of 2017, the Maltese Parliament organised six interparliamentary conferences falling within the Parliamentary Dimension of the Maltese Presidency. These conferences focused on local priority thematic issues and offered Members of Parliament and their European counterparts, the opportunity for dialogue and exchange of ideas and best practices. Additionally, in 2017 the Maltese Parliament hosted a seminar of the European Centre for Parliamentary Research and Documentation (ECPRD), which brought together parliamentary officials from member states of the Council of Europe to discuss the challenges and opportunities which technology brings to national parliaments.

In this field, the Maltese Parliament continued its work to enable citizens to follow Parliament's work more closely. Following the launch of the mobile app regarding the Parliamentary Dimension of Malta's Presidency of the Council of the European Union in 2016, which app gained popularity as a useful tool throughout the Maltese Presidency, in 2017 the Maltese House of Representatives launched its second mobile app: PQViz. PQViz provides an innovative visualization of the large amount of information contained in PQ documents in such a way that users may more intuitively understand how Parliament holds the Executive to account by means of this new scrutiny tool.

Furthermore, Parliament continued to publicise its work through various publications, notably through the *Is-Sedja Titkellem* series, with its 6th and 7th volumes being published in 2017, as well as the 16th and 17th issues of the periodical *mill-Parlament*.

The Parliamentary Service Act, which was published in 2017, provides for the establishment of an autonomous Parliamentary Service, which, among other things, increased the Parliament's financial independence. Consequently, in December 2017, for the first time ever, the Speaker of the House of Representatives presented and explained the Financial Plan of the Parliamentary Service for the year 2018 to the House Business Committee, as per Article 17 of the Parliamentary Service Act, Chap. 562, which committee unanimously recommended the approval of the said financial plan. The Motion which was presented to the House to approve the financial plan of the Parliamentary Service for the year 2018 was unanimously approved.

1.1.2 Composition of Parliament

During the year under review the composition of the House changed as outlined below:

- On 1 May the President of Malta, Her Excellency Marie-Louise Coleiro Preca, dissolved Parliament. Following a general election which was held on 3 June, the 13th Parliament was constituted on 24 June, with 37 Members forming the Government and 30 Members forming the Opposition being elected.
- Member of Parliament Jean Pierre Debono, who was elected for the first time in the June general elections, resigned his parliamentary seat on 24 September. The resignation of Hon. Debono resulted in a vacancy in the Fifth Electoral District for which a casual election was held on 3 October. Peter Micallef, who was elected in the aforementioned casual election, resigned within minutes of being sworn in to Parliament on 3 October to make way for the co-option of Dr Adrian Delia as Member of the House.



- On 4 October, Prime Minister Joseph Muscat presented a motion calling for the co-option of Adrian Delia to Parliament. The motion was approved unanimously and Adrian Delia was sworn in to Parliament during the same sitting and sworn as Leader of the Opposition on 6 October.



1.2 Legislative Programme

During 2017, 31 Acts were enacted by Parliament, 21 of which were enacted in the 12th Legislature and ten in the 13th Legislature.

1.2.1 New legislation and objectives behind the following bills

The following eight principal Acts were enacted in the 12th Legislature in 2017:

Act No. II of 2017 – Coordination of Government Inspections Act: The objects and reasons of this Bill are to establish a central office to coordinate inspections by government bodies and to regulate the conduct of inspections with a view to reducing the burden on private businesses, other private entities and individuals, and making inspections more transparent and effective.

Act No. III of 2017 – Child Protection (Alternative Care) Act: The Bill is intended to replace the Children and Young Persons (Care Orders) Act, to establish Child Court Services, to introduce child protection orders, to provide for special care and protection for children removed or separated from their parents and placed in out of home care.

Act No. XIII of 2017 – Standards in Public Life Act: The main object of this Bill is to provide for the appointment of a Commissioner and a Standing Committee with power to investigate breaches of statutory or ethical duties of categories of persons in public life.

Act No. XV of 2017 – Cohabitation Act: The objects of this Bill are to regulate cohabitations.

Act No. XVI of 2017 – Budget Measures Implementation Act: The objects and reasons of this Bill are to implement Budget measures for the financial year 2017 and other administrative measures.

Act No. XVII of 2017 – Government Lands Act: The objects and reasons of this Bill are to regulate the administration of Government land, land acquisition for public purposes, to establish a procedure that shall be followed related to this acquisition, to provide for eviction from lands and properties which are either administered or held by the Government under any title and to regulate the grant of title to any immovable property of the Government or that which is administered by such Government, and to provide for matters connected therewith and ancillary thereto.

Act No. XVIII of 2017 – Police Act: The object of this Bill is to provide for the regulation of the organization, discipline and duties of the Police Force, and to repeal the Police Act, 1961.

Act No. XXI of 2017 – Malta Development Bank Act: The object of this Bill is to make provision for the establishment of the Malta Development Bank, the composition of its Board of Directors, the determination of its functions and powers, and to provide for other matters connected thereto.

The following three principal Acts were enacted in the 13th Legislature:

Act No. XXII of 2017 – Government Borrowing and Management of Public Debt Act: The objects and reasons of this Act are to consolidate all the existing laws relative to the borrowing of the central Government including the issue of debt securities. The Act aims at providing for the governance aspects, high level policy objectives and institutional arrangement for prudent management of the central Government's debt and cash position, and liquidity and reserve funds.

Act No. XXIX of 2017 – Appropriation (2018) Act: This Bill provides for the application of a sum not exceeding €3,058,452,066 for the service of the financial year 2018 to meet expenditure under the different Votes in the Schedule to this Bill.

Act No. XXX of 2017 – Second (2017) Appropriation Act: This Bill provides for the application of a sum not exceeding €260,999,978 for the service of the financial year 2017 to meet expenditure under the Votes specified in the First Schedule to the Bill in addition to €2,799,560,187 appropriated by the Act No. LVII of 2016 and for the appropriation of a further €22 for the service of the financial year 2017 to repay an equivalent amount withdrawn from the Contingencies Fund during the financial year 2017 under the Votes specified in the Second Schedule to the Bill.

1.2.2 Amendment Acts and objectives behind the following amendment bills

The following amendment Acts of 2017 were enacted in the 12th Legislature:

Act No. I of 2017 – Civil Code (Amendment) Act: The object of this Bill is to review the prescriptive period in actions which involve the collection of ground rents and other rents payable to the Government of Malta. The Bill also provides for the revision of the provisions relating to the confirmation on oath in order that the creditor will not be precluded from collecting whatever is due to him or her from a debtor who recognizes the fact that he or she is a debtor.

Act No. IV of 2017 – Prisons (Amendment) Act: The object of the Bill is to provide for the welfare and retirement of animals used by disciplined forces.

Act No. V of 2017 – Malta Council for Economic and Social Development (Amendment) Act: The main object of this Bill is to provide for the transfer, to the Minister responsible for Social Dialogue, of certain rights, duties and functions established in the Act. Amongst other amendments, the Bill also provides for the establishment of certain other bodies within the Council.

Act VI of 2017 - Maltese Language (Amendment) Act: The main objects and reasons of this Bill are to update the composition of the National Council of the Maltese Language by, inter alia, recognising and including entities and associations which are contributing to the Maltese language through their work in Malta and abroad.

Act VII of 2017 – Health (Amendment) Act: The objects and reasons of this Bill are to enable persons who have reached the age of sixteen years to consent or refuse medical attention, care or treatment upon their own individual judgement if the medical practitioner decides that they have sufficient maturity and understanding to take such a decision.

Act No. VIII of 2017 – Mediation (Amendment) Act: The main object of this Bill is to amend the Mediation Act in order to introduce provisions aimed at widening the instances relating to recourse to out of court settlement.

Act No. IX of 2017 – Interpretation (Amendment) Act: The objects and reasons of this Bill aim at the establishment of legal certainty with regard to the decisions taken by Boards, Committees, Authorities or other entities established by law in circumstances where any person required to nominate or appoint any person to sit on the same fails to do so.

Act No. X of 2017 – Banking (Amendment) Act: The object of this Bill is to transpose Article 108 of Directive 2014/59/EU of the European Parliament and of the Council establishing a framework for the recovery and resolution of credit institutions and investment firms and amending Council Directive 82/ 891/EEC, and Directives 2001/24/EC, 2002/47/EC, 2004/25/EC, 2005/56/EC, 2007/36/EC, 2011/35/EU, 2012/30/EU and 2013/36/EU, and Regulations (EU) No. 1093/2010 and (EU) No. 648/2012, of the European Parliament and of the Council by amending the Banking Act, and also to provide for matters ancillary or incidental thereto.

Act No. XI of 2017 – Companies (Amendment)

Act: The object of this Bill is to amend the Companies Act so as to improve the recovery process for registered companies in financial difficulties.

Act No. XII of 2017 – Small Business (Amendment)

Act: The object of this Bill is to update the composition of the entities and the administration of the Act.

Act No. XIV of 2017 – Traffic Regulation Ordinance (Amendment) Act:

The purpose of this Bill is to strengthen the safeguarding of safety on the road by decreasing the limits of alcohol that one may be allowed to consume if he shall be driving, by adding to the possibilities of effective enforcement and by introducing different permissible limits of alcohol for different categories of drivers.

Act No. XIX of 2017 – Civil Protection (Amendment) Act:

The main objects of this Bill are to establish a Strategic Committee of the Civil Protection Department, to update the principal Act with regards to the functions of the Force, to widen the scope for the making of regulations, and to regularise the use of animals by the Force.

Act No. XX of 2017 – Refugees (Amendment) Act:

The main object of this Bill is to amend the Refugees Act by updating certain provisions thereof which were necessitated as a result of later EU legislation.

The following amendment Acts were enacted in the 13th Legislature:

Act No. XXIII of 2017 – Marriage Act and other Laws (Amendment) Act:

The object of this Bill is to modernise the institution of marriage and ensure that all consenting, adult couples have the legal right to enter into marriage.

Act No. XXIV of 2017 – Maltese Citizenship (Amendment) Act:

The objects and reasons of this Bill are to enable the grant of Maltese citizenship to persons who have rendered an exceptional service to the Republic of Malta or to humanity or whose naturalisation is of exceptional interest to the Republic of Malta, subject to such requirements as may be prescribed.

Act No. XXV of 2017 – Competition (Amendment) Act:

The object of this Bill is the implementation of Directive 2014/104/EU of the European Parliament and of the Council of 26 November 2014 on certain rules governing actions for damages under national law for infringements of the competition law provisions of the Member States and of the European Union.

Act No. XXVI of 2017 – Maltese Citizenship (Amendment No. 2) Act:

The objects and reasons of this Bill consist of the elimination of the absolute prohibition on persons with a mental disability which qualifies them as persons 'of unsound mind' in terms of the Act from obtaining Maltese citizenship by naturalisation thereby eliminating another form of discrimination against persons with disability.

Act No. XXVII of 2017 – Engineering Profession (Amendment) Act:

The object of this Bill is to update the provisions of the Engineering Profession Act in accordance with the provisions of Directive 2013/55/EU.

Act No. XXVIII of 2017 – Prevention of Money Laundering (Amendment) Act:

The objects of this Bill are to amend the Prevention of Money Laundering Act and to transpose Directive (EU) 2015/849 into Maltese law.

Act No. XXXI of 2017 – Various Financial Services Laws (Amendment) Act:

The object of this Bill is to affect amendments to the Financial Markets Act and the Investment Services Act, to transpose and implement the relevant provisions of (i) Directive 2014/65/EU of the European Parliament and of the Council on markets in financial instruments and amending Directive 2002/92/EC and Directive 2011/61/EU ("MiFID II"), (ii) Regulation (EU) No. 600/2014 of the European Parliament and of the Council on markets in financial instruments and amending Regulation (EU) No. 648/2012 ("MiFIR"), and (iii) Regulation (EU) No. 909/2014 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 23 July 2014 on improving securities settlement in the European Union and on central securities depositories and amending Directives 98/26/EC and 2014/65/EU and Regulation (EU) No. 236/2012 ("the CSDR"); and also to carry out amendments to the Companies Act in order to transpose and implement the relevant provisions of the CSDR. The object of this Bill is also to amend the Malta Financial Services Authority Act in view of (i) Regulation (EU) No. 2016/1011 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 8 June 2016 on indices used as benchmarks in financial instruments and financial contracts or to measure the performance of investment funds; and (ii) Regulation (EU) No. 2015/2365 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 25 November 2015 on transparency of securities financing transactions and of reuse.

1.3 Parliamentary Questions

6,275 Parliamentary Questions were submitted in 2017; 3,103 of which were submitted in the 12th Legislature and 3,172 in the 13th Legislature. 4,836

parliamentary questions were answered during 2017, 2,479 in the 12th Legislature and 2,357 in the 13th Legislature.

1.4 Ministerial Statements

11 ministerial statements were delivered in the House during 2017, nine in the 12th Legislature and two in the 13th Legislature.

The statements delivered in the 12th Legislature were:

Sitting No. 467 – 10 January

Statement by the Minister for the Economy, Investment and Small Business, Hon. Chris Cardona, on the reform of the opening hours of retail outlets;

Sitting No. 469 – 16 January

Statement by the Minister for Tourism, Hon. Edward Zammit Lewis, on the way forward for Air Malta and the negotiations with Alitalia;

Sitting No. 477 – 1 February

Statement by the Minister for Justice, Culture and Local Government, Hon. Owen Bonnici, on a report by the Permanent Commission Against Corruption concerning the investigation of an official of the Association of Local Councils;

Sitting No. 479 – 7 February

Statement by the Minister within the Office of the Prime Minister, Hon. Konrad Mizzi, regarding the major power cut on 6 February;

Sitting No. 479 – 7 February

Statement by the Minister within the Office of the Prime Minister, Hon. Konrad Mizzi, regarding the private investment in the project on the site of the Institute for Tourism Studies in St Julian's;

Sitting No. 480 – 8 February

Statement by the Prime Minister, Hon. Joseph Muscat, on the Malta Summit held on 3 February;

Sitting No. 485 – 20 February

Statement by the Minister for Home Affairs and National Security, Hon. Carmelo Abela, regarding the car bomb explosion in Triq Marina, Msida, on 20 February;

Sitting No. 492 – 8 March

Statement by the Minister for the Environment, Sustainable Development and Climate Change, Hon. José Herrera, and by the Minister for Tourism, Hon. Edward Zammit Lewis, on the collapse of the Azure Window in Dwejra, Gozo, on 8 March; and

Sitting No. 496 – 20 March

Statement by the Prime Minister, Hon. Joseph Muscat, on the European Council of 9-10 March.

The statements delivered in the 13th Legislature were:

Sitting No. 60 – 4 December

Statement by the Prime Minister, Hon. Joseph Muscat, on the investigations concerning the murder of the journalist Daphne Caruana Galizia; and

Sitting No. 65 – 18 December

Statement by the Prime Minister, Hon. Joseph Muscat, on the outcome of the European Council of 14-15 December.

1.5 Petitions

Two petitions were presented to the House in 2017. Both were presented in the 12th Legislature:

Sitting No. 493 – 13 March

Petition presented by Hon. Antoine Borg and Hon. Luciano Busuttil signed by 27,917 Maltese citizens registered as eligible to vote, for the reduction of the five-year prison punishment referred to in article 225(2) of the Criminal Code, regarding involuntary murder; and

Sitting No. 499 – 27 March

Online petition presented by Hon. George Pullicino signed by 1,772 students, addressed to the MATSEC Board, requesting compensation due to audio-visual technical issues encountered during the listening comprehension of the Italian and German 'O' level examinations.

1.6 Motions

The Office of the Clerk received 115 motions during the year under review. In the 12th Legislature, out of the 31 motions received, 16 were motions for First Reading of bills, of which one First Reading motion, together with the relative bill, was submitted by two Members from the Opposition. In the 13th Legislature, 84 motions were received, 22 of which were for First Reading of bills and seven were Private Members' Motions.

The motions presented by Government during the 12th Legislature in 2017 included the following:

- a motion to extend the timeframe within which the National Audit Office Accounts Committee needs to discuss the transfer of Government land to Sliema Wanderers FC, and its subsequent motion approving the transfer;
- a motion to approve the Ombudsplan for 2017;
- a motion to authorise the ratification of the UNESCO Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage; and
- a motion for the approval of the report by the Electoral Commission dated 24 October 2016

with regard to revisions of the electoral boundaries.

The Private Members' Motion presented during the 12th Legislature was:

Motion No. 441 – A bill amending the Code of Organization and Civil Procedure, which objects and reasons included the prescription of the possibility of demanding precautionary garnishee orders for claims for damages under the Press Act, presented by Hon. Jason Azzopardi and Hon. Clyde Puli.

At the start of the 13th Legislature, a number of procedural motions were approved in Parliament, namely calling for:

- the appointment of Speaker Anġlu Farrugia, Deputy Speaker Claudette Buttigieg, and Deputy Chairman of Committees Glenn Bedingfield;
- the setting up of the standing committees for the Consideration of Bills, on House Business, Privileges, the Foreign and European Affairs, on Petitions, on Health, on Economic and Financial Affairs, on Family Affairs, on Social Affairs, on Public Accounts, on the National Audit Office Accounts and on the Environment and Development Planning; and
- the appointment of the parliamentary delegations to various international fora: Parliamentary Assembly of the Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE PA), Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe (PACE), Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU), Parliamentary Assembly of the Union for the Mediterranean (PA-UfM), and Parliamentary Assembly of the Mediterranean (PAM).

Other motions presented by the Government in the 13th Legislature during the year under review, included the following:

- a number of motions for the approval of the financial estimates of government entities and corporations for 2017;
- motions concerning the parliamentary approval of the state budget and financial estimates for 2018 and the supplementary estimates for 2017;
- motions enabling Government to borrow money through bilateral loan arrangements agreed with foreign governments and local and foreign institutions, by issuing treasury bills and by issuing debt instruments;
- a motion to fill the seat vacated by Peter Micallef enabling Adrian Delia to be co-opted as a Member of the House;
- a motion to approve the estimates of the National Audit Office for the year 2018;

- a motion to approve the Financial Plan of the Parliamentary Service for the year 2018; and
- a motion on the transfer of Government property to Malita Investments plc for purposes as outlined in the Schedule to the Ecclesiastical Entities (Properties) Act.

The seven private Members Motions received during the 13th Legislature in 2017 are the following:

Motion No. 55 – Motion on a National Masterplan regarding development, presented by Hon. Marlene Farrugia;

Motion No. 58 – Motion proposing the appointment of a Committee on the Right to Life and Human Dignity, presented by Hon. Godfrey Farrugia and Hon. Clyde Puli;

Motion No. 61 – Motion proposing a bill to amend the Civil Code and the Criminal Code aimed at protecting first aiders from criminal and civil prosecution when assisting a person who is in 'clear and imminent' danger, presented by Hon. Mario de Marco, Hon. Therese Comodini Cachia, Hon. Claudio Grech and Hon. Stephen Spiteri;

Motion No. 66 – Motion to amend Legal Notice No. 156 of 2017 regarding leave for medically assisted procreation, presented by Hon. Stephen Spiteri and Hon. David Agius;

Motion No. 70 – Motion to revoke Legal Notice No. 243 of 2017 on the Institute for Education Agency, presented by Hon. Therese Comodini Cachia, Hon. Mario de Marco and Hon. David Agius;

Motion No. 71 – Motion for the setting up of a board of inquiry to investigate allegations that journalist Daphne Caruana Galizia, who was assassinated on 16 October 2017, made on public officers and on officers and employees of public entities, presented by Hon. Chris Said; and

Motion No. 76 – Motion regarding Legal Notice No. 300 of 2017, relating to the Environment Protection Act (Cap. 549), that increases the hunting and trapping hours in the Majjistral Nature and History Park Site, presented by Hon. Godfrey Farrugia and Hon. Marlene Farrugia.

1.7 Papers Laid on the Table of the House

In 2017, a total of 1,421 documents were laid on the Table of the House. The majority of the documents were replies given to parliamentary questions submitted by Members of Parliament to the various Ministers, legal notices and annual reports and financial statements of government entities and corporations.

A number of documents were tabled by the Speaker. These documents included reports received from the Office of the Ombudsman and the National Audit Office, reports prepared by Members of the Maltese Parliament following their participation in interparliamentary meetings abroad, and replies to parliamentary questions submitted to the Speaker.

1.8 Rulings

In 2017, during the 12th Legislature, nine rulings by the Chair on issues raised during debates in plenary were given.

The rulings delivered in the 12th Legislature were as follows:

Sitting No. 466 – 9 January

Ruling delivered by the Speaker on a point raised by Hon. Evarist Bartolo on 6 December 2016 concerning the tabling of documents quoted by a Member during his speech in parliament;

Ruling delivered by the Speaker on a point raised by Hon. Ċensu Galea on the reporting of parliamentary debates in the editorial of *I-Orizzont*;

Ruling delivered by the Speaker on points raised by Hon. Michael Falzon concerning the National Audit Office in his adjournment speech of 20 December 2016; and

Ruling delivered by the Speaker on a point raised by Hon. David Agius on 21 December 2016 regarding allegations of photos taken of Hon. Beppe Fenech Adami during a parliamentary sitting;

Sitting No. 479 – 7 February

Ruling delivered by the Speaker on a point raised by Minister Carmelo Abela on 6 February relating to the alleged misreporting of a speech that Minister Abela made in Parliament, by the newspaper *In-Nazzjon*, wherein the newspaper claimed that the Minister had said that a Police investigation was being carried out on Minister Konrad Mizzi;

Sitting No. 481 – 13 February

Ruling delivered by the Speaker on a point raised by Minister Owen Bonnici regarding the report in the journal *Politico* on 8 February concerning the establishment of the European Public Prosecutor Office (EPPO);

Sitting No. 491 – 7 March

Ruling delivered by the Speaker on a point raised by Hon. Robert Cutajar in the sitting of 6 March concerning the reply given to Parliamentary Question 31,403 by Minister Michael Farrugia regarding publications issued by the secretariat

responsible for persons with disability and active ageing;

Sitting No. 493 – 13 March

Ruling delivered by the Speaker on a point raised by Hon. Jason Azzopardi in an email sent to the Speaker asking him whether the area near Parliament reserved to members of the media had been extended to the area around the Central Bank of Malta; and

Sitting No. 503 – 5 April

Ruling delivered by the Speaker on the a point raised by Hon. Robert Cutajar in the sitting of 4 April, regarding the reports in the newspaper *Times of Malta* and on its website www.timesofmalta.com concerning Parliamentary Question 29809 on persons with disabilities employed by the Ministry for Finance.

During the 13th Legislature, in 2017, six rulings by the Speaker on issues raised during debates in plenary were given as follows:

Sitting No. 39 – 23 October

Ruling delivered by the Speaker on the request by the Leader of the Opposition, for the adjournment of the House in terms of Standing Order 13 to hold a debate, without vote, on the assassination of the journalist Daphne Caruana Galizia and the subsequent civil society protest in Valletta calling for the resignation of the Commissioner of Police and the Attorney General;

Sitting No. 53 – 15 November

Ruling delivered by the Speaker on the request by Hon. David Agius on the procedure to be followed regarding supplementary questions in view of the points raised in the previous sitting;

Sitting No. 57 – 27 November

Ruling delivered by the Speaker on the request by Minister Joe Mizzi regarding the reporting in *In-Nazzjon* of the reply given by the same Minister to Parliamentary Question 301 submitted by Hon. Jason Azzopardi asking whether any of the entities falling under the responsibility of Minister Mizzi had requested the services of the legal office of Hon. Robert Abela after 2013;

Ruling delivered by the Speaker on the request of Hon. Godfrey Farrugia, regarding the allocation of parliamentary speaking time to the members of the Partit Demokratiku forming part of the Opposition in Parliament;

Sitting No. 60 – 4 December

Ruling delivered by the Speaker regarding the question put by Hon. Robert Cutajar as to whether Minister Joe Mizzi was misleading the House in the sitting of 29 November when he declared that Minister Konrad Mizzi was abroad when, in fact, he

was present in the Chamber later on in the sitting; and

Sitting No. 65 – 18 December

Ruling delivered by the Speaker on the point made by Hon. Edwin Vassallo in the sitting of 5 December as to whether the difference in the definitions of 'prospective parents' and 'procreation medically assisted' in the Legal Notice No. 156 of 2017 and in the Embryo Protection Act (Cap. 524) constitutes misleading the House.

1.9 Parliamentary Whips

Parliamentary Whips are Members of Parliament appointed by each political party represented in the House of Representatives to facilitate the contribution of the parliamentary political groups to parliamentary business, so that it can proceed smoothly. By virtue of the nature of this role, the Whips are members of the House Business Committee.

Another responsibility of the parliamentary Whips is to ensure the regular presence in Parliament of Members in their respective parliamentary group, especially when votes are taken and when divisions are called.

Whips are also responsible for keeping Members in their respective parliamentary group informed about the business of the House, propose Members to serve on standing and select committees and also nominate Members on delegations participating in interparliamentary meetings abroad.

During the 12th Legislature, at the beginning of 2017, Hon. Godfrey Farrugia and Hon. David Agius continued as Government Whip and Opposition Whip respectively. In the 13th Legislature, until the end of 2017, Hon. Byron Camilleri served as Government Whip, while Hon. David Agius continued as Opposition Whip until Hon. Robert Cutajar was appointed Opposition Whip in November.

1.10 Leader of the House

The Leader of the House is defined in the Standing Orders of the House of Representatives as being the Minister responsible for parliamentary affairs. By virtue of this role, the Leader of the House is primarily responsible for the arrangement of Government business in the House, and for setting the parliamentary schedule of the House together with the Government and the Opposition Whips during the meetings of the House Business Committee, presided by the Speaker of the House.

In the 12th Legislature, the role of the Leader of the House was occupied by Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for European Affairs and the Implementation of the Electoral Manifesto, Hon. Louis Grech, while in the 13th Legislature, the role of the Leader of the House was occupied by Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Health, Hon. Chris Fearne.

2. STANDING COMMITTEES

The standing committees of the House, established with the cooperation and approval of both sides of the House in 1995, are of particular relevance in the workings of the House of Representatives. The standing committees, which are an extension of the House itself, have provided that professional slant to various issues discussed.

The standing committees have furthermore introduced an element of consultation with civil society. Technical experts and representatives from various organisations are invited to discuss and contribute through their expertise on particular subjects. More than that, meetings of the standing committees are open to the public and the media. These meetings are broadcast on the Parliament TV channel and are also audio and video streamed on the parliamentary website, thus facilitating an even closer relationship between the people and their elected representatives in Parliament. Committees may submit recommendations to the House for its consideration.

The Standing Orders of the House of Representatives provide for ten standing committees:

- Standing Committee on House Business;
- Standing Committee on Privileges;
- Standing Committee on Public Accounts;
- Standing Committee on Foreign and European Affairs;
- Standing Committee on Social Affairs;
- Standing Committee on Consideration of Bills;
- Standing Committee on Family Affairs;
- Standing Committee on Economic and Financial Affairs;
- Standing Committee on Health; and
- Standing Committee on Petitions.

Concurrently, two other parliamentary committees are appointed:

- Standing Committee on Environment and Development Planning by virtue of the Development Planning Act (Cap. 552); and
- National Audit Office Accounts Committee by virtue of the Auditor General and National Audit Office Act (Cap. 396).

2.1 Standing Committee on House Business

The principal task of this Committee, as outlined in Standing Order 120C, is to organise the business of the House by distributing bills and other work to the other standing committees and the House,

establishing and scheduling the number of sittings to be allocated to parliamentary debates and to consider other procedural issues. Correspondence received by the Speaker is also brought to the attention of the Committee.

The House Business Committee is also responsible for discussing the financial plan of the Parliamentary Service. This came about after the coming into force of the Parliamentary Service Act in 2017. The House Business Committee also discusses the plan of the Office of the Ombudsman for the following year, known as the Ombudsplan.

In the 12th Legislature, the Standing Committee on House Business was set up by way of Motion No. 18 approved on 22 April 2013 and its composition amended by way of Motion No. 40 approved on 28 May 2013, and by Motion No. 199 approved on 19 January 2015. It was composed as follows:

Chairperson

Hon. Anġlu Farrugia, Speaker

Members

Hon. Louis Grech, Leader of the House

Hon. David Agius

Hon. Mario de Marco

Hon. Godfrey Farrugia

Hon. Deborah Schembri

In 2017, the House Business Committee in this formation convened twice, and, apart from procedural House Business, discussed the following:

- the meeting with the College of European Commissioners scheduled for January 2017 as part of the events of the parliamentary dimension of the Maltese Presidency of the Council of the European Union;
- the interparliamentary meetings within the parliamentary dimension of the Maltese Presidency of the Council of the European Union;
- the appointment of the new representative of the Maltese Parliament in the European Parliament in Brussels; and
- the use of the funds collected as penalty for not attending parliamentary sitting days.

In the 13th Legislature, the Standing Committee on House Business was set up by way of Motion No. 35 approved on 11 July 2017 and its composition, as amended by Motion Nos. 48 and 77 of 17 July and 27 November, respectively, is as follows:

Chairperson

Hon. Anġlu Farrugia, Speaker



Members

Hon. Chris Fearne,
Leader of the House
Hon. David Agius
Hon. Byron Camilleri
Hon. Robert Cutajar
Hon. Edward Zammit Lewis

During the 13th Legislature, the House Business Committee convened five times. Besides procedural House business, the Committee also discussed the following:

- electronic voting in the House;
- the Conference on Migration organised by the Inter-Parliamentary Union and the Maltese Parliament in collaboration with the Parliamentary Assembly of the Mediterranean in November;
- the Ombudsplan for 2018;
- the Financial Plan of the Parliamentary Service for 2018;
- the sitting to be allocated to the discussion on the annual reports on sustainable development for the years 2015 and 2016;
- the Notte Bianca 2017 activities in Parliament;
- the internal call for applications issued by COSAC for a permanent member of the COSAC Secretariat;
- the internal call for applications for a representative of the Maltese Parliament in the European Parliament in Brussels;
- the appointment of a new Member to fill the seat vacated by Jean Pierre Debono;
- 'Tetra għall-Istrina' Campaign;
- the Seminar on Statelessness organised by the European Association of Former Members of Parliament of the member states of the Council of Europe in collaboration with the Parliament of Malta in November;
- the timing of parliamentary sittings; and
- Thursday sittings allocated to Private Members' work.

2.2 Standing Committee on Privileges

Standing Order 120D outlines the powers and the composition of the Committee on Privileges, enabling it to consider cases referred to it by the Speaker or by the House and to take decisions and make recommendations about such cases.

In the 12th Legislature the Standing Committee on Privileges was set up by way of Motion No. 19 approved on 22 April 2013 and was composed as follows:

Chairperson

Hon. Anġlu Farrugia, Speaker

Members

Hon. Louis Grech, Leader of the House
Hon. David Agius
Hon. Godfrey Farrugia
Hon. Chris Said
Hon. Deborah Schembri

In the 13th Legislature, the Standing Committee on Privileges was set up by way of Motion No. 34 approved on 11 July 2017. Its composition was amended by way of Motion No. 49 approved on 17 July, and is as follows:

Chairperson

Hon. Anġlu Farrugia, Speaker

Members

Hon. Chris Fearne,
Leader of the House
Hon. Jason Azzopardi
Hon. Byron Camilleri
Hon. Marthese Portelli
Hon. Edward Zammit Lewis



No meetings of the Standing Committee on Privileges were held in 2017.

2.3 Standing Committee on Public Accounts

Established by way of Standing Order 120E, the Standing Committee on Public Accounts is tasked with inquiring into matters relating to public accounts referred to it by the House, a Minister or the Auditor General. It can examine accounts of statutory authorities, including parastatal organisations, whose accounts are presented to Parliament. The Public Accounts Committee may request the Auditor General to submit memoranda on any matter that has been requested by at least three members of the Standing Committee. The Committee considers also memoranda submitted by the Auditor General, made on his own initiative. The Standing Committee on Public Accounts is the only standing committee chaired by a Member nominated by the Opposition, the same as is done in several Commonwealth countries.

In the 12th Legislature, the Standing Committee on Public Accounts was set up by Motion No. 17 presented on 16 April 2013. Its composition was amended by way of Motion Nos. 129 and 187 approved on 7 May and 18 November 2014, Motion No. 202 approved on 14 January 2015 and Motion No. 364 approved on 11 July 2016. In the 12th Legislature, the Committee was composed as follows:

Chairperson

Hon. Tonio Fenech

Members

Hon. Chris Agius
Hon. Ian Borg
Hon. Mario de Marco
Hon. Joseph Farrugia
Hon. Claudio Grech
Hon. Charles Mangion

In 2017, the Committee met four times in the 12th Legislature. The subjects shown hereunder were discussed in these meetings:

30 January

Report by the Malta Fiscal Advisory Council – *An Overall Assessment of the Draft Budgetary Plan for 2017*, dated December 2016;

13 February

Annual Audit Report by the Auditor General – Public Accounts 2015: Ministry for Finance – VAT Department – Expenditure and Personal Emoluments, dated November 2016;

20 February

Due to lack of quorum, Hon. Tonio Fenech, Committee Chairperson, in the presence of Hon. Claudette Buttigieg, Hon. Mario de Marco and Hon. Claudio Grech, by virtue of Standing Orders No. 120E (2) and 128, adjourned the meeting;

13 March

Performance Audit Report by the National Audit Office – *The General Practitioner Function – the Core of Primary Health Care*, dated June 2016;

27 March

Annual Audit Report by the Auditor General – Continuation of the discussion on the Public Accounts 2015: Ministry for Finance – VAT Department – Expenditure and Personal Emoluments, dated November 2016; and

3 April

Due to lack of quorum, Hon. Tonio Fenech, Committee Chairperson, in the presence of Hon. Mario de Marco, by virtue of Standing Orders No. 120E (2) and 128, adjourned the meeting for 8 May.

In the 13th Legislature, the Standing Committee on Public Accounts was set up by Motion No. 43 approved on 11 July 2017. The Committee is composed as follows:

Chairperson

Hon. Beppe Fenech Adami

Members

Hon. Robert Abela
Hon. Clayton Bartolo
Hon. Kristy Debono
Hon. Julia Farrugia Portelli
Hon. Claudio Grech
Hon. Silvio Schembri



The committee met ten times in the 13th Legislature, as per details shown hereunder:

25 September

Report by the National Audit Office – *An investigation of property transfers between 2006 and 2013: The expropriation of the property at Fekruna Bay, St Paul's Bay*, dated July 2017;

10, 17, 24 and 31 October, 6, 14, 21 and 28 November

Report by the National Audit Office – *An investigation of property transfers between 2006 and 2013: The transfer of the property at 83 Spinola Road, St Julian's*, dated July 2017; and

19 December

Joint meeting with the Standing Committee on Economic and Financial Affairs and the Standing Committee on Foreign and European Affairs – Presentation by Leo Brincat, Member of the European Court of Auditors (ECA), regarding the *Annual Report of the ECA on the Budget of the EU for the Year 2016* and on the work of the Maltese Member in the ECA.

2.4 Standing Committee on Foreign and European Affairs

The Standing Committee on Foreign and European Affairs deals with matters relating to foreign and European Union affairs which are referred to it by the House or by the Standing Committee on House Business, and scrutinises proposals and documentation made within the context of the European Union, both for compliance with the principles of subsidiarity and proportionality as well as scrutiny of the Maltese Government position on measures to be taken by the Council of Ministers of the European Union. The committee represents the House of Representatives of Malta at the Conference of European Affairs Committees (COSAC).

The members of the European Parliament elected from Malta can participate at the Committee meetings but do not have the right to vote or to move motions and amendments. Such functions are outlined in Standing Order 120F.

In the 12th Legislature, the Standing Committee on Foreign and European Affairs was set up by Motion No. 20 approved on 22 April 2013 and its composition, amended by way of Motion No. 41 approved on 28 May 2013, Motion No. 126 approved on 7 May 2014, Motion No. 201 approved on 19 January 2015 and Motion No. 309 approved on 15 February 2016, was as follows:

Chairperson

Hon. Luciano Busuttil

Members

Hon. George Vella, Minister for Foreign Affairs
Hon. Frederick Azzopardi
Hon. Toni Bezzina
Hon. Michael Falzon
Hon. Tonio Fenech
Hon. Franco Mercieca
Hon. Joseph M. Sammut
Hon. Francis Zammit Dimech

During the 12th Legislature, the Standing Committee on Foreign and European Affairs met five times. Details of the meetings held are as follows:

8 February

Meeting with a delegation from the Committee for European Affairs from the German Bundestag, led by Member Gunther Krichbaum, on the Maltese Presidency of the Council of the European Union;

3 March

Meeting with the President of the European Parliament's Committee on International Trade (INTA), Bernd Lange, on the trade agenda of the European Union;

6 March

Meeting with a delegation from the Committee for European Affairs of the Parliament of Sweden, led by Member Eskil Erlandsson, on the Maltese Presidency of the Council of the European Union, Brexit and Turkey;

28 March

Meeting with Raymond Xerri, Director, Maltese Living Abroad Directorate in the Ministry for Foreign Affairs, and Joseph Xerri, Secretary of the Council for Maltese Living Abroad on the *2016 Report of the Council* in accordance with article 7(2) of the Council for Maltese Living Abroad Act (Cap. 515); and

3 April

Meeting with a delegation from the Association of Former Members of the European Parliament, led by its President Enrique Baron Crespo, on the Maltese Presidency of the Council of the EU and the challenges faced by the EU.

Following the June 2017 general elections, the Standing Committee on Foreign and European Affairs was reconstituted by way of Motion No. 36 approved on 11 July 2017 and is composed as follows:

Chairperson

Hon. Edward Zammit Lewis



Members

Hon. Carmelo Abela,
Minister for Foreign Affairs
Hon. Jason Azzopardi
Hon. Glenn Bedingfield
Hon. Toni Bezzina
Hon. Aaron Farrugia
Hon. Carmelo Mifsud Bonnici
Hon. David Stellini
Hon. Stefan Zrinzo Azzopardi

During the 13th Legislature, the Standing Committee on Foreign and European Affairs held two meetings, the details of which are as follows:

19 July

Discussions in terms of article 4(2) of the EU Act on the ratification of the Comprehensive Economic and Trade Agreement (CETA) between Canada and the European Union with the participation of Minister Chris Cardona, and David Sammut, Director in the Ministry for Finance;

Scrutiny of EU legislative proposals and other documents published by the Commission and other EU Institutions; and

Consideration of EU legislative proposals with regard to the subsidiarity and proportionality principles; and

19 December

Joint meeting with the Standing Committee on Economic and Financial Affairs and the Public Accounts Committee – Presentation by Leo Brincat, Member of the European Court of Auditors (ECA), regarding the *Annual Report of the ECA on the Budget of the EU for the Year 2016* and on the work of the Maltese Member in the ECA.

2.4.1 Informal Meetings

In 2017, the Chairman of the Standing Committee on Foreign and European Affairs also had the following meetings:

9 January

Meeting with HE Pádraig MacCoscair, Ambassador of Ireland to Malta, and Adam Vella, Political and Public Diplomacy Officer, on Malta's Presidency of the Council of the EU and issues of mutual interest;

17 January

Meeting with HE Eyal Sela, Ambassador of Israel for Malta, on the strengthening of bilateral relations and cooperation at international fora;

20 February

Meeting with HE Vladimir Malygiin, Ambassador of the Russian Federation to Malta; and

Meeting with Joost Taverne, Dutch MP and HE Joost Nijssen, Dutch Ambassador to Malta, on the proposal for the reform of the EP Election Laws;

18 October

Meeting with HE Vladimir Malygin, Ambassador of the Russian Federation to Malta; and

12 December

Meeting with HE Stuart Gill O.B.E., British High Commissioner to Malta, and Michael Howes, Political Officer, on Brexit and on bilateral relations.

2.4.2 Sub-Committees

In accordance with paragraph 3 of Standing Order 120F, the Standing Committee on Foreign and European Affairs set up a working group to assist it in its work. The objective of this Working Group is to analyse legislative proposals with regard to the principles of subsidiarity and proportionality and also to scrutinise the EU *pipeline acquis*, that is, to identify those documents of political or legal importance and to reach a decision on whether a particular document should be cleared without reserve or referred for further debate either to the plenary of the Foreign and European Affairs Committee or to other standing committees.

In the 12th Legislature, the Working Group was composed as follows:

Chairperson

Hon. Luciano Busuttil

Members

Hon. Deo Debattista
Hon. Michael Falzon
Hon. Carmelo Mifsud Bonnici
Hon. Francis Zammit Dimech

In the 13th Legislature, the Working Group was reconstituted as follows:

Chairperson

Hon. Edward Zammit Lewis

Members

Hon. Glenn Bedingfield
Hon. Aaron Farrugia
Hon. Carmelo Mifsud Bonnici
Hon. David Stellini



2.4.3 Meetings of the Working Group

During 2017, the Working Group met seven times and, together with the Standing Committee on Foreign and European Affairs, scrutinised 192 legislative and non-legislative proposals, including reports, staff working documents and Green and White Papers, published by the European Commission and other EU institutions.

2.5 Standing Committee on Social Affairs

The Standing Committee on Social Affairs deals with all matters relating to social policy, including social assistance and family matters, which may be referred to it by the House or by the Standing Committee on House Business, as outlined in Standing Order 120G.

During 2017 in the 12th Legislature, the Committee was composed as follows:

Chairperson

Hon. Anthony Agius Decelis

Members

Hon. Robert Cutajar
Hon. Deo Debattista
Hon. Godfrey Farrugia
Hon. Clifton Grima
Hon. Paula Mifsud Bonnici
Hon. Stephen Spiteri

The Committee was convened six times in this formation. The subjects that were dealt with by the Committee are the following:

17 January

Presentation by the Maltese Federation of Organisations of Persons with Disability regarding 50 proposals concerning persons with disabilities put forward by the said Federation;

18 January

Continuation of the joint meeting with the Standing Committee on Health and the Standing Committee on Family Affairs on euthanasia in Malta, with the participation of the Imam for the Islamic community in Malta;

15 February

Continuation of the joint meeting with the Standing Committee on Health and the Standing Committee on Family Affairs on euthanasia in Malta, with the participation of ALS Malta, the Malta Institute of Journalists, the Medical Council and the *Għaqda Studenti tal-Liġi*;

21 February

Discussion about sports nurseries in Malta, with the participation of the Malta Football Association and the Youth Football Association;

8 March

Continuation of the discussion about sports nurseries in Malta, with the participation of the Malta Football Players Association; and

3 April

Consultation regarding the appointment of the Autism Consultative Council (held *in camera*).

In the 13th Legislature, the Standing Committee on Social Affairs, set up by Motion No. 42 of 11 July 2017, is composed as follows:

Chairperson

Hon. Etienne Grech



Members

Hon. Ivan Bartolo
Hon. Justyne Caruana
Hon. Rosianne Cutajar
Hon. Karl Gouder
Hon. Silvio Grixti
Hon. Clyde Puli

During the 13th Legislature, the Committee was convened five times, as follows:

9 August

Approval of the members of the Guardianship Board;

25 October

Discussion on topics to be put on the Committee's agenda during the 13th Legislature;

15 November

Discussion on the possibility of introducing cremation in Malta, with the participation of the Superintendent of Public Health, the Director of Environmental Health, and representatives of the Faculty of Theology and of the Planning Authority;

29 November

Joint meeting with the Standing Committee on Family Affairs on ghettoisation of immigrants in Malta, with the participation of the mayors from the Local Councils of Marsa and Birżebbuġa, a former member of the Police Force who served at the Marsa Police Station and representatives from the Jesuit Refugee Service and Spark 15; and

6 December

Continuation of the joint meeting with the Standing Committee on Family Affairs on *ghettoisation* of immigrants in Malta, with the participation of the Marsa FC Youth Nursery, residents of the locality of Marsa, members of the Police Force serving at the Marsa Police Station as well as the mayor and councillors of the Marsa Local Council; and

Discussion on the report of the Standing Committee for Social Affairs on the possibility of introducing cremation in Malta.

2.6 Standing Committee on Family Affairs

The principal task of the Standing Committee on Family Affairs is to discuss matters and legislation related to family affairs. The work of the Committee is regulated by Standing Order 120H.

In the 12th Legislature, the Standing Committee on Family Affairs, set up by Motion No. 23 approved on 22 April 2013 and amended by Motions Nos 204, 306 and 307 approved on 19 January, 1 February and 15 February 2016, respectively, was composed as follows:

Chairperson

Hon. Godfrey Farrugia

Members

Hon. Anthony Agius Decelis
Hon. Robert Cutajar
Hon. Etienne Grech
Hon. Paula Mifsud Bonnici

The Standing Committee on Family Affairs met twice in 2017 under this formation, as follows:

18 January

Continuation of the joint meeting with the Standing Committee on Health and the Standing Committee on Social Affairs on euthanasia in Malta, with the participation of the Imam for the Islamic community in Malta; and

15 February

Continuation of the joint meeting with the Standing Committee on Health and the Standing Committee on Social Affairs on euthanasia in Malta, with the participation of ALS Malta, the Malta Institute of Journalists, the Medical Council and the *Għaqda Studenti tal-Liġi*.

In the 13th Legislature, the Standing Committee on Family Affairs, set up by Motion No. 41 of 11 July 2017, is composed as follows:

Chairperson

Hon. Rosianne Cutajar



Members

Hon. Anthony Agius Decelis
Hon. Ivan Bartolo
Hon. Silvio Grixti
Hon. Clyde Puli

The Standing Committee on Family Affairs met three times in the 13th Legislature as follows:

13 November

Discussion on topics to be put on the Committee's agenda during the 13th Legislature

29 November

Joint meeting with the Standing Committee on Social Affairs on ghettoisation of immigrants in Malta with the participation of the Mayors from the Local Councils of Marsa and Birżebbuġa, a former member of the Police Force who served at the Marsa Police Station and representatives from the Jesuit Refugee Service and Spark 15; and

6 December

Continuation of the joint meeting together with the Standing Committee on Social Affairs on ghettoisation of immigrants in Malta with the participation of the Marsa FC Youth Nursery, residents of the locality of Marsa, members of the Police Force serving at the Marsa Police Station as well as the Mayor and councillors of the Marsa Local Council; and

Discussion on the report of the Standing Committee on Social Affairs on the possibility of introducing cremation in Malta.

2.7 Standing Committee on Economic and Financial Affairs

As regulated by Standing Order 120I, the Standing Committee on Economic and Financial Affairs considers, from an economic and financial perspective, any decision, recommendation or report published locally, by the European Institutions or by international organisations, that could have an impact on the Maltese economy. The Committee may, besides considering matters that may be referred to it by the House or any Standing Committee of the House, request to appear before it, persons appointed by the Government of Malta to represent it on the governing and administrative organs of the European Stability Mechanism (ESM), and also the Governor of the Central Bank of Malta.

In the 12th Legislature, the composition of the Standing Committee on Economic and Financial Affairs, appointed by Motion No. 25 approved on 23 April 2013 and amended by way of Motion No. 47 approved on 11 June 2013 and Motion No. 205 approved on 19 January 2015, was as follows:

Chairperson

Hon. Silvio Schembri

Members

Hon. Charles Buhagiar
Hon. Mario de Marco
Hon. Kristy Debono
Hon. Michael Falzon
Hon. Claudio Grech
Hon. Edward Scicluna

The Standing Committee on Economic and Financial Affairs did not meet in 2017 during the 12th Legislature.

In the 13th Legislature, the Standing Committee on Economic and Financial Affairs, appointed by way of Motion No. 40 approved on 11 July 2017, is composed as follows:

Chairperson

Hon. Emmanuel Mallia



Members

Hon. Edward Scicluna,
Minister for Finance
Hon. Clayton Bartolo
Hon. Kristy Debono
Hon. Mario de Marco
Hon. Claudio Grech
Hon. Edward Zammit Lewis

During the 13th Legislature, the Standing Committee on Economic and Financial Affairs met four times, as follows:

1 November

Discussion on topics to be put on the Committee's agenda during the 13th Legislature;

22 November

Presentation by Alfred Camilleri, Permanent Secretary within the Ministry for Finance, on the operations of the European Financial Stabilisation Mechanism and the European Financial Stability Facility;

19 December

Joint meeting with the Standing Committee on Public Accounts and the Standing Committee on Foreign and European Affairs - Presentation by Leo Brincat, Member of the European Court of Auditors (ECA), regarding the *Annual report of the ECA on the Budget of the EU for the Year 2016* and on the work of the Maltese Member in the ECA; and

19 December

Presentation by Dr Mario Vella, Governor of the Central Bank of Malta, on Malta's economic prospects and the latest developments in the banking sector.

2.8 Standing Committee on Health

The work of the Committee is regulated by Standing Order 120J, which empowers it to discuss policies and matters in the health sector which have strategic importance and are of material interest to patients, and report thereon to the House. These include issues relating to public health and the rights of the patient, government and European Union decisions in the health sector. Furthermore, the Standing Committee on

Health discusses items relating to capital and recurrent expenditure of departments, statutory authorities and public organizations which operate in the public health sector. While such discussion can take place on its own initiative, the Standing Committee on Health also evaluates all reports, strategic plans, task plans and policies referred to it by the House, by the Minister or by any other standing committee.

In the 12th Legislature, this Committee was set up following the unanimous approval in the House of a private member's motion presented by Opposition Member Hon. Claudio Grech on 18 November 2013. The Standing Committee on Health, appointed by Motion No. 106 approved on 12 March 2014 and its composition amended by way of Motion No. 127 presented on 7 May 2014 and by Motion No. 206 approved on 19 January 2015, was as follows:

Chairperson

Hon. Etienne Grech

Members

Hon. Claudette Buttigieg
Hon. Deo Debattista
Hon. Chris Fearne
Hon. Michael Gonzi

During the 12th Legislature, the Standing Committee on Health met three times as follows:

18 January

Joint meeting with the Committee on Family Affairs and the Committee on Social Affairs on euthanasia in Malta, with the participation of the Imam for the Islamic community in Malta, regarding the document 'Muslim perspective on euthanasia';

15 February

Continuation of the joint meeting with the Standing Committee on Family Affairs and the Standing Committee on Social Affairs on euthanasia in Malta, with the participation of ALS Malta, the Malta Institute of Journalists, the Medical Council and the *Għaqda Studenti tal-Liġi*; and

12 April

Discussion on The National Cancer Plan for the Maltese Islands 2017-2021, with the participation of the Department of Public Health, Cancer Care Pathways, the Pathology Department, Mater Dei Hospital, Department of Haematology and Oncology and the Cancer Screening Programme.

In the 13th Legislature, the Standing Committee on Health, appointed by Motion No. 38 approved on 11 July 2017, is composed as follows:

Chairperson

Hon. Silvio Grixti



Members

Hon. Deo Debattista
Hon. Maria Deguara
Hon. Etienne Grech
Hon. Stephen Spiteri

In the 13th Legislature, the committee has met twice, as follows:

24 October

Discussion on topics to be put on the Committee's agenda during the 13th Legislature; and

13 November

Discussion on surrogacy and gamete donation, with the participation of Dr E.E. Esme Wiegman-van Meppelen Scheppink, Dr Christophe Foltzenlogel and Dr Joanna Rose, European expert speakers on ethical issues.

2.9 Standing Committee for the Consideration of Bills

The principal task of the Committee for the Consideration of Bills is to consider bills referred to it by the House after the conclusion of the debate in the Second Reading stage. The work of the Committee is regulated by Standing Order 120B.

In the 12th Legislature, the Standing Committee for the Consideration of Bills was set up by Motion No. 22 approved on 22 April 2013 and its composition, as amended by way of Motion No. 132 approved on 7 May 2014, was as follows:

Chairperson

Hon. Silvio Parnis

Members

Seven Members: four Government Members including the Chairperson, and three Opposition Members appointed according to the Bill under discussion

The Standing Committee for the Consideration of Bills met 15 times in 2017 during the 12th Legislature. Twelve bills were discussed, eight of which were approved and referred back to the House for Third Reading. Details of the meetings held are as follows:

9 January

Bill 173 – Malta Council for Economic and Social Development (Amendment) Bill;

24 January

Bill 89 – Care Standards Authority Bill;

31 January

Bill 89 – Care Standards Authority Bill (Continuation);

6 February
Bill 187 – Health (Amendment) Bill;

7 February
Bill 188 – Mediation (Amendment) Bill;

13 February
Bill 63 – Standards in Public Life Bill;

14 February
Bill 89 – Care Standards Authority Bill (Continuation);

7 March
Bill 189 – Small Business (Amendment) Bill;

13 March
Bill 174 – Budget Measures Implementation Bill;

14 March
Bill 174 – Budget Measures Implementation Bill (Continuation);

20 March
Bill 191 – Traffic Regulation Ordinance (Amendment) Bill;

21 March
Bill 177 – Homes for Older Persons (Care Quality Standards) Authority Bill;

4 April
Bill 197 – Code of Organization and Civil Procedure (Amendment) Bill;

5 April
Bill 198 – Civil Protection (Amendment) Bill; and

10 April
Bill 190 – Fisheries Conservation and Management (Amendment) Bill.

In the 13th Legislature, the Standing Committee for the Consideration of Bills was set up by Motion No. 21 approved on 3 July 2017 and is composed as follows:

Chairperson

Hon. Stefan Zrinzo Azzopardi



Members

Seven Members: four Government Members including the Chairperson, and three Opposition Members, appointed according to the Bill under discussion

In this formation, the Committee met nine times and discussed six bills, of which it approved and referred five back to the House for Third Reading. Details of the meetings held are as follows:

6 July
Bill 1 – Marriage Bill and other Laws (Amendment) Bill;

7 July
Bill 1 – Marriage Bill and other Laws (Amendment) Bill (Continuation);

10 July
Bill 1 – Marriage Bill and other Laws (Amendment) Bill (Continuation);

18 July
Bill 4 – Maltese Citizenship (Amendment) Bill;

20 November
Bill 3 – Various Financial Services Laws (Amendment) Bill;

27 November
Bill 10 – Prevention of Money Laundering (Amendment) Bill;

5 December
Bill 6 – Code of Organization and Civil Procedure (Amendment) Bill;

11 December
Bill 3 – Various Financial Services Laws (Amendment) Bill (Continuation); and

19 December
Bill 6 – Code of Organization and Civil Procedure (Amendment) Bill (Continuation).

2.9.1 Adjunct Committee for the Consideration of Bills

In the 12th Legislature, the Adjunct Committee for the Consideration of Bills was established for the first time following the approval of Motion No. 293 on 15 December 2015, to consider Bills and other business referred by the House.

In the 12th Legislature, the composition of the Adjunct Committee for the Consideration of Bills was amended by Motions No. 308 and 365 approved on 15 February and 11 July 2016 respectively. In 2017 (12th Legislature) its composition was as follows:

Chairperson

Hon. Michael Falzon

Members

Seven members: four Government Members including the Chairperson, and three Opposition Members, appointed according to the Bill under discussion

This Committee met 10 times in the 12th Legislature, wherein the Committee discussed seven bills, six of which it approved and referred back to the House for Third Reading.

Details of the meetings held are as follows:

23 January

Bill 178 – Cohabitation Bill;

30 January

Bill 176 – Maltese Language (Amendment) Bill;

1 February

Bill 178 – Cohabitation Bill (Continuation);

6 March

Bill 195 – Interpretation (Amendment) Bill;

13 March

Bill 183 – Police Bill;

14 March

Bill 180 – Local Councils (Amendment) Bill;

21 March

Bill 183 – Police Bill (Continuation);

27 March

Bill 178 – Cohabitation Bill;

11 April

Bill 200 – Refugees (Amendment) Bill; and

12 April

Bill 164 – Malta Development Bank Bill.

2.10 National Audit Office Accounts Committee

The National Audit Office Accounts Committee appointed in accordance with Part IV of the National Audit Office Act (Cap. 396), meets at least once a year and presents to the House of Representatives a report of its activities and the report of the estimates of the National Audit Office. Besides this function, the Committee also meets to discuss the transfer of Government Property.

In the 12th Legislature, the National Audit Office Accounts Committee was set up by Motion No. 31 approved on 29 April 2013 and amended by way of Motion No. 208 approved on 19 January 2015. Its composition was as follows:

Chairperson

Hon. Louis Grech, Leader of the House

Members

Hon. Chris Agius
Hon. Mario de Marco
Hon. Tonio Fenech
Hon. Silvio Schembri

The National Audit Office Accounts Committee met once on 18 January 2017 to discuss the resolution on the transfer of property to Sliema Wanderers Football Club.

In the 13th Legislature, the National Audit Office Accounts Committee was set up by Motion No. 33 approved on 11 July 2017, and amended by Motion No. 47 approved on 17 July 2017. Its composition is as follows:

Chairperson

Hon. Chris Fearne,
Leader of the House



Members

Hon. Robert Abela
Hon. Mario de Marco
Hon. Beppe Fenech Adami
Hon. Alex Muscat

The National Audit Office Accounts Committee met twice in the 13th Legislature, in 2017, to discuss the following:

24 October

Annual Report and the Financial Statements of the National Audit Office for the year 2016 and Financial Estimates of the National Audit Office for 2018; and

18 December

Resolution on the transfer of property to Malita Investments for purposes as outlined in the Schedule to the Ecclesiastic Entities (Properties) Act.

2.11 Standing Committee on Environment and Development Planning

The Standing Committee on Environment and Development Planning is established by virtue of the Environment Protection Act (Cap. 549) which empowers this Standing Committee to discuss matters, plans, proposals and reports relating to the environment, which are referred to it by the Minister responsible for the environment.

In 2017 (12th Legislature) the Standing Committee on Environment and Development Planning was set up by Motion No. 30 approved on 29 April 2013. Its composition was as follows:

Chairperson

Hon. Franco Mercieca

Members

Hon. Charles Buhagiar
Hon. Ryan Callus
Hon. Godfrey Farrugia
Hon. Marthese Portelli

The Committee held seven meetings in 2017 in this formation, the details being as follows:

18 January

Continuation from 2016 of the discussion on the Partial Review of the North Harbour Local Plan of 2006; and

Supplementary Planning Policy Guidance – Child Day Care Facilities;

1 March

Partial Review of the Central Malta Local Plan (2006) – Magħtab Planning Strategy Area;

Partial Local Plan Review of the South Malta Local Plan (2006) as amended – Area at Ғal Mula, Ғaḡ-Żebbuġ;

15 March

Partial Local Plan Review of the South Malta Local Plan (2006) as amended – Area at Ғal Mula, Ғaḡ-Żebbuġ – Continuation;

Partial Review of the Central Malta Local Plan (2006) – Magħtab Planning Strategy Area;

28 March

Partial Local Plan Review of the South Malta Local Plan (2006) as amended – Area at Ғal Mula, Ғaḡ-Żebbuġ – Continuation; and

Partial Review of the Central Malta Local Plan (2006) – Magħtab Planning Strategy Area;

5 April

Partial Local Plan Review of the Gozo and Comino Local Plan (2006) for Triq San Pawl, iċ-Ċnus, Xewkija;

12 April

Partial Local Plan Review of the Central Malta Local Plan (2006), as amended, at Area Tal-Bajjad, Qormi; and

2 May

Continuation of the discussion on the Partial Local Plan Review of the Central Malta Local Plan (2006), as amended, at Area Tal-Bajjad, Qormi.

In the 13th Legislature, the Standing Committee on Environment and Development Planning was set up by Motion No. 39 approved on 11 July 2017. Its composition is as follows:

Chairperson

Hon. Alex Muscat



Members

Hon. Karol Aquilina
Hon. Clint Camilleri
Hon. Marlene Farrugia
Hon. Roderick Galdes

The Committee held two meetings in 2017, during the 13th Legislature, the details being as follows:

10 October

Partial Local Plan Review of the Central Malta Local Plan (2006) – Area of Containment at Tal-Ғandaq North, Qormi; and

18 December

Report by the Ministry for Transport, Infrastructure and Capital Projects – Sites nominated to be declared as Public Domain under the Civil Code (Amendment No. 3) Act 2016.

2.12 Standing Committee on Petitions

In the 12th Legislature the Standing Committee on Petitions was set up by Motion No. 413 presented to the House on 7 November 2016 following several amendments to the Standing Orders. The Committee was composed as follows:

Chairperson

Hon. Chris Cardona

Members

Hon. David Agius
Hon. Evarist Bartolo
Hon. Charles Mangion
Hon. Chris Said

In 2017, the said Committee met once during the 12th Legislature, wherein the following petition was discussed:

4 April

Petition presented on 13 March (Sitting No. 493) by Hon. Antoine Borg and Hon. Luciano Busuttil and signed by 27,917 Maltese citizens registered as eligible to vote, for the reduction of the five year prison punishment referred to in Article 225(2) of the Criminal Code; and

Discussion about whether a non-Maltese citizen may present a petition.

In the 13th Legislature the Standing Committee on Petitions was established by Motion No. 37 presented to the House on 7 July 2017. The Committee is composed as follows:

Chairperson

Hon. Chris Agius



Members

Hon. Robert Abela
Hon. David Agius
Hon. Robert Cutajar
Hon. Clifton Grima

While a number of petitions have been received, during the 13th Legislature, the Committee had not yet met by the end of 2017.

2.13 Parliamentary Group on the European Capital of Culture 2018

During the 12th Legislature the composition of the Parliamentary Group on the European Capital of Culture was established in the meetings of the House Business Committee of 25 June and 8 July 2013, and was as follows:

Chairperson

Hon. Deo Debattista

Members

Hon. David Agius

Hon. Luciano Busuttil

Hon. Karl Gouder

During the 12th Legislature, the Parliamentary Group held one meeting on 31 January. The Group met with Hon. Owen Bonnici, Minister for Justice, Culture and Local Government; Jason Micallef, *Chairman* Foundation Valletta 2018; Dr Stefan Zrinzo Azzopardi, Chairman Grand Harbour Regeneration Corporation; and Mario Cutajar, Principal Permanent Secretary, to discuss the progress made with regard to the Valletta 18 – European Capital of Culture 2018 Project.

3. INTERNATIONAL ACTIVITIES

Throughout the year, the House of Representatives continued reaching out to connect with other parliamentarians around the globe.

Besides hosting foreign visitors to the Maltese Parliament, the Speaker led several delegations drawn from both sides of the House on official visits to other parliaments, to participate in interparliamentary meetings held in Malta as part of the 2017 Maltese Presidency of the Council of the European Union, as well as other interparliamentary meetings held overseas.

3.1 *Outgoing Visits and participation in international fora by the Office of the Speaker*

3.1.1 *Standing Committee of the CSPOC, London*

The Deputy Speaker of the House of Representatives Hon. Ċensu Galea participated in the *Standing Committee of the Conference of Speakers and Presiding Officers of the Commonwealth (CSPOC)*, held in London on 12 January. The Conference brings together the Speakers and Presiding Officers of the national parliaments of the independent sovereign states of the Commonwealth. The conference is an independent group and has no formal affiliation with the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association, the Commonwealth Secretariat or the Conference of Commonwealth Heads of Government. CSPOC operates on a two-year cycle, holding a conference of the full membership every two years, usually in January, and a meeting of the Standing Committee, also in January, in the intervening year. The Conference aims to maintain, foster and encourage impartiality and fairness on the part of Speakers and Presiding Officers of Parliaments; promote knowledge and understanding of parliamentary democracy in its various forms; and develop parliamentary institutions. During this meeting, the agenda for the next conference to be held in the Seychelles in 2018, was discussed and decided upon. During the visit, participants of the meeting had the opportunity to meet Princess Royal Ann and the Secretary General of the Commonwealth Baroness Patricia Scotland of Asthal.

3.1.2 *Inauguration of exhibition on the occasion of the launch of the Maltese Presidency of the Council of the European Union, Rome*

At the invitation of the Ambassador of the Republic of Malta to Italy, HE Vanessa Frazier, Speaker Anġlu Farrugia attended the *inauguration of the exhibition 'Mediterraneo in*

Chiaroscuro – Ribera, Stomer e Preti da Malta a Roma' held at Palazzo Barberini in Rome on 14 January. The exhibition was organised by the Embassy of Malta in Rome with the support of Heritage Malta and the Malta Arts Council on the occasion of the launch of the Maltese Presidency of the Council of the EU. The exhibition comprised nine masterpieces from Malta's national collection, notably works by Jusepe Ribera, Matthias Stamer, Mattia Preti and Francesco de Mura, which were presented as a series of comparisons with purposely chosen key works from the collection at Palazzo Barberini.

During this visit, Speaker Farrugia also held a meeting with Italy's Secretary of State for EU Affairs, Sandro Gozi.

3.1.3 *38th Session of the Steering Committee of the Parliamentary Conference on the World Trade Organisation, Brussels*

Speaker Anġlu Farrugia represented the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association (CPA) in the *38th Session of the Steering Committee of the Parliamentary Conference on the World Trade Organisation (WTO)* held in Brussels on 9 March, which conference was organised jointly by the Inter-Parliamentary Union and the European Parliament. Speaker Farrugia, who is the Chairperson of the CPA Small Branches and a member of the Steering Committee of the CPA, addressed the Session, which focused on free trade agreements having provisions of trade liberalization compatible with labour and human rights.

3.1.4 *60th Anniversary of the Treaties of Rome, Rome*

Speaker Anġlu Farrugia addressed the Extraordinary Conference of Speakers of EU Parliaments held at the Chamber of Deputies in Rome on 17 March. The Extraordinary Conference was held to commemorate the *60th Anniversary of the Treaties of Rome*. In his address, Speaker Farrugia mentioned the parliamentary dimension of the Maltese Presidency of the Council of the European Union, stressing that the relevance of the European Union depends on its democratic legitimacy and stating that the growth and development of the various interparliamentary fora in which all parliaments are active, is evidence of the fact that national parliaments and the European Parliament have become an integral part of the European decision-making structure.

Speaker Farrugia referred to the result of a 2015 Eurobarometer survey, wherein 84% of the Maltese population felt that they belong in the

European Union and that the majority of the population in 25 Member States believed that future challenges can be faced better from within the European Union rather than from outside. On the other hand, Hon. Farrugia recalled that the EU was facing uncharted territory since it was the first time that a Member State was moving towards exiting the EU. Speaker Farrugia commended the European Commission's White Paper on the Future of Europe for the broad consultation that it encouraged, and urged Speakers to facilitate the relevant consultation process in their Chambers.

Speaker Farrugia highlighted that because of the Treaty of Rome, Europe was able to enjoy the longest period of lasting peace in a region that had been historically fraught by countless wars. It was this lasting peace which enabled the unprecedented economic and social progress of the European Union and the establishment of the single market which remains the cornerstone of the Union. Quoting Larkin Zahra's 2012 winning entry in an online competition concerning the meaning of peace in Europe, Speaker Farrugia claimed that while the peace and prosperity brought about by the EU is sometimes taken for granted, it is only possible thanks to the vision and hard work of our forefathers. Hon. Farrugia also urged parliamentarians to listen to young people, as they are the future of the Union, for whom present parliamentarians must leave a better world, and who will be taking present parliamentarians' dreams forward and making them a reality for future generations.

3.1.5 11th Conference of Presidents of Parliaments of Small European States, San Marino

Deputy Speaker Ćensu Galea participated in the 11th Conference of Presidents of Parliaments of Small European States in San Marino between 21 and 23 March. The conference focused on three themes: The geopolitical situation, the humanitarian crisis and the role and policies of small countries; Europe and the Mediterranean with an emphasis on the powers and limitations of small countries in international fora; and Tourism and culture through history, sovereignty and art, with an emphasis on the possibility of cooperation between small nations. On the humanitarian crisis, Hon. Galea spoke about Malta's position in the middle of the Mediterranean and recalled the number of migrants crossing the Mediterranean in bad conditions. He claimed that the humanitarian crisis in the Mediterranean remains critical, and that persons braving the crossing are still putting their lives at risk and even dying, despite a decline in the number of migrants arriving in Malta. In fact, although Malta has been a frontrunner in proposing a common and efficient European stance on migration, the European Union can still

do more in this sector. Hon. Galea described Malta's Presidency of the Council of the European Union as a positive demonstration that a small country like Malta, can manage the European calendar and contribute to international fora. On tourism, the Deputy Speaker discussed Malta's attributes which make it attractive to tourists and the importance of air access to small islands.

Hon. Ćensu Galea also held bilateral meetings with the President of the Parliament of Montenegro Ivan Brajović, where Montenegro's accession to the EU was discussed.

3.1.6 Conference of Speakers of EU Parliaments, Bratislava

Deputy Speaker Ćensu Galea attended the Conference of Speakers of EU Parliaments organised in Bratislava, Slovakia, on 23 and 24 April, which Conference gathers together Speakers of Parliaments of EU Member States, those of Parliaments of candidate countries and the President of the European Parliament. The Conference is organised with a view to promote and consolidate interparliamentary relations, as defined in the Protocol on the Role of National Parliaments in the European Union annexed to the Lisbon Treaty stating: "The European Parliament and national parliaments shall together determine the organisation and promotion of effective and regular interparliamentary cooperation within the Union".

This Conference was divided into two sessions:

- the future of the EU as a global player in the context of the current global changes, and the role of national parliaments; and
- bringing parliamentary agenda closer to citizens in the modern era – sharing best practices.

IPEX (Inter-Parliamentary EU information exchange) and the Europol Joint Parliamentary Scrutiny Group also featured in the discussions.

3.1.7 Mid-Year Executive Committee Meeting of the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association, Darwin

In his capacity as the Chairperson of the Small Branches of the CPA, Speaker Anġlu Farrugia participated in the Mid-Year Meeting of the Executive Committee of the CPA which was held in the Northern Territory Legislative Assembly in Darwin, Australia, between 25 and 27 April.

At this meeting, Speaker Farrugia presented a draft Strategic Plan for the years 2016-2019 for the

Small Branches within the Commonwealth. This plan was developed following Speaker Farrugia's election as the first Chairperson of the Small Branches of the CPA in December 2016. Its development involved direct consultation between Speaker Farrugia and the Small Branches, gathering their views and input, which were formulated into a strategic plan that would help give direction to the work programme of Small Branches. After having received approval of the Small Branches, this plan received the unanimous approval of the Executive Committee of the CPA. This Plan was to be further discussed and finalised by the regional committees in 2017, including at a Small Branches workshop that will focus on one of the identified thematic areas. This is the first Strategic Plan for Small Branches that has ever been submitted.

The role of the CPA in the Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting (CHOGM) was also discussed.

3.1.8 4th Summit of Presidents of Parliaments of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Union for the Mediterranean, Rome

On 12 May, Speaker Anġlu Farrugia attended the 4th Summit of Presidents of Parliaments of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Union for the Mediterranean hosted by the Italian Senate in Rome. The Union for the Mediterranean (UfM) is an intergovernmental organisation bringing together the 28 European Union Member States and 15 countries from the southern and eastern shores of the Mediterranean. It provides a unique forum to enhance regional cooperation and dialogue in the Euro-Mediterranean region.

Addressing Presidents of European and Mediterranean national parliaments, Speaker Farrugia said that the topics for the meeting, namely employment, inclusive growth, and sustainable development, are interrelated tools necessary for the development of a resilient and strong Euro-Mediterranean region. The Speaker highlighted that employment is intertwined with a diversified education and the promotion of inclusive growth, while sustainable development is crucial to ensure the right balance between the needs of the present and those of the future.

Speaking on the Maltese Presidency of the Council of the EU, the Speaker emphasised that Malta kept the Mediterranean dimension at the forefront of its agenda, which included migration, security and terrorism, the European Neighbourhood, the economic and social impact of climate change, poverty and social inclusion, the blue economy, and maritime affairs. However, other priorities included the UN 2030

Sustainable Development Goals and the UfM Road Map and Plan of Action. Furthermore, the Parliamentary Dimension of the Presidency aimed to foster dialogue and promote cooperation at a parliamentary level and, together with other national parliaments, address issues of common concern.

3.1.9 47th British Isles and the Mediterranean Region (BIMR) Conference, Gibraltar

Chairperson of the Small Branches of the CPA and Speaker of the House Hon. Anġlu Farrugia, attended the 47th British Isles and the Mediterranean Region Conference held in Gibraltar between 21 and 24 May, accompanied by Member of Parliament Hon. Godfrey Farrugia. The Conference, themed 'Strengthening the role of the BIMR region and considering the role of Small Branches post Brexit', commenced with a meeting of the Standing Committee.

Opening the plenary session on the role of small branches, Speaker Farrugia, who chaired the session, spoke of the changes that Brexit will bring to the relationship between the EU and the BIMR members, recalling that the Commonwealth has always worked in the spirit of voluntary cooperation, goodwill, partnership and understanding, openness and flexibility and can be used to create ever-stronger relationships between its members, not least members which are small branches. Speaker Farrugia said that the Commonwealth's intention to strengthen the relationships between small branches was concretised in December 2016, with the introduction of the role of Chairperson for Small Branches. This role will continue to give all people a voice through promoting democracy, good governance, rule of law, separation of powers, human rights, equality of access to healthcare, freedom of expression and sustainable development.

Speaker Farrugia also participated in the plenary session on the effect of Brexit on the region and turning to the Commonwealth post-Brexit, referring to citizens' rights post-Brexit, particularly those of the three million EU citizens residing in the UK and to the 1.2 million British citizens living in the European Union. In this context, a discussion ensued about whether the European Court of Justice will remain the relevant Court wherein citizens can seek redress on alleged violations of their rights.

He also referred to the effects that Brexit is likely to have on various industries on which BIMR members depend, as well as to the acute impact on the borders and contentions on sovereignty which may arise. Speaker Farrugia said that each

BIMR member needs to articulate its own relationship with the UK or the EU, as applicable, and that BIMR members can also turn to the strong relationship granted to them by the Commonwealth. Hon. Farrugia concluded by saying that while Brexit will bring challenges, politicians must act to turn the challenges into opportunities.

3.1.10 Official Visit to Cuba

The Speaker of the House Hon. Anġlu Farrugia, Government Whip Hon. Byron Camilleri and Hon. Hermann Schiavone visited Cuba between 3 and 7 September at the invitation of the President of the Cuban National Assembly of People's Power.

During the meeting with the President of the Parliament Juan Esteban Lazo Hernández, both sides agreed that although the diplomatic relations between both countries were established way back in 1977, there is still ample scope to further deepen the cooperation between the two countries in various areas such as trade, culture, and climate change, which could be of mutual benefit.

In a meeting with the Deputy Minister for Public Health Marcia Cobas Ruíz, the Maltese delegation discussed various themes, including health, the importance of research in medicine and how the two countries can explore possibilities for joint projects in this field, particularly in treatment of cancer and diabetes.

The delegation also discussed topics of interest to both Malta and Cuba with Deputy Foreign Affairs Minister Ana Teresita González Fraga. During the meeting, Speaker Farrugia referred to the Third EU-CELAC Summit, which Summit brings together European, Latin American and Caribbean leaders, that was to take place in San Salvador in October 2017. Speaker Farrugia stated that this will provide an opportunity for the EU and the Latin-American and Caribbean countries to confirm a positive momentum on global issues and to reaffirm the shared commitment to strengthening multilateralism, focusing on the UN.

The President of the Constitutional and Judicial Affairs Commission of the National Assembly of People's Power, Dr José Luis Toledo, also received the Maltese delegation. During the meeting, both sides discussed the importance of the role of parliamentary democracy. Reference was also made to the Cuba-EU relations, which relations deepened significantly since the 2008 re-launch of political dialogue and cooperation.

The delegation also visited the Solidarity with Panama School, a school in Cuba which hosts

children with special needs. Speaker Farrugia remarked that he was impressed that students at this school recognised the importance of education and learning, understanding that their future is in their own hands. The delegation also had the opportunity to visit the Study Centre of Cuban Youth.

3.1.11 39th Session of the Steering Committee of the Parliamentary Conference on the World Trade Organisation, Geneva

The Speaker of the House of Representatives, Hon. Anġlu Farrugia, represented the CPA at the 39th Session of the Steering Committee of the Parliamentary Conference on the World Trade Organisation (WTO), organised by the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU) and the European Parliament and held in Geneva between 26 and 28 September. Speaker Farrugia also participated in a WTO Public Forum which included the parliamentary session on 'Making trade fair: The contribution of parliaments'.

The subjects discussed during the Conference included strengthening the role of parliament to ensure fair contribution by traders, the promotion of social business dialogue, support for global dialogue, and the role of trade unions. Brexit also featured in the discussions. During his various interventions, Speaker Farrugia focused on the challenges faced by small nations and territories.

3.1.12 137th General Assembly of the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU), St Petersburg

Speaker Anġlu Farrugia led the Maltese delegation, comprising Hon. Alex Muscat and Hon. Mario Galea, to the 137th Inter-Parliamentary Union General Assembly held in St Petersburg, Russia, between 15 and 18 October. The General Assembly serves as a platform for an open and equal discussion among parliamentarians representing almost all states in the world, with the theme chosen for 2017 being 'Promoting Cultural Pluralism and Peace through Inter-Faith and Inter-Ethnic Dialogue'.

The meeting tackled various topics, including democracy and human rights, sustainable development, finance and trade, peace and international security. In his address during the high-level segment for Speakers of Parliaments, Hon. Anġlu Farrugia delved into religious tolerance and peaceful co-existence in an inter-faith society, remarking that legislators must make sure that national laws adequately tackle discrimination and bigotry. The IPU Governing Council, during its 201st Session held between 15 and 18 October, endorsed a 'Presidential statement on the state of democracy in the world

today', which denounced the assassination of Maltese journalist Daphne Caruana Galizia and called for the protection of journalists all around the world.

The 137th IPU General Assembly also included the election of a new IPU President for 2017-2020, during which session Senator Gabriela Cuevas Barron from Mexico was elected IPU President.

3.1.13 63rd Commonwealth Parliamentary Conference, Dhaka

The Speaker of the House of Representatives and Chairperson of the Small States and Small Branches of the Commonwealth, Hon. Anġlu Farrugia, led a parliamentary delegation composed of Government Whip Hon. Byron Camilleri, Hon. Alex Muscat and Hon. Ryan Callus to the 63rd Commonwealth Parliamentary Conference (CPC), held in Dhaka, Bangladesh, between 1 and 8 November. The CPC annual conference of the CPA provides a unique platform for interparliamentary dialogue, bringing together Speakers and Members of Parliament representing the nine regions of the CPA, 52 countries of the Commonwealth, and over 180 national, state, provincial and territorial parliaments and legislatures.

The Conference included workshops and debates focusing on the importance of development for parliamentarians, and in turn, parliament's performance as a guarantor of democracy and an independent pillar in the separation of powers. The themes of the sessions were 'Democracy must Deliver: Role of Parliament in addressing the Challenges'; 'The role of Parliamentarians in building stronger ties within the Commonwealth: including new trade issues, visa issues, travel restrictions, non-tariff restrictions'; 'The Climate Change Debate: A challenge for the Commonwealth?'; 'Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs): How can CPA Members work with their own governments in ensuring that the SDG goals have a proper gender lens to ensure success in the areas of alleviating poverty and women's empowerment?'; 'CPA Benchmarks for Democratic Legislatures: Progress in the past 10 years'; 'Giving voice to the youth: Mechanisms for ensuring effective participation of youth in the governance process'; and 'What factors fuel the rise of different kinds of nationalism?'



As part of the programme, a briefing on the Rohingya issue was made by the Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Bangladeshi Government Hon. A. H. Mahmood Ali, who stated that, to date, more than 600,000 Rohingyas have taken shelter in Bangladesh. This generated a considerable interest among conference participants, with Speaker Farrugia proposing that a resolution be put forward and adopted in the General Assembly and eventually presented to the Secretary General of the United Nations.

Speaker Anġlu Farrugia, in his capacity as Chairperson of the Small Branches of the CPA, briefed the Assembly on the work done by the Small Branches. He gave an overview of the progress made following the Small Branches Strategy meeting held in Valletta on 19 and 20 October 2017.

During the General Assembly, an election for a new President and Chairperson of the Executive Committee was held. The elected candidate was Emilia Monjowa Lifaka, MP from Cameroon. The General Assembly was also presented with a statement which called for urgent action from the international community to resolve the ongoing humanitarian crisis facing the Rohingyas community, as proposed by the Maltese Branch and seconded by the majority of delegates during the opening session of the conference. The statement was accepted and adopted unanimously.

3.1.13.1 36th Meeting of the Small Branches of the CPA, Dhaka

Opening the 36th Meeting of the Small Branches of the CPA, organised in Dhaka, Bangladesh, on 2 and 3 November as part of the 63rd Commonwealth Parliamentary Conference (CPC), Speaker Anġlu Farrugia, Chairperson of the Small Branches of the CPA, explained that for the first time in its 106-year history, the CPA will seek to meet the unique developmental needs of its 43 smallest legislatures through a newly-devised CPA Small Branches Strategy. This Strategy acknowledges that Small Branches are seeking to

meet the same expectations of service delivery as larger legislatures, despite fiscal and human resource constraints; recognises the central role of parliament in meeting the challenges of combating corruption; and acknowledges the threats that climate change brings to some of the Commonwealth's most vulnerable.

The new strategy focuses on key thematic areas and development activities with measurable outcomes; it builds parliamentary capacity for CPA Small Branches and creates greater opportunities for the sharing of knowledge, parliamentary strengthening, and cooperation across the network. The draft Strategy was presented to the plenary as mapped out during a meeting held in Malta on 19 and 20 October, whereby representatives from the nine regions of the CPA were brought together to compile a draft Strategy for the period 2018-2019. The draft Strategy was unanimously approved by the members of the Small Branches and was to be presented for full approval by the mid-year Executive Committee of the CPA which will be held in March 2018.

The conference then tackled a number of themes which were very relevant to small branches: Critical Mass: Small Jurisdictions and big problems – logistics and infrastructure challenges to meet small jurisdiction expectations to achieve the same service levels as larger ones; Parliamentary innovations in small jurisdictions in the face of financial and human resource challenges; 'The role of parliament in combating corruption; and The role of parliament on meeting the challenges of protecting territorial waters.

3.1.14 10th Parliamentary Intelligence-Security Forum, Washington

Speaker Anġlu Farrugia participated in the 10th *Parliamentary Intelligence-Security Forum* held in Washington, United States of America, on 7 December. This annual Forum is organised by US Congressman and Chairman of the Congressional Taskforce on Terrorism, Security and Unconventional Warfare Robert Pittinger. This Forum brought together government, diplomatic, intelligence and industry leaders from 53 countries to discuss terrorism financing, cyber security, money laundering and intelligence co-operation.

In an intervention during the Forum, the Speaker Anġlu Farrugia spoke about the future of Europe, particularly in light of the challenges of migration, security, the radicalisation of young people and terrorism. Keeping unity within the European Union despite its challenges and diversity also featured in the intervention.

3.1.15 Parliamentary Conference on the World Trade Organisation, Buenos Aires

Speaker Anġlu Farrugia, in his capacity as Chairperson of the Small Branches of the CPA, represented the CPA in the Session of the Parliamentary Conference on the World Trade Organisation (WTO), which was jointly organised by the IPU and the European Parliament with the support of the National Congress of Argentina on 9 and 10 December in Buenos Aires. The Conference's main objective was to enhance the external transparency of the WTO and make this inter-governmental organisation accountable to legislators as elected representatives of the people. Sessions of the Parliamentary Conference are held annually as a side event of the WTO Ministerial Conferences to provide legislators with an opportunity to obtain first-hand information on progress made at the Ministerial Conference, interact with government negotiators and WTO officials, exchange views and experiences with colleagues in other parliaments and engage in a dialogue with civil society representatives. This year's Session focused on multilateral trade, specifically on limiting barriers to trade, expectations for the 11th WTO Ministerial Conference (MC11), as well as e-commerce and the internalization of SMEs.

The Parliamentary Conference ended with the adoption of the Outcome Document urging WTO Members to make every possible effort to achieve positive results that consolidate and strengthen the multilateral trading system, with the WTO as its cornerstone, as this plays an important role in promoting global economic growth and sustainable development, in creating jobs and wellbeing.

3.2 Parliamentary Dimension of the Maltese Presidency of the Council of the European Union

Malta held the rotating Presidency of the Council of the European Union between January and June 2017. National parliaments have gained growing relevance in the European decision-making structure, notably since the entry into force of the Lisbon Treaty which granted new powers to national parliaments, and through the strengthening of the parliamentary dimension of the Presidency of the Council of the European Union, including the setting up of various interparliamentary conferences.

As part of the parliamentary dimension of the Presidency of the Council, the Maltese Parliament organised six meetings of Chairpersons and Members of parliamentary committees.

3.2.1 Meeting with European Commission President

On 11 January, Speaker Anġlu Farrugia received a courtesy visit from the President of the European Commission Jean Claude Juncker. President Juncker was leading a visit by the College of Commissioners, who were in Malta to mark the beginning of Malta's first Presidency of the Council of the European Union. During the meeting, the priorities of the Maltese Presidency of the Council of the European Union, as well as the interparliamentary meetings to be organised by the House of Representatives within the framework of the Parliamentary Dimension of the said Presidency, were discussed by the two dignitaries. The issue of migration and the situation in the Mediterranean, particularly in North African countries, also featured in the discussion.

3.2.2 Meeting with the College of Commissioners

On 11 January, the College of Commissioners, who were in Malta to mark the beginning of the incoming Maltese Presidency of the Council of the European Union, met with Members of the parliamentary committees of the House of Representatives. Discussions focused on priorities for the Maltese EU Presidency, namely energy efficiency, climate change, poverty and social exclusion in light of the 2020 targets, interparliamentary exchanges, economic coordination, stability, sustainable growth and employment.



3.2.3 Meeting of the Chairpersons of COSAC

On 22 and 23 January, the Maltese House of Representatives hosted the first meeting of the parliamentary dimension of the Maltese Presidency of the Council of the European Union, i.e. the Meeting of the Chairpersons of the Conference of Parliamentary Committees for Union Affairs of the Parliaments of the European Union (COSAC), that brings together the chairs of the committees on Union Affairs of the Member States of the European Union, the European Parliament and observer and candidate countries. COSAC is the primary forum where members of parliament exchange best practices and information on their role and relationship with the European Union and European Institutions.



The two-day event started with a meeting of the Presidential Troika, presided by Malta and comprising Slovakia and Estonia, being the Member States holding the Presidency of the Council of the European Union immediately before and after the Maltese Presidency.

The meeting of the Chairpersons of COSAC gathered over 100 Members of Parliament who discussed the priorities of the Maltese Presidency and the Commission Work Programme for 2017. The meeting was chaired by Hon. Luciano Busuttil, Chairman of the Foreign and European Affairs Committee of the Maltese Parliament.



Opening the meeting, Speaker Anġlu Farrugia emphasised Malta's strategic position in the Mediterranean, which has been transformed from a stopover along major Mediterranean trade routes, to a key promoter of regional cooperation and development. He remarked that COSAC provides the appropriate platform for parliamentarians to engage in fruitful and sustained discussions, emphasising the need to facilitate and promote parliamentary diplomacy to ensure that the exchange of ideas and conclusions, agreed during the plenary session, resonates in national policies and European action plans. Speaker Farrugia concluded by calling on parliamentarians to promote dialogue, unity and peace across all levels of the social sphere and to envision a shared, serene and prosperous future for all.

Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for European Affairs and Implementation of the Electoral Manifesto Louis Grech opened the first session of the meeting dealing with the priorities of the Maltese Presidency of the Council. In his address, Hon. Grech stated that the Maltese Presidency comes at a time when the European Union is in a state of flux and uncertainty, created by mass migration movements, security concerns, economic strife, income inequalities, citizen disillusionment, terrorist attacks and Brexit. Hon. Grech said that these phenomena have contributed to the re-emergence of extreme nationalism, protectionism, xenophobia and geopolitical tensions, which contrast sharply with the EU's ideals and carry the risk of derailing the European project. The European Union must adapt to various emerging realities, he continued, urging the EU to focus on issues that address the legitimate concerns and expectations of its citizens. In conclusion, Hon. Grech claimed that the Union will succeed if it manages to instil a sense of hope and optimism in its citizens, and if it makes citizens feel that they are getting added value from belonging to a great Union of nations

that works in unison to enrich their lives. Hon. Grech explained that the long-term sustainability of the EU and restoring faith in the EU was at the core of the theme of "rEUnion" adopted for the Maltese Presidency. He concluded that with the right leadership, vision and in-built flexibility, the Union will adapt to forge a strong dynamic and vibrant Europe for its young people and future generations.



Addressing the delegates during the same meeting, Minister for Tourism Edward Zammit Lewis stressed the potential for transformation that the EU has conveyed to all its Member States, by delivering and harbouring peace, security, and prosperity for its citizens, adding that the Union has

been facing major issues, namely migration, security, terrorism and Brexit, and claimed that such issues are generating widespread uncertainty, fear and potential inequalities amongst European citizens. Whilst presenting the way forward aligned with the Maltese Presidency's priorities, the Minister referred to the Single Market and the Digital Single Market Strategy, focusing on the importance of competitiveness and SMEs, as well as the security of European citizens, including the need to address regional and global challenges, notably terrorism. Other priorities mentioned were social inclusion and links between national parliaments. In conclusion, Minister Zammit Lewis stated that COSAC provides the perfect platform for the Union to ensure its potential is fully exploited.

During the session on the Commission Work Programme, First Vice President of the European Commission Frans Timmermans presented the Commission's ten priorities for 2017. Commissioner Timmermans highlighted three issues that will be shaping the EU's future: Brexit, disenchantment in the EU by European citizens, and migration. Timmermans explained that the EU needs to be effective for all European citizens alike, and to ensure that democracy is not a dictatorship of the majority. He called on members present to cultivate further their parliamentary diplomacy to enhance dialogue between national parliaments and with the European Commission. Chair of the Committee on Constitutional Affairs of the European Parliament Danuta Maria Hübner, highlighted the importance of sustaining inter-institutional cooperation and ensuring that the Commission Work Programme is analysed and endorsed by the Committees of the European Parliament. Hübner reiterated the need to address concerns in a joint and inclusive way, and to identify solutions at European level, and reaffirmed the centrality of national parliaments, notably the need to encourage greater participation in and engagement with parliaments. Concluding, Hübner encouraged Members present to sustain closer cooperation with the European Parliament.

3.2.4 European Parliamentary Week, European Parliament, Brussels

Speaker Anġlu Farrugia participated in the *European Parliamentary Week* between 30 January and 1 February. The European Parliamentary Week provides an opportunity for debate and knowledge transfer between national parliaments and the European Parliament with a view to improve democratic accountability on economic governance and budgetary politics in the European Union.

Speaker Farrugia's first engagement was a meeting with European Parliament President Antonio Tajani. Speaker Farrugia congratulated Tajani on his recent election to President of the European Parliament and augured that the good relations built between the Maltese and European Parliaments under Tajani's predecessor, Martin Schulz, will continue to be strengthened in the forthcoming years. Speaker Farrugia cited the fact that the Interparliamentary Conference on Stability, Economic Coordination and Governance according to Article 13 of the Fiscal Pact was going to be opened by both presidents as an example of the good relationship that exists between the two institutions, both at a political and administrative level. He added that this cooperation extends to all the meetings that are being organised as part of the parliamentary dimension of the Maltese Presidency of the Council of the European Union. Tajani remarked that the proximity between Malta and his own country enables him to understand Malta's problems, and committed the European Parliament and himself as its President, to work closely throughout the Maltese Presidency to address challenges that no country should face alone, not least in the field of irregular immigration. He stressed that this cooperation should continue beyond the Maltese Presidency. In conclusion, Speaker Farrugia highlighted that the Maltese parliamentary dimension is committed to giving direction on, where and how the European Union should act.



The *Parliamentary Conference on Stability, Economic Coordination and Governance in the European Union*, held at the European Parliament in Brussels, was co-organised by the Maltese House of Representatives and the European Parliament within the framework of the European Parliamentary Week 2017. The Conference was co-chaired by Roberto Gualtieri (Chair of the Committee on Economic and Monetary Affairs of the EP) and Hon. Silvio Schembri (Chair of the Economic and Financial Affairs Committee of the Maltese Parliament).

This annual Conference aims to strengthen cooperation between national parliaments and the European Parliament as well as to improve accountable democracy in the fields of economic governance and budgetary policies in the European Union. The meeting comprised four plenary sessions: An exchange of views on the Fiscal Compact as part of national economic policy; An exchange of ideas regarding a more comprehensive and coordinated social dimension of the Economic and Monetary Union; An exchange of best practices on benchmarking national reforms aimed at increasing growth and employment; and An exchange of ideas on the role of the financial assistance programme and the European Stability Mechanism in safeguarding the stability of the Euro.



In his opening address, Speaker Anġlu Farrugia remarked that the European Union is facing a number of challenges, the EU's solutions for which are not always welcomed by the citizens, so much so that they have served to diminish citizens' trust in European institutions. He explained that Malta's priorities for its Presidency of the Council aimed to achieve positive results in areas in which the European Union has struggled to move forward, adding that the meetings being organised by the Maltese Parliament within the parliamentary dimension aim to provide impetus and complement such discussions. He also remarked that citizens expect concrete action in order to be able to recognise that the European Union is a project from which can benefit each and every citizen.



In his speech, President Tajani thanked the Maltese Parliament for the cooperation that exists between the two institutions, stating that the Maltese Presidency can rely on the European Parliament's commitment to the success of Malta's first Presidency. Tajani claimed that the EU has the duty to protect its most vulnerable citizens, highlighting the alarming rate of unemployment among young people. Tajani added that every decision aimed at addressing the challenges which the European Union is facing must be subjected to parliamentary scrutiny so that they will truly gain democratic legitimacy.

During his opening remarks on the session on benchmarking national reforms, Chair Hon. Silvio Schembri said that beyond what is set out in the Treaty, a discussion is needed regarding parliaments' understanding of benchmarking, how parliaments deem benchmarking should be conducted, whether the objectives of benchmarking are being reached and whether they could be achieved through other, perhaps more effective, means. During the opening remarks to the last session, Hon. Silvio Schembri spoke of the successes the European Stability Mechanism (ESM) and the European Financial Stability Facility (EFSF) had in countries undertaking such loan programmes. He also recalled that at the end of 2016, the ESM agreed to launch an evaluation process of loan programmes granted in the past for a more in-depth analysis of the results achieved so that the efficiency and the effectiveness of future programmes will be improved.

Minister for Finance Hon. Edward Scicluna was amongst the various guest speakers. He addressed two of this Conference's sessions, wherein he discussed the role of the financial assistance and the European Financial Stability Mechanism to safeguard the stability of the Euro. Minister Edward Scicluna said that the ESM contributes to stability and pointed out that although the Euro is more than a political project, it lacks the institutional elements commonly found in other federal currencies such as the dollar. Minister Scicluna added that the ESM is an essential element of the European response to the financial crisis. He pointed out that there is a strong political will to ensure stability and sustainability of the Euro, and referred to the various available tools, including benchmarking and the Stability and Growth Pact.

The Governor of the Central Bank of Malta Mario Vella, another guest speaker at the Conference, spoke about the implementation of structural reforms that lead to growth and jobs. He listed the reforms implemented in Malta and their results. Vella argued that it is a mistake to assume that it

is simpler to introduce reforms in small countries since such countries often face lack of resources, and wrong decisions may have a greater impact on small countries than they would on larger economies. He claimed that successful reforms are built on lengthy and thorough discussions. In his concluding comments, he said that although Malta's successes cannot be easily transposed in larger economies, a lot can be learned. Policymakers should focus on flexible, clear and well-thought incentives to promote appropriate economic behaviour.

Hon. Jason Azzopardi also participated at this conference.

3.2.5 Visit by the President of the European Parliament



On 2 February, President of the European Parliament Antonio Tajani paid a courtesy visit to Speaker Anġlu Farrugia, just two days after both dignitaries together opened the Interparliamentary Conference on Stability, Economic Governance and Coordination which was organised in Brussels by the Maltese House of Representatives and the European Parliament. In a brief meeting, the two spoke of the excellent relations that exist between the Maltese Parliament and the European Parliament, both at the political and administrative level, with EP President Antonio Tajani reiterating the pledge that Malta and the Maltese Parliament can always count on the support of the European Parliament on issues which are of a priority for Malta, such as in the area of irregular migration and the Mediterranean. Additionally, Speaker Farrugia recalled the visit by the Conference of Presidents in December 2016 led by then EP President Martin Schulz, when Schulz had remarked that the large turnout of Members of Parliament to meet the Conference was unprecedented and encouraging. The Speaker also referred to a proposal for a pilot project between parliaments of small Member States to

evaluate the effect of EU legislation on small states. President Tajani took note of this proposal, remarking that it deserved further consideration.

After the meeting, Speaker Farrugia accompanied President Tajani on a tour of the Parliament building, which tour included the basement of the building which is earmarked to house the Parliament's archive and a library in order to further facilitate access of parliamentary documents to the public. President Tajani expressed his interest in the project and also remarked that the current digitalisation project being undertaken by the European Parliament could prove useful for the Maltese Parliament.

3.2.6 Meeting of the Chairpersons of the Committees on Social Affairs

On 23 and 24 March, the Maltese House of Representatives hosted the *Meeting of the Chairpersons of the Committees on Social Affairs*. The discussions at this meeting, that brought together more than 80 delegates, focused on poverty and social exclusion, underpinned by the notion that everyone has the right to live in dignity, and the EU's target of bringing 20 million people out of poverty and social exclusion by 2020.



More than 120 million people in Europe are at risk of poverty or social exclusion. The European Commission's definition of poverty, that is having an income and resources which are limited to the extent that they do not allow people to enjoy a standard of living considered acceptable in the society in which they live, pays testament to the multifaceted and complex nature of poverty. Poverty is both a cause and consequence of multiple disadvantages, including unemployment, low income, poor housing, inadequate healthcare and barriers to lifelong learning, culture, sport and recreation, resulting in exclusion and marginalisation from participating in activities that others consider the norm. However, poverty and social exclusion are not matters that solely affect the individuals involved: societies can only flourish and improve if their members have a decent standard of living which enables them to participate in the community. Additionally,

poverty has economic implications, namely increased public expenditure.



Over the years, the EU has been committed to reducing poverty and social exclusion, such as through its inclusion in the Treaty of the Functioning of the European Union, the Treaty of Amsterdam and the Lisbon Strategy, the European Pillar of Social Rights and in the establishment of the Social Protection Committee. However, despite such efforts, poverty and social exclusion began to rise again with the 2008 economic crisis, with children, youth, women and the elderly remaining the most vulnerable.

Opening the meeting, the Chairperson of the Standing Committee on Social Affairs Hon. Anthony Agius Decelis, who presided over the meeting, spoke about the importance of European states coming together to discuss issues relating to poverty and social exclusion. He argued that parliamentarians cannot take poverty as an unbeatable reality and encouraged Europe to work towards being more inclusive, among other things, through paying particular attention to the needs of minorities.

In his address, Speaker Farrugia emphasised the growing relevance of national parliaments in the entire European decision-making structure as a means of enhancing the democratic process. Farrugia argued that it is parliamentarians who must prioritise and implement this ambitious plan. Speaker Farrugia urged all Chairpersons present, as citizens' representatives, to consider the impact of each parliamentary decision on society's vulnerable groups.

Addressing the audience through a recorded video message, European Commissioner Marianne Thyssen, responsible for Employment, Social Affairs, Skills and Labour Mobility, spoke of the European Commission's commitment to deepen the social dimension of the EU, mentioning the need for fairer and more resilient labour markets and societies. Commissioner Thyssen stated that social issues are a cross-cutting priority which are mainstreamed across

the entire political agenda of the EU. Highlighting the key roles held by national parliamentarians in developing social policy, which, she said, must be developed close to their target recipients, Commissioner Thyssen explained that the EU adds value through policy support and coordination, stating that acting together better enables EU Member States to face global challenges and opportunities. The Commissioner honed in on inequality between EU citizens, which is on the rise, stating that inequality brings with it a real cost to the economy and to citizens' trust in political institutions. Referring to the social fairness agenda and the European Pillar of Social Rights, the Commissioner claimed that these should be used as a reference framework through which national social and employment policies are screened to ensure that they are fit for purpose in the long-term, stating that the EU's future growth must be based on sustainability. Concluding, Commissioner Thyssen referred to national parliamentarians as partners who need to make the EU's social agenda a reality and to ensure that it bring results for citizens, who expect concrete answers to their concerns and who expect the EU to provide opportunities and protection.



Delegates present commented on the EU's achievements in fighting poverty and social exclusion, exchanged good practice and discussed ways in which the EU's target could be achieved. Opportunities for fighting poverty and social exclusion mentioned during the meeting, included job creation, employment rights, a decent minimum wage to make work pay, tapering unemployment benefits, improving the quality and accessibility of education, health and social services for vulnerable groups including early intervention, improving community services and introducing more robust outcome measurement and benchmarking, limiting inflation on basic goods (such as electricity, public transport, food and rents), researching and sharing good practices, addressing stigma against minority groups, encouraging innovation and the meaningful involvement of service users, the workforce and carers in policies and services aimed at fighting poverty and social exclusion.

3.2.7 Meeting of the Chairpersons of Economic and Environmental Affairs Committees



Another meeting organised within the framework of the parliamentary dimension of the Maltese Presidency of the Council of the European Union was the *Meeting of Chairpersons of Economic and Environmental Affairs Committees* held on 7 April. In his opening address, Speaker Anġlu Farrugia explained that the aim of the meeting was to engage Members of Parliament in discussions dealing with the phenomenon of climate change not from a purely environmental perspective but also from an economic opportunity point of view. Speaker Farrugia added that as legislators and as representatives of citizens, parliamentarians must work closely to discuss the economic and social impact of climate change not only for this generation but also for the generations to come, especially the difference between taking action and not taking any action at all. By way of example, Speaker Farrugia explained that the new Parliament building has been designed to be as highly energy efficient as possible through the installation of photovoltaic cells on its roof and sun deflecting structures around windows. He added that although these came at a considerable initial cost, these would be outweighed by the long-term benefits. In conclusion, Speaker Farrugia urged all parliamentarians as representatives of the citizens, to always consider the impact of each decision taken in the respective parliaments on the future generations.

The meeting was divided in two sessions. The first session dealt with 'The Economic and Social Impact of Climate Change – the costs of doing nothing' and was addressed by Prof. Maria Attard, Director at the Institute for Climate Change and Sustainable Development, University of Malta and Jan Dusik, Regional Director for Europe, UN Environment Programme (UNEP).

The second session, 'Financing the cost of taking action – climate change as an exciting opportunity for non-state actors', addressed public and private financing and the involvement of non-state actors. Keynote Speakers on this topic were Sean Kidney, CEO and Co-Founder of the Climate Bonds Initiative, Dr Philip von Brockdorff, Head of Department of Economics, Faculty of Economics, Management and Accountancy, University of Malta, David Xuereb, CEO, QP Management and Ernest Agius, Chief Operations Officer, Bank of Valletta.



This meeting was chaired by the Chairman of the Economic and Financial Affairs Committee of the House of Representatives Hon. Silvio Schembri.

3.2.8 Interparliamentary Conference on the Common Foreign and Security Policy/Common Security and Defence Policy (CFSP/CSDP)

The House of Representatives, together with the European Parliament, also organised the *Interparliamentary Conference on the Common Foreign and Security Policy/Common Security and Defence Policy* between 26 and 28 April. This Conference gathers delegations of the national parliaments of the EU member states and observer countries, and the European Parliament

to discuss topical issues in this policy area, in which European cooperation can truly bring added value to its citizens, as it brings peace, security and stability.



During the opening session, Hon. Luciano Busuttill, Chair of the Foreign and European Affairs Committee and co-Chair of the Conference, stated that the European Union was at a crossroads, not only from a political and economic perspective, but also from an existential and fundamental freedoms perspective. In this context, Hon. Busuttill emphasised the significance for Members of Parliament to recognize the importance of maintaining open channels of communication at parliamentary and institutional level as well as at the level of the grassroots, through a cross-sectional, multi-layered approach which includes cooperation with stakeholders, civil society organizations and other interested parties involved in the common foreign and security policy and common security and defence policy.



During his keynote speech, opening the Session on the State of Play of the European Neighbourhood, Minister for Foreign Affairs Hon. George Vella focused on the role of the European Union and its relations with neighbouring states. During the debate which followed, delegates emphasised the importance of peace and stability in Europe and in neighbouring countries. Delegates reiterated their commitment towards the unity, the sovereignty and the territorial integrity of Ukraine, Georgia

and Moldova and the importance of strengthening the relationship between the EU and these countries through strengthening the implementation of the association agreements and the reforms aimed at strengthening their independence, democracy, institutions, economy, fight against corruption, minority rights, security and defence. Moreover, delegates emphasized the importance of developing a realistic strategy regarding the bilateral relations between the EU and Russia, which retains the sanctions against Russia yet enables cooperation when this has clear benefits for the EU and Russian civil society.



Another session focused on the instability and threats in the Southern Mediterranean region and the Middle East, and included the participation of EU Counter-Terrorism Coordinator Gilles de Kerchove, UN High Commissioner for Refugees Representative in Malta Kahin Ismail and the representative of International Institute for Justice and the Rule of Law Valerio de Divitiis. The ensuing debate focused on the need for a peace process to be supported and promoted, that sustainable development is encouraged and that the root causes of instability, forced and irregular migration, terrorism and radicalisation are addressed. Such root causes include poverty, lack of economic opportunities, armed conflicts, bad governance, climate change and human rights abuses. They emphasised the need for the EU to work together with countries involved and with international organisations to develop a common law-based strategy that addresses these global challenges. Delegates called on the EU to establish a genuine common European policy on migration, which is based on human rights, to revise the existing asylum regime and to develop adequate legal means for safe migration and commit to propose to the United Nations to recognise organised human trafficking as a crime against humanity.



The session on Priorities and the Strategies of the EU in the area of CFSP and CSDP included the participation of the Minister for Home Affairs and National Security of Malta, Hon. Carmelo Abela, and the High Representative of the European Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy and Vice-President of the European Commission, Ms Federica Mogherini. The intervention of Ms Mogherini focused on the priorities and strategies of the EU in the area of the CFSP/CSDP and underlined all the issues on defence and security and broader cooperation between Member States. Delegates aired their views on the importance on the fight against propaganda and information warfare, while emphasizing the need for strengthening institutions of the European Union and its Member States.



On the final day of the Conference, Members participated in thematic workshops dealing with the EU's Migration Policy in 2017 and beyond, Fighting Propaganda and Information Warfare and European Defence Action Plan and EU-NATO relations. The workshops served as a basis for the conclusions of the meeting which were adopted at the end of the Conference.

The Conclusions assert that the European Union is one of the greatest achievements in European history and that it has brought peace, stability and prosperity to its citizens and that these need to be defended and strengthened for the benefit of future generations of Europeans and that an effective common foreign and security policy is

one of the main areas where European cooperation could deliver added value. Furthermore, they outline the Priorities and Strategies of the EU in the area of CFSP and CSDP, highlighting the Implementation Plan on Security and Defence and the establishment of a coordinated annual review on defence (CARD) among member states, as well as strengthening the EU's diplomatic, civilian, security and defence instruments and capabilities, in view of the need for the European Union to achieve strategic autonomy, build resilience and increase energy security independence. Relations between the EU and the UK post-Brexit and between the EU and Russia, as well as cooperation with the Eastern Partnership countries also featured in the context of the EU's Neighbourhood Policy.

On the instability and threats in the Southern Mediterranean and the Middle East, the Conference Conclusions condemn the indiscriminate suffering of innocent civilians and highlight the need to address the root causes leading to instability and forced and irregular migration, terrorism and radicalisation. In this regard, mention was made of collaboration with the United Nations and NATO, as well as the implementation of the Valletta Summit Action Plan, the Malta Declaration and an asylum policy based on the principle of solidarity and shared responsibility with the securing of the EU's external borders.

On the topic of fighting propaganda and information warfare, the Conference Conclusions stress the need to address potential cyber threats to the energy, transport and space infrastructures, financial systems and public health, and to enhance strategic communication aimed at making EU values and external action more visible; stresses that it is also crucial that citizens, especially youths, are trained to distinguish facts from alternative facts.

On strengthening the Common Security and Defence Policy, the Conclusions emphasise the Rome Declaration and the political will to strengthen European Defence, highlighting the role played in this regard by the European Defence Technological and Industrial Base, a military planning and conduct capability, a European Defence Action Plan (EDAP). European Defence Agency (EDA) capabilities and permanent structured cooperation (PESCO), as well as lending its support to the Joint EU-NATO Declaration of 8 July 2016, were also included in the conclusion.

3.2.9 LVII COSAC



The last meeting organised within the framework of the parliamentary dimension of the Maltese Presidency was the LVII COSAC held in Malta on 29 and 30 May. This meeting gathered over 250 delegates in Malta to discuss issues of common concern and exchange best practices on promoting increased parliamentary participation in European affairs. Its agenda comprised five main sessions, which were addressed by a number of distinguished guests.

During the session on Reflections on the Maltese Presidency of the Council, Minister for Foreign Affairs Hon. George Vella highlighted that taking over the Presidency of the Council of the EU for the first time was an important milestone, a huge challenge, and great responsibility for Malta. The six priority areas identified by Malta were: migration, security, neighbourhood policy, the Single Market, maritime, and social inclusion. Minister Vella explained that in 2017, the Council made significant strides towards control and management of borders, documentation, and the entry-exit system, with the Malta Summit and Declaration on the external aspects of migration providing an important tool and plan of action. With regard to security, the Council adopted a Directive on combating terrorism, and a Directive on the fight against fraud to the financial interest of the Union. Economic stability and political realities of neighbouring states constitute an important element for the development of a prosperous region, and the Maltese Presidency attaches particular importance to this element. In fact, Minister Vella explained that the enrichment of synergies between the Anna Lindh Foundation, the Union for the Mediterranean, and the Western Mediterranean Forum contribute to bridge differences and close the gap between the EU and its immediate neighbours.

With regard to the maritime sector, the Maltese Presidency focused on furthering the EU Integrated Maritime Policy, especially with the expansion of the Blue Economy. Furthermore, Council Conclusions on International Ocean Governance, together with the related Joint Communication, have successfully put forward a more coherent, comprehensive, and effective EU policy to improve the international ocean governance framework, and to ensure the conservation and sustainable use of oceans.

On the single market, Minister Vella said that this was another area of great success. He explained that the Council worked hard on tackling corporate tax avoidance, by closing down hybrid-mismatches with the tax systems of third countries. The Council has also worked on the review of the Emissions Trading Scheme and on establishing a mechanism for the exchange of information between member states and third countries in this sector.

On social inclusion, Minister Vella informed the delegates about conclusions on the European Solidarity Corps and on High Quality Education, as well as on enhancing the skills of women and men in the EU labour market, and on the protection of the rights of the child.

In the session on the role of national parliaments in the future of the EU, First Vice President of the European Commission Frans Timmermans spoke about the need to increase transparency at EU level, and to ensure that national parliaments take control of the tools available to them to carry out parliamentary scrutiny of EU policies and activities. Furthermore, First Vice President Timmermans also called on national parliaments to step-up dialogue with the European Commission.

Delegates taking part in this session highlighted that national parliaments should be at the core of European Union decision-making, and the need for national parliaments to bridge the divide between the EU and their respective constituencies. They spoke of the need to bridge the gap between the EU and its citizens and to ensure that euro-scepticism is collectively countered.

Another session focused on the outcome of the UK referendum, where Michel Barnier, Chief Negotiator for the preparation and conduct of the negotiations with the United Kingdom, and Ms Danuta Hübner, Chair of the Committee on Constitutional Affairs of the European Parliament, presented the European Union's institutional approach for Brexit. Barnier emphasized that in spite of the regrettable decision by the UK to leave the EU and possible resentment by some members of the European fora, the European Commission was committed to not take a punitive approach towards the UK. Furthermore, Barnier emphasized that European citizens will be placed at the forefront of the discussions. Ms Hübner highlighted that the European Parliament remains strongly committed to be a key actor during the negotiating process of the UK exit from the EU. Ms Hübner explained that the role of national parliaments is of utmost importance, and central to ensure that European citizens have a direct voice in European Union decision-making processes, thereby ensuring a better implementation of the democratic principle.



Another session of the LVII COSAC addressed issues and opportunities linked to the Blue Economy and the need to create a sustainable EU Integrated Maritime Policy. For this session, EU Commissioner for the Environment, Maritime Affairs and Fisheries Karmenu Vella was invited to speak on the potential of the Blue Economy and on the innovative opportunities for all. Speaking on the European Agenda for blue growth, Commissioner Vella highlighted the importance of ensuring access to finance, enhancing skills and qualifications through the Blue Careers Initiative, and further promoting regional cooperation.

On the topic of migration, more specifically the need to combat human smuggling and trafficking, and establishing a humane and effective return and readmission policy, the keynote speakers included Minister for Foreign Affairs Hon. George Vella, Member of the European Parliament Maite Pagazaurtundúa Ruiz, and Vice-Chair of the Committee on EU Policies of the Italian Senate Lucio Romano.

During his address, Minister George Vella explained that the migration phenomenon is presenting three key challenges related to: (i) the emergence of new routes; (ii) an increase of young unaccompanied migrants; and (iii) the mutating business model. Minister Vella recognised that cooperation with third-countries, especially within a return and readmission portfolio, is an important and strategic approach to ensure that migration is managed in a more efficient and humane manner. Furthermore, Minister Vella highlighted the need to promote legal migration and to step up information campaigns in countries of origin and transit, thus providing concrete information to prospective migrants.

MEP Pagazaurtundúa Ruiz said that 2017 should be the year Europe develops a harmonised migration policy guided by the principles of ethics, human rights, and human dignity. Highlighting the need to promote legal channels for migration and thus effectively act as a deterrent for human trafficking, Ms Pagazaurtundúa Ruiz quoted the Canadian model as a possible example of well-managed migration. Senator Lucio Romano provided a detailed account of the recent visit to hotspots in Pozzallo, Sicily, by a COSAC delegation on 5-6 May 2017 to enhance awareness of MPs from Member States on the challenges of migration.

In his concluding remarks, Speaker Anġlu Farrugia, chairing the LVII COSAC, thanked the members of the Troika of COSAC, i.e. the Slovak, Estonian and European Parliament delegations, for their cooperation throughout the Presidency, especially in the run up to the LVII COSAC, which

was organised in spite of the unexpected dissolution of Parliament on 1 May 2017.

3.3 Outgoing Visits of Maltese Members of Parliament

3.3.1 European Parliament and European Union Presidency Meetings

At EU level, Members of Parliament participate in three types of interparliamentary meetings, those organised by the European Parliament, those organised by the European Commission and those organised within the parliamentary dimension of the rotating Presidency.

Interparliamentary committee meetings with national parliaments organised by the European Parliament are proposed on the initiative of an individual parliamentary committee of the European Parliament, for which national parliamentarians from their corresponding committee are invited. These meetings mainly cover the policy areas where the European Union has legislative powers using the co-decision procedure. The aim of these meetings is to promote an exchange of views and best practice between European and national parliamentarians with a view to influencing the legislative decisions of the European Parliament and ensuring more transparency and openness in the decision-making process. They are co-organised by the Directorate for Relations with National Parliaments and the European Parliament committee concerned.

Meetings organised by the European Commission are less frequent; they tend to focus on priority EU policy areas and actions.

The meetings falling within the parliamentary dimension of the rotating Presidency are organised by the parliament of the Member State holding the Presidency of the Council of the European Union, and include a number of statutory interparliamentary meetings.

During the course of the year under review, Maltese Members of Parliament participated in the following meetings at EU level:

Hon. David Agius and Hon. Alex Muscat participated in the *High Level Conference on Migration* held in Brussels on 21 June;

Hon. Edward Zammit Lewis participated in the *Meeting of the COSAC Chairpersons* held in Tallinn on 9-10 July;

Hon. Jason Azzopardi and Hon. Edward Zammit Lewis participated in the *Interparliamentary Conference for the Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP) and the Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP)* held in Tallinn between 7 and 9 September;

Hon. Clayton Bartolo and Hon. Robert Cutajar participated in the *Meeting of the Chairpersons of the Economic Affairs Committees on Transport Connections in Europe* held in Tallinn on 21-22 September;

Hon. David Stellini and Hon. Stefan Zrinzo Azzopardi participated in the *High Level Conference on Tourism: A European Strategy to enhance the competitiveness of the tourism industry, a key driver for jobs creation* held in Brussels on 27 September;

Hon. Simon Busuttil participated in the *Constituent Meeting of the Joint Parliamentary Scrutiny Group on the European Union Agency for Law Enforcement Cooperation (Europol)* held in Brussels on 9-10 October;

Hon. Simon Busuttil participated in the *Exchange of views with National Parliaments on the Country Specific Recommendations and the Common Consolidated Corporate Tax Base* held in Brussels on 10 October;

Hon. Simon Busuttil participated in the *Interparliamentary Committee Meeting on the Future of Europe: Perspectives on the European Parliament's Proposals and the Commission White Paper* held in Brussels on 11 October;

Hon. Ivan Bartolo and Hon. Emmanuel Mallia participated in the *Interparliamentary Conference on Stability, Economic Coordination and Governance in the European Union* held in Tallinn between 29 and 31 October;

Hon. Claudette Buttigieg participated in the *Interparliamentary Committee Meeting with National Parliaments on the Istanbul Convention: Combating Violence against Women at National and EU Level* held in Brussels on 21 November;

Hon. Simon Busuttil participated in the *Interparliamentary Committee Meeting with National Parliaments on the Future of Cohesion Policy post 2020: Opportunities, Challenges and Next Steps* held in Brussels on 22 November; and

Hon. David Stellini and Hon. Edward Zammit Lewis participated in the *LVIII COSAC* held in Tallinn between 26 and 28 November. During this meeting, Kenneth Curmi, Research Analyst at the Maltese Parliament, was appointed Permanent Member

of the COSAC Secretariat for the period 2018-2019.

3.3.2 Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe

The Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe (PACE) brings together democratically elected Members of Parliament from the 47 Member States of the Council of Europe. Using its powers under the founding Statute, the Assembly can:

- demand action from 47 European governments, who must jointly reply;
- conduct probes to uncover new facts about human rights violations;
- question Presidents and Prime Ministers on any topic it chooses;
- observe elections and send delegations to mediate in crisis hot-spots;
- negotiate the terms on which states join the Council of Europe;
- inspire new national laws by proposing and giving opinions on treaties;
- request legal opinions on the laws and constitutions of member states; and
- sanction a member state by recommending its exclusion or suspension.

Though it has no power to pass binding laws, PACE holds a constant dialogue with governments, national parliaments, other international organisations and civil society which 'set the agenda'. In this way, its texts filter down through law and practice to improve the lives of Europeans.

Through its recommendations, the Assembly demands action on behalf of the 800 million Europeans it represents, and the 47 governments of the Council of Europe represented in the Committee of Ministers are obliged to respond. In practice, the Assembly often acts as the driving force of the Council of Europe by promoting new ideas, setting strategic direction and initiating many of the Council's most important activities.

The Assembly sets its own agenda where it discusses European and international events covering issues related to human rights, democracy, protection of minorities and the rule of law.

In terms of Motion No. 16 adopted by the House on 15 April 2013 and Motion No. 130 adopted by the House on 7 May 2014, the Maltese delegation to the PACE, in the 12th Legislature, was composed as follows:

Members

Hon. Joe Debono Grech, Head of Delegation
Hon. Beppe Fenech Adami
Hon. Deborah Schembri

Substitute Members

Hon. Charlò Bonnici
Hon. Deo Debattista
Hon. Joseph M. Sammut

The delegates were members of the committees as shown hereunder:

Hon. Joe Debono Grech

- Standing Committee of the Assembly;
- Political Affairs and Democracy Committee;
- Committee on the Honouring of Obligations and Commitments by Member States of the Council of Europe (Monitoring Committee); and
- Committee on Legal Affairs and Human Rights (substitute)

Hon. Beppe Fenech Adami

- Committee on Migration, Refugees and Displaced Persons; and
- Political Affairs and Democracy Committee (substitute)

Hon. Deborah Schembri

- Committee on Equality and Non-Discrimination; and
- Committee on Migration, Refugees and Displaced Persons (substitute)

Hon. Charlò Bonnici

- Committee on the Honouring of Obligations and Commitments by Member States of the Council of Europe (Monitoring Committee);
- Committee on Culture, Science, Education and Media; and
- Committee on Social Affairs, Health and Sustainable Development (substitute)

Hon. Deo Debattista

- Committee on Social Affairs, Health and Sustainable Development; and
- Committee on Culture, Science, Education and Media (substitute)

Hon. Joseph M. Sammut

- Committee on Legal Affairs and Human Rights; and
- Committee on Equality and Non-Discrimination (substitute).

In the 13th Legislature, through Motion No. 28 approved by the House on 11 July 2017, the delegation to the PACE was reconstituted as follows:

Members

Hon. Emmanuel Mallia,
Head of Delegation
Hon. Rosianne Cutajar
Hon. David Stellini



Substitute Members

Hon. Jason Azzopardi
Hon. Etienne Grech
Hon. Stefan Zrinzo Azzopardi

The delegates are members of the committees as shown hereunder:

Hon. Emmanuel Mallia

- Standing Committee of the Assembly;
- Committee on Legal Affairs and Human Rights;
- Ad Hoc Committee of the Bureau; and
- Political Affairs and Democracy Committee (substitute)

Hon. Rosianne Cutajar

- Committee on Equality and Non-Discrimination; and
- Committee on Social Affairs, Health and Sustainable Development (substitute)

Hon. David Stellini

- Committee on Migration, Refugees and Displaced Persons; and
- Committee on Culture, Science, Education and Media (substitute)

Hon. Jason Azzopardi

- Political Affairs and Democracy Committee; and
- Committee on Migration, Refugees and Displaced Persons (substitute)

Hon. Etienne Grech

- Committee on Social Affairs, Health and Sustainable Development; and
- Committee on Equality and Non-Discrimination (substitute)

Hon. Stefan Zrinzo Azzopardi

- Committee on Culture, Science, Education and Media; and
- Committee on Legal Affairs and Human Rights (substitute).

The resolutions and recommendations adopted or approved by the PACE during the 2017 Sessions were laid on the Table of the House of Representatives.

The following information lists the Maltese delegation's participation in both the Assembly plenary sessions as well as the committee meetings where Members had the opportunity to

participate in discussions on a number of texts which later were considered by the Assembly:

Hon. Joe Debono Grech, Hon. Charlò Bonnici, Hon. Beppe Fenech Adami and Hon. Joseph M. Sammut took part in the *First Part of the 2017 Ordinary Session of the PACE* held in Strasbourg on 23 and 27 January;

Hon. Joe Debono Grech participated in the *Meeting of the Committee on Legal Affairs and Human Rights* on 7 March in Paris; the *Meeting of the Monitoring Committee* on 8 March also in Paris; and the *Meeting of the Standing Committee* held on 9-10 March in Madrid;

Hon. Joseph M. Sammut and Hon. Charlò Bonnici participated in the *International Conference on the Interaction between the Political Majority and the Opposition in a Democracy* organised by the European Commission for Democracy through Law (Venice Commission) of the Council of Europe, held in Bucharest on 6-7 April;

Hon. Joe Debono Grech and Hon. Charlò Bonnici took part in the *Second Part of the 2017 Ordinary Session of the PACE* held in Strasbourg between 24 and 28 April;

Hon. Joe Debono Grech participated in a *PACE Election Observation Mission to Albania* between 22 and 26 June;

Hon. Rosianne Cutajar participated in the *Launching Conference of the Parliamentary Network on Diaspora Policies* organised by the PACE and the Parliament of Portugal in Lisbon on 7-8 September;

Hon. Emmanuel Mallia, Hon. Etienne Grech and Hon. David Stellini took part in the *Fourth Part of the 2017 Ordinary Session of the PACE* held in Strasbourg between 9 and 13 October;

Hon. Etienne Grech participated in the *Parliamentary Seminar on Employment, Training and Equal Opportunities: How to ensure fair treatment and inclusion for all*, held in Paris on 27 October;

Hon. Emmanuel Mallia participated in the *Meeting of the Committee on Legal Affairs and Human Rights* in Paris on 13 November;

Hon. Stefan Zrinzo Azzopardi participated in the *South-East Europe and Mediterranean Regional Seminar on Global Development Education* held in Bucharest on 16 November;

Hon. Emmanuel Mallia participated in the *Meeting of the Standing Committee* held in Copenhagen on 24 November; and

Hon. Emmanuel Mallia participated in the *Meeting of the Committee on Legal Affairs and Human Rights* held in Paris on 12 December.

3.3.3 Parliamentary Assembly of the Mediterranean

Since the Helsinki process in 1973 which led to the setting up of the CSCE (Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe), countries like Malta emphasised the principle of indivisibility of security and argued strongly that peace, security and stability in Europe and in the Mediterranean were intrinsically and inextricably interlinked. The 'Mediterranean dimension', better known as the CSCM, within the Charter of Paris for a New Europe signed in November 1990, is synonymous to Malta which advocated since the very start of the Helsinki process that there cannot be security in Europe without security in the Mediterranean. To underscore the importance of this dimension and its commitment towards the region, Malta hosted a number of CSCE/OSCE seminars dealing on the Mediterranean over a period of time. Following seven Inter-Parliamentary Conferences on Security and Cooperation in Europe between 1972 and 1991, the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU) decided on a similar process in the Mediterranean, launching the process of the CSCM under the auspices of the IPU and including all littoral states of the Mediterranean. In April 1990, during the 83rd IPU Conference in Nicosia, a resolution on 'The promotion of peace and security in the Mediterranean region in the light of developments in Europe and the new spirit prevailing internationally' recommended the convening of a Conference of Parliamentarians of all Mediterranean States to discuss measures addressing various fields of cooperation. The idea of an interparliamentary CSCM was met with interest and support from among Parliamentarians around the Mediterranean. The IPU decided therefore to launch an 'interparliamentary' CSCM which convened meetings in Malaga (Spain) in June 1992, in Valletta (Malta) in November 1995 and in Marseille (France) in April 2000.

The Malaga Conference confirmed the basic principles of the process and set up the general framework for cooperation between the Mediterranean partners; the Valletta Conference affirmed the need to give the CSCM process a solid institutional basis, both at governmental and parliamentary level, and further recommended, on Malta's initiative, the setting up of an Association of Mediterranean States. The Marseille Conference urged that 'concurrent action should continue to be taken to establish an interparliamentary cooperation structure as advocated in the Final Document of the Second Interparliamentary Conference on Security and Cooperation in the Mediterranean, with a view to

creating, in the long run, a Parliamentary Assembly of the Mediterranean' and 'to establish an interparliamentary structure as advocated in the Valletta (1995) document' which enjoys a superior status, thus institutionalizing the CSCM process. In February 2005, the Fourth and final CSCM Conference was held in Nafplion, Greece.

During that meeting, representatives of national parliaments of the Mediterranean States finalized and adopted the Statutes of the Parliamentary Assembly and decided to hold the first meeting of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Mediterranean (PAM) in Amman, Jordan in 2006. During PAM's inauguration in September 2006 in Amman, Malta was unanimously selected to host the PAM's Secretariat at Palazzo Spinola in St Julian's. The aim of PAM is to provide the Mediterranean with a unique parliamentary forum of its own and to bring together, on an equal footing, the national parliaments on the Mediterranean littoral. By addressing issues of common concern to foster and enhance further confidence between Member States to ensure regional security and stability and promote peace, the Assembly works to develop cooperation among its members in its fields of action by promoting political dialogue and understanding between parliaments concerned.

PAM is also an Observer at the General Assembly of the United Nations. Over a short period, PAM has established itself as the main actor in parliamentary diplomacy in the region, and its commitment to the founding principles and its Charter, is guaranteed by the continued support of all its member parliaments. The detailed work of the Assembly is carried out by three Standing Committees which draw up opinions and recommendations. The committees of the PAM are:

- First Standing Committee on Political and Security-Related Cooperation;
- Second Standing Committee on Economic, Social and Environmental Cooperation; and
- Third Standing Committee on Dialogue among Civilisations and Human Rights.

Furthermore, in early 2008, the Standing Committees of the Assembly set up a number of working groups under the form of *ad hoc* Committees and Special Task Forces.

By way of Motion No. 27 approved by the House on 29 April 2013 and Motion No. 212 adopted by the House on 2 February 2015, in the 12th Legislature, the parliamentary delegation to the Parliamentary Assembly of the Mediterranean was composed as follows:

Members

Hon. Justyne Caruana, Head of Delegation
Hon. Tonio Fenech
Hon. Joseph M. Sammut
Hon. Silvio Schembri
Hon. Stephen Spiteri

Substitute Members

Hon. Etienne Grech
Hon. Clyde Puli

By way of Motion No. 32 approved by the House on 11 July 2017, the parliamentary delegation to the Parliamentary Assembly of the Mediterranean during the 13th Legislature is composed as follows:

Members

Hon. Justyne Caruana,
Head of Delegation
Hon. Clayton Bartolo
Hon. Etienne Grech
Hon. Carm Mifsud Bonnici
Hon. David Stellini



Substitute Members

Hon. Frederick Azzopardi
Hon. Glenn Bedingfield

Details of the delegation's participation in PAM meetings held during 2017 are as follows:

Hon. Justyne Caruana, Hon. Etienne Grech, Hon. George Pullicino and Hon. Joseph M. Sammut participated in the 11th Plenary Session of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Mediterranean held in Porto between 22 and 25 February; and

Hon. Joseph M. Sammut participated in the *Joint PAM/UNODC Conference – Evaluation of the Implementation by National parliaments of the United Nations Security Council Resolution on Terrorism and Foreign Terrorism Fighters* held in Rome on 30-31 March.

Malta elected to the Bureau of PAM

During the 11th Plenary Session of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Mediterranean (PAM) in Porto, Portugal, head of delegation Hon. Justyne Caruana proposed the nomination of Malta to the Bureau, explaining that membership of the Bureau of the country hosting the secretariat of this Assembly is necessary to ensure that issues that could arise are addressed in a timely and efficient manner. Hon. Justyne Caruana reiterated that Malta's membership in the Bureau would also contribute to strengthening the relationship between the host country and the PAM, thus positively contributing to the functioning and development of the organisation. Consequently, a vote was taken and Malta was elected, for the first time, member of the Bureau of the Assembly.

3.3.4 Parliamentary Assembly of the Union for the Mediterranean

The Parliamentary Assembly of the Union for the Mediterranean (PA-UfM), formerly Euro-Mediterranean Parliamentary Assembly, consists of 280 members: 132 EU members (83 members from the 28 EU national parliaments – three from each Parliament except for the UK that has two members – and 49 members from the European Parliament), 8 members from parliaments of the European Mediterranean partner countries (two from each Parliament of Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Monaco and Montenegro), 130 members from the ten founding countries on the Southern and Eastern shores of the Mediterranean (Algeria, Egypt, Jordan, Israel, Lebanon, Morocco, Palestinian Authority, Syria, Tunisia and Turkey), and 10 members from the Parliament of Mauritania.

The Assembly has five committees:

- Committee on Political Affairs, Security, and Human Rights;
- Committee on Economic and Financial Affairs, Social Affairs and Education;
- Committee on Improving Quality of Life, Exchanges between Civil Societies and Culture;
- Committee on Women's Rights in Euro-Mediterranean countries; and
- Committee on Energy, Environment, and Water.

The Assembly may also set up working groups whose membership and powers are determined by the Bureau.

The PA-UfM is a consultative institution. Its resolutions and recommendations focus on the partnership's objectives and areas of cooperation and are not legally binding. At present, the PA-UfM is the main parliamentary dimension of the Union for the Mediterranean. It absorbed the Barcelona Process and was officially launched at the Summit of the Heads of State and Government of 43 countries held in Paris on 13 July 2008.

On 28 April 2010, the European Parliament adopted Motion 2009/2215(INI) on the Union for the Mediterranean whereby, in clause 37, 'stresses that the purpose of the EMPA is to become the parliamentary assembly of the Union for the Mediterranean, which will guarantee its democratic legitimacy, and supports the proposal of the 6th Plenary Session of the EMPA held in Amman on 13 and 14 March 2010 and that the name of the EMPA should be changed to Parliamentary Assembly of the Union for the Mediterranean (PA-UfM)'.

By way of Motion No. 29 approved by the House on 29 April 2013 and Motion No. 345 adopted by the House on 23 May 2016, the 12th Legislature's parliamentary delegation to the Parliamentary Assembly of the Union for the Mediterranean was composed of the following Members:

Members

Hon. Michael Falzon, Head of Delegation

Hon. Ćensu Galea

Hon. Silvio Parnis

Substitute Members

Hon. Luciano Busuttil

Hon. Karl Gouder

Hon. Silvio Schembri

In the 13th Legislature, the delegation was set up by way of Motion No. 31 approved by the House on 11 July 2017, as follows:

Members

Hon. Glenn Bedingfield,

Head of Delegation

Hon. Carm Mifsud Bonnici

Hon. Anton Refalo



Substitute Members

Hon. Karl Gouder

Hon. Etienne Grech

Hon. Alex Muscat

3.3.5 Commonwealth Parliamentary Association

The Commonwealth Parliamentary Association (CPA) is an association of Commonwealth parliamentarians united in their interests, respect for the rule of law and individual rights and freedoms, and by the pursuit of the positive ideals of parliamentary democracy. The CPA works in the fields of good governance, of democracy and elections, and of human rights, while special attention is also paid to gender sensitising (thus the appointment of the branch of the Commonwealth Women Parliamentarians) and to promoting awareness of parliamentary democracy among the youth of the Commonwealth. This Association was founded in 1911 as the Empire Parliamentary Association.

The mission of the CPA is to promote the advancement of parliamentary democracy by enhancing knowledge and understanding of democratic governance. It seeks to build an informed parliamentary community able to deepen the democratic commitment of the Commonwealth and to further cooperation among its parliaments.

During 2017 Members of the Maltese House of Representatives took part in the following CPA events:

Hon. Tonio Fenech participated in the *Executive Committee Meeting of the Commonwealth Association of Public Accounts Committees (CAPAC)* held in London between 6 and 8 March;

Hon. Deborah Schembri participated in the *4th British Isles and Mediterranean Region Commonwealth Women Parliamentarians Conference* held in Cardiff on 6-7 April;

Speaker Anġlu Farrugia, Hon. Ryan Callus, Hon. Byron Camilleri and Hon. Alex Muscat participated in the *63rd Commonwealth Parliamentary Conference* held in Dhaka between 1 and 8 November; and

Hon. Robert Abela and Hon. Beppe Fenech Adami participated in the *Westminster Workshop for Public Accounts Committees* held in London between 4 and 6 December and in the *1st Commonwealth Association of Public Accounts Committees Conference (CAPAC)* held in London on 7 December.

3.3.6 Inter-Parliamentary Union

The Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU) is an international organisation established in 1889 as a forum for political multilateral negotiations. To that end, it:

- fosters contacts, co-ordination, and the exchange of experience among parliaments and parliamentarians of all countries;
- considers questions of international interest and concern and expresses its views on such issues in order to bring about action by parliaments and parliamentarians;
- contributes to the defence and promotion of human rights, which is considered to be an essential factor of parliamentary democracy and development; and
- contributes to better knowledge of the working of representative institutions and to the strengthening and development of their means of action.

The Maltese Parliament, together with the parliaments of 165 other countries, is a member of the IPU, which supports the efforts of and works in close cooperation with the United Nations, and has a permanent observer status at the United Nations. One of the organs of the IPU is the Assembly which is composed of parliamentarians designated as delegates by the parliaments of the countries in the Union. The Assembly meets twice a year and is assisted in its work by a number of standing committees which normally prepare reports and draft resolutions for the Assembly. In October 2011, the IPU adopted its Strategy for 2012-2017 under the overall title 'Better parliaments, stronger democracy'.

In the 12th Legislature, the parliamentary delegation to the IPU, as set out in Motion No. 26 approved by the House on 29 April 2013 and by Motion No. 215 approved on 9 February 2015, was composed as follows

Members

Hon. Godfrey Farrugia, Head of Delegation
Hon. Michael Gonzi

Substitute Members

Hon. Joseph M. Sammut
Hon. Stephen Spiteri

In the 13th Legislature, the parliamentary delegation to the IPU, as set out in Motion No. 29 approved by the House on 11 July 2017 is composed as follows:

Members

Hon. Byron Camilleri,
Head of Delegation
Hon. Mario Galea



Substitute Members

Hon. Toni Bezzina
Hon. Alex Muscat

In 2017, the Maltese delegation to the IPU participated in the following meetings:

Hon. Mario Galea participated in the 136th *Assembly of the Inter-Parliamentary Union and related meetings* held in Dhaka between 1 and 5 April; and

Speaker Anġlu Farrugia, Hon. Mario Galea and Hon. Alex Muscat participated in the 137th *Assembly of the Inter-Parliamentary Union and related meetings*, held in St Petersburg between 14 and 19 October.

3.3.7 Parliamentary Assembly of the Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe

The Parliamentary Assembly of the Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE PA) was established following a decision of the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe (CSCE) at a Ministerial Conference in Berlin in 1991. The first formal session of the Parliamentary Assembly was held in Budapest in July 1992. Currently, the OSCE PA is made up of 323 members from 56 parliaments, including the Maltese Parliament.

The aim of the OSCE PA is to facilitate interparliamentary dialogue which is an important aspect of the overall effort to meet the challenges of democracy throughout the OSCE area. It offers a forum for political negotiations and decision-making in the fields of early-warning, conflict prevention, crisis management

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and post-conflict rehabilitation, and puts the political will of its participating states into practice through the unique network of OSCE field missions.

The Assembly has three general committees, the General Committee on Democracy, Human Rights and Humanitarian Questions, the General Committee on Economic Affairs, Science, Technology and the Environment, and the General Committee on Political Affairs and Security.

By way of Motion No. 28 approved by the House on 29 April 2013, Motion No. 131 approved on 7 May 2014, Motion No. 213 approved on 2 February 2015 and Motion No. 346 approved on 23 May 2016, the Maltese Parliament was, in the 12th Legislature, represented in the OSCE PA as follows:

Members

Hon. Godfrey Farrugia, Head of Delegation
Hon. Frederick Azzopardi
Hon. Franco Mercieca

Substitute Members

Hon. Jason Azzopardi
Hon. Luciano Busuttill
Hon. Michael Falzon

In the 13th Legislature the delegation was established by way of Motion No. 23 approved by the House on 3 July 2017, and amended by way of Motion No. 30 approved by the House on 11 July 2017, and is composed as follows:

Members

Hon. Rosianne Cutajar,
Head of Delegation
Hon. Emmanuel Mallia
Hon. Hermann Schiavone



Substitute Members

Hon. Godfrey Farrugia
Hon. Edward Zammit Lewis
Hon. Stefan Zrinzo Azzopardi

In 2017, Members of the Maltese House of Representatives attended the following OSCE PA meetings:

Hon. Godfrey Farrugia and Hon. Frederick Azzopardi participated in the *Winter Meeting of the OSCE PA* in Vienna on 23-24 February;

Hon. Claudette Buttigieg participated in the *OSCE Security Policy – Female Perspectives Conference* held in Vienna on 23 March;

Hon. Rosianne Cutajar, Hon. Emmanuel Mallia and Hon. Godfrey Farrugia participated in the 26th *Annual Session of the OSCE PA* held in Minsk between 5 and 9 July; and

Hon. Rosianne Cutajar, Hon. Emmanuel Mallia and Hon. Hermann Schiavone attended the *Autumn Meeting of the OSCE PA* in Andorra between 3 and 5 October.

Resolution on drinking water and climate change

During the 2017 OSCE PA Annual Session in Minsk in July, the Second General Committee on Economic Affairs, Science, Technology and the Environment debated a draft resolution on drinking water and climate change, submitted by Hon. Godfrey Farrugia, which was approved unanimously following few amendments. The resolution aims to raise awareness on water in its various forms and the main challenges it is facing. Once approved, the resolution was included in the Final Declaration of the Annual Session, a copy of which was to be presented to the Ministerial Council of the OSCE in December, with the aim of bringing to the Ministers' attention issues of major importance, and to call on the OSCE to take action to address shortcomings and problems identified.

3.3.8 Other Meetings

Besides meetings organised by the above-mentioned international fora, Members of Parliament also participated in other international meetings, as shown hereunder:

Hon. Silvio Parnis attended the *Summit of the Foreign Affairs Parliamentary Committees* organised by the Parliament of the Republic of Kosovo held in Prishtina between 19 and 20 February;

Hon. Etienne Grech and Hon. Chris Said participated in the *17th Interparliamentary Meeting on Renewable Energy and Energy Efficiency of EUFORES* in Tallinn on 29 September; and

Hon. Jason Azzopardi participated in the *Regional Workshop on the Nexus of Parliamentarians and Criminal Justice Actors in Counter Terrorism* organised by the International Institute of Justice and the Rule of Law held in Cairo on 24-25 October.

3.4 Incoming Visits and Conferences organised by the Maltese Parliament

3.4.1 Visit by the Speakers of the Staten-Generaal of The Netherlands

On 22 June, Speaker Anglu Farrugia met with the President of the Senate of The Netherlands Ankie Broekers-Knol and the President of the House of Representatives of The Netherlands Khadija Arib who were in Malta following the invitation extended by the Maltese Speaker. Speaker

Farrugia said that this visit coincided with the conclusion of the Trio Presidency, which included The Netherlands, Slovakia, and Malta. He highlighted the various interparliamentary conferences which were organised by the Parliament of Malta under the parliamentary dimension of Malta's Presidency of the Council of the EU. He also referred to the administrative autonomy of the Maltese Parliament, which culminated in the enactment of the Parliamentary Service Act.



The two sides discussed the role of national parliaments within the EU, and mentioned the importance and relevance of the involvement of national parliaments in EU affairs. They highlighted the fact that national parliaments are best-placed to act as the bridge between EU institutions and European citizens. They also recognised the value of enhancing interparliamentary cooperation as a means of finding common solutions to common problems facing Europe and its citizens. Government Whip Hon. Byron Camilleri, and Opposition Deputy Whip Hon. Frederick Azzopardi were also present at this meeting.

3.4.2 ECPRD Seminar on ICT in Parliaments

On 14 and 15 September, the Maltese House of Representatives hosted a seminar organised by the European Centre for Research and Documentation (ECPRD) in the area of interest of ICT in Parliaments. The Seminar, bringing together 50 IT experts from 35 parliamentary chambers from the Council of Europe Member States, focused on the implications of budgetary pressures on investment in ICT services in parliaments, dealing specifically with document management systems and common data formats, the transition to a paperless parliament and the broadcasting of parliamentary debates.

Opening the Seminar, Speaker Anglu Farrugia spoke of Parliament's move from the Grand Master's Palace to a new purpose-built building at the entrance to the capital city, which move has helped citizens to better appreciate the distinction between Parliament and the other branches of the Administration. This move,

Speaker Farrugia said, also brought about new opportunities notably the possibility of implementing new ICT-dependent technologies, such as the introduction of live parliamentary broadcasts on a dedicated TV channel. Speaker Farrugia reiterated his strong belief in the importance of interparliamentary cooperation.

In his address, Clerk of the House Raymond Scicluna noted that the ECPRD network is often the primary source of information on parliamentary practice and procedure for the Maltese Parliament. Scicluna spoke about the administrative process of planning and prioritising the introduction of new services to meet the ever-growing expectations of MPs and the public in the light of budgetary constraints.

3.4.3 CPA Small Branches Strategy Meeting

Speaker of the House of Representatives and Chair to the CPA Small Branches, Hon. Anġlu Farrugia, hosted the *CPA Small Branches Strategy Meeting* on 19-20 October. This meeting brought together representatives from the nine regions of the CPA to establish a mission statement for the CPA Small Branches and to compile a draft Strategy for the period 2018-2019.

In his welcome address, Speaker Farrugia recalled that the Commonwealth was the first organisation to give parliaments of small branches adequate recognition and space in an international forum, notably through its annual Small Branches Conference which commenced in 1981 for Commonwealth members with populations of less than 250,000 persons. Today, the CPA Small Branches has 43 branches whose populations are up to 500,000 people. The role of the CPA Chairperson, which was established for the first time in December 2016, reflects the CPA's commitment to strengthening the small branches network within the CPA through giving small branches a very strong voice within the wider Commonwealth association and all its committees. The Small Branches Conference is held in the margins of the CPA Annual Conference to enable small jurisdictions to discuss matters of relevance to them with larger branches, giving small branches a voice and rights equivalent to those of larger branches. He stated that a country which inspires confidence through robust democratic institutions and processes is more likely to reach sustainable development, yet democratic institutions are more costly to develop and maintain in small countries because of their size and resources. Speaker Farrugia explained that the Small Branches Strategic Plan 2018-2019 provides small branches with the opportunity to develop their own objectives within the overall strategic plan of the CPA. This will enable small branches to have a position and space in regional meetings,

participate more strongly in CPA meetings, set the agenda for meetings, and receive a budget which will allow them to meet and undertake activities to increase their capacities.

Delegates agreed that the draft Strategic Plan should focus on the collective needs expressed by Small Branches in a survey carried out by the CPA Secretariat, these being climate change, reaching economic growth in a sustainable manner, engaging young people in the political process and training newly-elected parliamentarians. Discussing the structure of the Small Branches within the CPA, members agreed that there will be a steering committee, composed of the Chair and one member from each region, with the Steering Committee members championing the strategic plan within their region.

The draft Strategic Plan was to be presented to the members of the Small Branches during the Small Branches Conference in Bangladesh in November, and, should support be forthcoming, it will subsequently be presented to the CPA Executive Committee for final approval.

3.4.4 Conference on Migration across the Mediterranean



The Maltese House of Representatives organised the *Conference on Migration across the Mediterranean* on 16-17 November, in collaboration with the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU), and the Parliamentary Association of the Mediterranean (PAM). The Conference brought together parliamentarians and experts hailing from countries across the world to discuss the promotion of better regional cooperation towards smart and humane migration across the Mediterranean.

Opening the Conference, Speaker Anġlu Farrugia spoke of the history and impact of migration on the Maltese archipelago. He explained that while in the 19th and 20th centuries Malta experienced an outward flow of its citizens, Malta was today host to many immigrants. Both these trends brought unprecedented changes to Malta's demographics and shaped the relationship

between Malta, countries which host the Maltese diaspora and the countries of origin of immigrants to Malta. Speaker Farrugia acknowledged the recent increased effort with which the EU aimed to address the issue of migration from a political, humanitarian and security aspect, while lamenting that southern European states had been left unsupported to tackle the asylum crisis for far too long. He stated that the 4 Rs: Relocation, Resettlement, Return and Readmission, represent the core of European action, and, therefore, cooperation, dialogue and mutual understanding with countries of origin and transit countries are key to ensure the Mediterranean Sea does not become a deadly trap for migrants. Recalling the 2015 Valletta Summit on Migration, which brought together European and African Heads of State, and its follow-up which took place in Valletta on 8 and 9 February 2017, where senior officials met to discuss the state of play of the implementation of the Joint Valletta Action Plan, Speaker Farrugia highlighted the role of parliamentary diplomacy in tackling global issues such as migration.

The Maltese delegation to PAM headed by Hon. Justyne Caruana, and comprising Hon. Glenn Bedingfield, Hon. Etienne Grech, and Hon. David Stellini, participated in the conference. Hon. Caruana highlighted that Malta has, on numerous occasions, called on European states, international bodies and institutions to implement an inclusive and equal dialogue with neighbouring and southern states. She explained that Malta was instrumental in highlighting the root causes of migration and the need for sustained and continuous dialogue with key actors. Hon. Caruana reiterated that Malta will continue to give the Mediterranean dimension top priority to reaffirm the long-standing belief that there can be no security in Europe if there is no security in the Mediterranean.

Participants also discussed the need to bolster border protection, the fight against people smugglers, the 'push' factors of migration, and notably the importance of promoting sustainable development in countries of origin. Hon. Etienne Grech explained that Malta has been actively contributing to the promotion of parliamentary

cooperation in the discussion on border control and the fight against migrant smugglers. Hon. Grech highlighted the need to open and promote legal channels of migration, acting as a direct contribution to disrupt the smugglers network and ensure migration is managed in a humane and sustainable manner.

Hon. Glenn Bedingfield welcomed the opportunity to address the topic of migration but cautioned against letting statistical numbers overshadow the fact that migration regards human beings and the desperate plea of men, women and children. Speaking on the situation in Libya, Glenn Bedingfield expressed disdain at the lack of media coverage and international action to reports of abuses and the 'thriving migrant slave trade'. He explained that remaining passive is not an option and that parliaments must place greater pressure on their respective governments to ensure that measures are put in place to successfully fight migrant smugglers and promote greater political input into the discussions on migration, discussions which should be compassionate towards migrants. In conclusion, Hon. Bedingfield reiterated that Malta will continue to be a leading voice for continuous, comprehensive, and compassionate discussions on migration, and that every country needs to feel part of the migration debate and the fight against migrant smugglers in the Mediterranean Sea and beyond.



4. ASSOCIATION OF FORMER MEMBERS OF PARLIAMENT

The Maltese Association of Former Members of Parliament of the House of Representatives held a number of meetings during the course of 2017. Besides, it also participated in meetings of the European Association of Former Parliamentarians of the Member States of the Council of Europe (FP-AP). Malta has been a member of the FP-AP since 2006, whose current president is former member of the Maltese Parliament Lino Debono, elected for a two-year term in the General Assembly in 2016.

The principal objective of the FP-AP is to promote the European ideal based on individual and political liberties, the rule of law and democracy, and to contribute to the European construction. To this end, the FP-AP works to make the European institutions better known to the general public and organises meetings and colloquies aimed at examining the major problems of society. All reports adopted at the FP-AP colloquies are forwarded to the Council of Europe and the European institutions.

On 10 March, Prof. Alfred Baldacchino participated at the Meeting of the Bureau and General Assembly of the FP-AP held in Paris, while Dr Noel Buttigieg Scicluna participated in the Bureau Meeting of the FP-AP held in Dublin between 8 and 10 June.

Members of the European Parliament Former Members Association visited Malta on 3 and 4 April 2017. During this visit they held meetings at the House of Representatives, the European Asylum Support Office and the Armed Forces of Malta Maritime Base HQ. The former MEPs had meetings with several dignitaries, including the President of the Republic HE Marie-Louise Coleiro Preca, the Prime Minister Hon. Joseph Muscat, members of the parliamentary Standing Committee on Foreign and European Affairs and the Speaker of the House of Representatives Hon. Anġlu Farrugia.



On 3 November, the House of Representatives hosted a Seminar of the FP-AP in the parliamentary Chamber. The Seminar brought together former members of parliaments from European countries, representatives of Maltese voluntary organisations working in the field of migration and experts from the United Nations High Commission for Refugees, to discuss the issue of statelessness in the light of mass migration.

Opening the Seminar, Deputy Speaker Claudette Buttigieg likened statelessness to 'being in limbo', claiming that despite the Conventions of 1954 and 1961 which established minimum standards for stateless persons, such as the right to identity, education, employment and housing, while attempting to prevent and reduce statelessness, particularly by providing for the nationality of children, still today, a child is born stateless every ten minutes. Stateless persons face problems including restriction of movement, difficulty to access education, healthcare and employment, limited rights to a pension or other social benefits, challenges to hold a bank account and lack of official documentation. Therefore, statelessness often condemns its victims and their families to poverty, marginalisation, abuse and exploitation.

The Seminar ended with the adoption of a declaration calling for concerted positive action with a view to protect persons, especially children, who are stateless. The declaration urges European States to act in unison to limit the negative consequences of uncontrolled mass migration through resolute action and encourages member states of the Council of Europe that have not yet ratified the Convention relating to the Status of Stateless Persons of 1954 and that of 1961 to do so. Furthermore, the declaration calls on States to ensure that stateless persons on their territory are identified as such and arrange procedures for the civil registration and birth certificates and to prevent statelessness at birth or later in life, as well as to grant access to education and health care on a humanitarian basis to those who remain stateless. Moreover, the declaration advocates for evidence-based policy-making developed in consultation with stakeholders and urges the institutions of the European Union, the Council of Europe and the

OSCE to strengthen their efforts to end statelessness in the region.

The Bureau of the FP-AP, chaired by Lino Debono as President of the European Association, also issued a statement condemning the assassination of the Maltese journalist Daphne Caruana Galizia.

5. OTHER ACTIVITIES

5.1 Forum Valletta

Forum Valletta, chaired by Speaker Anġlu Farrugia, was held in the Parliamentary Chamber on 27 January on the initiative of MEP Therese Comodini Cachia within the cultural programme of the Maltese Presidency of the Council of the European Union. Opening the event, Hon. Comodini Cachia explained that *Forum Valletta* was being held at the House of Representatives as its aims include researching the role of culture in politics and governance and how cultural productions represent political life.



In his address, Speaker Anġlu Farrugia spoke of the role of national parliaments during the Presidency and elaborated upon the Maltese Parliament's work in relation to the parliamentary dimension of the Maltese Presidency of the Council of the European Union. Hon. Farrugia stated that culture was intrinsic to parliamentary work, which is both determined by and determines the culture of the community within which it functions and legislates.

5.2 European Youth Sport Forum

Speaker Anġlu Farrugia chaired a special sitting of the *European Youth Sport Forum* on 12 March, wherein young European people discussed the topics of youth, sport and society with Maltese parliamentarians, among whom were Hon. Chris Agius, Parliamentary Secretary for Youth and Sport, Opposition spokesperson on sport Hon. David Agius and Hon. Luciano Busuttil, Member of Parliament and Chairman of SportMalta.

Opening the session, Speaker Farrugia recalled that sports unites people and that good sportsmanship requires adherence to the rules, the contrary of which results in sanctions. These qualities make sports a model of the ideal society, wherein rules are observed and deviances addressed, and wherein every good person exhibiting good sportsmanship is respected. Bad sportsmanship, including doping, racism, corruption and unethical behaviour, ruins sports. Hon. Farrugia referred to the European Union's

Youth in Action programme, which brings young people together, enabling intercultural dialogue and positive actions. Turning to the importance of building a society which is inclusive, Speaker Farrugia reminded that even sports needs to be inclusive.



Tribute was paid to the memory of Pierre de Coubertin, founder of the International Olympic Committee.

5.3 Debate with students from Giovanni Curmi Higher Secondary School

On 5 May, Speaker Anġlu Farrugia presided over a debate between students of the *Giovanni Curmi Higher Secondary School*, saying that each and every person in our society can contribute to the improvement of our society by voicing and sharing their opinion. This can be done in groups where opinions and ideas are welcomed, discussed and considered in detail. Speaker Farrugia argued that freedom of expression and association are fundamental for every person to live in dignity. He reiterated that the importance of political participation should be expressed within a democracy, and that every discussion should be enforced by facts to help in the development and better future of our country.



Present at this session were a number of Members of Parliament from both sides of the House

5.4 7th Interparliamentary Meeting on Renewable Energy and Energy Efficiency of EUFORES

The first chapter of the 17th Interparliamentary Meeting on Renewable Energy and Energy Efficiency was organised by the Parliament of Malta in collaboration with the Parliamentary Network of the Mediterranean on 19 and 20 May. The conference was attended by participants from 20 EU member states and for the first time, also from non-EU countries from the Mediterranean. EUFORES is an independent non-profit European parliamentary network founded in 1995 with Members from all major political groups in the European Parliament as well as in the national and regional Parliaments of the EU Member States, renewable energy companies and associations, scientific institutes, energy agencies, NGOs and individuals who are strongly committed to renewable energy.

In his address, Speaker Anġlu Farrugia explained that the Mediterranean has historically played a significant role in enhancing human interaction between Mediterranean communities and those in mainland Europe. Being a searoad made the Mediterranean susceptible to exploitation, pollution and the effects of climate change, including the depletion of fresh water availability.



Turning to energy, Speaker Farrugia highlighted that clean and sustainable energy is the only viable way forward, as reflected in the Paris Agreement (COP21) and the priorities of the Energy Union. He referred to the good relations between the EU and its neighbours where energy is concerned and noted that several Mediterranean countries are already pursuing ambitious climate and energy policies. He called for further synergies between Mediterranean countries and the European Union Member States so that together they can develop robust energy policies which embrace the Energy Transition, taking advantage of new indigenous energy resources.

Speaking on the role of national parliaments, Speaker Farrugia emphasized that parliamentarians have a pivotal role to act as a bridge between the legislative arm of the country and the people and as diplomatic representatives in international and regional fora.

5.5 Sette Giugno Commemoration

On 6 June, the Parliament commemorated the *Sette Giugno* riots in which six persons lost their lives and many others injured, and following which the National Assembly laid the ground for a new Constitution for a responsible Government that enabled the establishment of the first Maltese Parliament. This year's event was attended by the Members who were elected just a few days earlier in the general elections that was held on 3 June. The Parliament had still not convened following the elections. Citing a news article published in *Il Popolo d'Italia* in 1919, in which the *Sette Giugno* riots were framed as a desire on the part of the Maltese to align themselves closer to Italy, Speaker Farrugia, in his speech discussed fake news, wherein a news item is spinned in a particular way to influence public opinion.

Hon. Farrugia described the parliamentary work undertaken during the 12th Legislature, that had come to a close on 1 May 2017, which included 507 parliamentary sittings, 565 meetings of parliamentary committees and 18 exhibitions held in the Parliament building. In particular, Hon. Farrugia highlighted the various reforms undertaken in the interest of strengthening democracy, namely the amendments to the Standing Orders of the House and the enactment of two Acts of Parliament – the Parliamentary Service Act which grants Parliament administrative autonomy from the Executive, and the Standards in Public Life Act which establishes a Parliamentary Standing Committee and a Commissioner on Standards with the power to investigate breaches of statutory or ethical duties of categories of persons in public life, including Members of Parliament. This raises the level of accountability which all Members are duty-bound to uphold.

Speaker Farrugia cited the amendments made to the Standing Orders of the House relating to the Members' attendance, the submission of petitions and the televising of debates. Following these changes, Members of Parliament are charged an administrative fine of €50 for each parliamentary day that s/he absented him/herself without a valid reason. Following the amendments, citizens can now directly submit petitions for Parliament's consideration by the Standing Committee on Petitions, which decides on the best way forward regarding the complaint in question.

Describing recommendations further improving parliamentary work, Speaker Farrugia highlighted the importance of ensuring better use of parliamentary time through shortening the time allocated for parliamentary speeches. Speaker Farrugia also suggested amending the Standing Orders of the House to grant citizens a right of reply and access to redress in situations wherein they feel aggrieved by statements made about them in Parliament, which changes must not impinge on parliamentary rights and privileges that enable Members of Parliament to speak without fear.

Hon. Farrugia also referred to the partnership between the House of Representatives and the University of Malta, through which the two entities are developing apps for Parliament that will serve to increase visibility, accessibility and transparency in parliamentary work. This partnership gave fruition to two apps: the PQViz app which provides an innovative visualization of the information contained in parliamentary questions and answers and the app relating to the Parliamentary dimension of the Maltese Presidency of the Council of the European Union which provided access to all proceedings that took place during the interparliamentary meetings.



On the Council Presidency, Speaker Farrugia explained that the Maltese Parliament had organised six interparliamentary meetings in five

months, bringing together more than 750 delegates from national parliaments of the European Union, candidate countries, observer countries, as well as from the European Parliament. The meetings focused on themes considered important for the European Union, including Malta's priorities for the Presidency of the Council, the European Union's foreign and defence policy, the exit of the United Kingdom from the European Union, migration, the EU maritime policy, poverty and social exclusion, and the economic opportunities for climate change.

Such parliamentary cooperation, Hon. Farrugia said, extended to multilateral organisations, such as the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association (CPA), for which Speaker Farrugia was elected member of the Executive of the Conference of Speakers of the Commonwealth and Chairperson of the CPA Small Branches.

Speaker Farrugia also referred to the structural works to transform the old railway station into Parliament's archives and the research library, committee room and offices.

5.6 33rd ACP-EU Joint Parliamentary Assembly

On 19 June Speaker Anġlu Farrugia addressed the 33rd Africa, Caribbean, Pacific-European Union Joint Parliamentary Assembly held in Malta between 19 and 21 June. In his address, Hon. Farrugia stated that the main functions of a parliament are to check and challenge the work of the Executive, make and change laws, debate important issues and check and approve government spending. He referred to two Acts of Parliament enacted in Malta during the 12th Legislature aimed at strengthening parliamentary work: the Parliamentary Service Act and the Standards in Public Life Act. The Parliamentary Service Act gives the Maltese Parliament administrative autonomy from the Executive, while the Standards in Public Life Act establishes a parliamentary Standing Committee and a Parliamentary Commissioner on Standards.



Speaker Farrugia referred to the parliamentary dimension of the Maltese Presidency of the Council of the EU, which included six interparliamentary meetings, welcoming more than 750 delegates from national parliaments of the European Union, candidate countries, observer countries and the European Parliament. Recalling that 2017 is the European year dedicated to global development, Speaker Farrugia called for Europe to support the African continent to address the root causes of migration and uphold people's dignity throughout the route. Mention was also made of Malta's participation in the various fora of the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association.

The President of Malta, HE Marie-Louise Coleiro Preca, was also present at the opening of this Assembly.

5.7 National Youth Parliament 2017

Deputy Speaker Claudette Buttigieg presided the 2017 edition of the *National Youth Parliament* which took place on 13 September. This annual activity, organised by the National Youth Council, offers young people between the ages of 13 and 35 the opportunity to participate in a session in which they debate a number of themes chosen by themselves. The session was also addressed by the President of the National Youth Council Michael Piccinino.

The group aged between 13 and 18 years discussed three themes: culture and innovation, youth and employment, and climate change. Within the theme of culture and innovation, the youths concluded that children should learn about different religions and that there should be more places of worship for different religions, including multifaith centres, as these measures will promote tolerance and reduce discrimination.

On improving the environment, it was proposed that harsher fines for the illegal extraction of water from boreholes be introduced, as well as solar canopies in parking places and vehicle charging stations. The group also proposed a downward revision of the fee for charging electric vehicles and that those who invest in an electric car between 2018 and 2020 are given €100 monthly for three years to spend at such stations. A proposal aimed at reducing traffic congestion suggested grants for car-pooling employees.

In the area of youth and employment, the group proposed that students who achieve the highest grades are to be provided with permanent job opportunities and that there should be a policy that prohibits the employer or manager from contacting employees outside their working hours (the right to disconnect).

Participants aged between 19 and 35 years discussed sexual and reproductive health, decentralisation and devolution of Gozo, and immigration and humanitarian protection. Regarding Gozo, the group concluded that there should be a holistic plan, especially for Marsalforn and Xlendi, which are being developed at a high rate to keep up with the touristic demand. They also called on Government to provide more teleworking and remote-working initiatives so that Gozitans can work from Gozo.

On immigration and migrants' integration, the participants proposed that children born to migrants or refugees in Malta be given Maltese citizenship and residency. They called for the development of organisations that promote migrants' concerns so they can take part in the political process, and that migrants and refugees who pay their social contribution and tax should receive a pension.



In the field of reproductive health, the participants called for open consultation regarding abortion, proposed the censorship of the film 'The Silent Scream' for 14-year olds and advocated in favour of opening of a sperm bank.

5.8 Malta Model United Nations Society Annual Conference

Speaker Anġlu Farrugia presided over the awards ceremony of the *Annual Conference of the Malta Model United Nations Society (MaltMUN)* hosted by the House of Representatives between 15 and 17 September with the theme 'Death of the Border: Eliminating Lines of Demarcation between States'.

Speaker Anġlu Farrugia welcomed the Society's initiative and commitment to be a leading organisation in promoting greater participation and engagement by young professionals. He emphasised that the Mediterranean region is currently experiencing a polarisation in the discourse surrounding territorial borders, with issues pertaining to security and heightened terrorist threats conflicting with the principles of the free movement of people, services and goods. He went on to explain that borders have

now acquired a spatial dimension that goes beyond physical territoriality, and therefore are more reflective of social and political developments rather than being fixed. The Speaker posed an important question on how professionals and Members of Parliament could promote the elimination of the border, without negatively impinging on the security and personal safety of their nation state. The Speaker concluded that parliamentary diplomacy and regional cooperation on issues of common concern provide the perfect platform to promote cooperation and mutual understanding across states and ultimately enable increased economic, social and environmental exchanges across borders.

Participants addressed the topic of borders through the simulation of UN committees, mainly the UN Security Council, the Special Political and Decolonization Committee, and the Economic and Financial Council. The MaltMUN Society strategically identified the importance and centrality of a multi-disciplinary and multi-stakeholder approach integrating in their programme various inter-related elements directly or indirectly linked to borders and territorial demarcations.

5.9 Visit by children attending SkolaSajf

Speaker Anġlu Farrugia met children from SkolaSajf centres in Attard, Fgura and St Paul's Bay, together with their parents and teachers, on 18 September.

Welcoming the young guests, the Speaker highlighted Parliament's institutional role, where representatives of the Maltese population, elected in free and democratic elections, propose new laws, scrutinise amendments to existing laws, approve financial estimates for the State and its entities, and closely examine Government operations.



The Speaker highlighted the importance of listening to the voices of school children who can make proposals and suggestions for the improvement of society. He said that this in itself is a service to others and that every service given

to society should be inspired by the virtues of loyalty and love to others.

Parliamentary Secretary for Youth, Sport and Voluntary Organisations Hon. Clifton Grima, Parliamentary Secretary for European Funds and Social Dialogue Hon. Aaron Farrugia, as well as Opposition Whip Hon. David Agius and Hon. Alex Muscat were also present at this meeting and answered questions asked by the children.

5.10 Session for Grandparents

On 29 September, Speaker Anġlu Farrugia presided over the session for grandparents, a special sitting wherein grandparents debate their concerns with Members of Parliament. Being the fourth such sitting in the House, the discussion focused on the work done in the last years and the way in which the Malta Grandparents' Foundation can continue to develop for the benefit of society.



In his address, the Speaker praised the work that the Malta Grandparents' Foundation carries out in the interest of all Maltese and Gozitan grandparents. He recalled that it is thanks to an initiative by the Malta Grandparents' Foundation that Malta celebrates Grandparents' Day on the second Sunday of October, and augured that Grandparents' Day will eventually be recognised in Europe. The Speaker reiterated that the Malta Grandparents' Foundation has the support of the House of Representatives and thanked grandparents for their work in bringing up their children and for helping in their grandchildren's upbringing. Speaker Farrugia concluded that the work of parents and grandparents, delivered through harmony and sincere love, enables children to build a good future for themselves.

5.11 Notte Bianca 2017

The House of Representatives opened its doors to the public once again during *Notte Bianca*, which this year was held on 7 October. This gave the public the opportunity to visit the Parliament building, to receive information on Parliament's

role and procedures, as well as to meet with Members of Parliament. Government Whip Hon. Byron Camilleri, Opposition Whip Hon. David Agius, and various Members from both sides of the House welcomed members of the public and guided them around the building.



When addressing the visitors, Speaker Anġlu Farrugia referred to the dedication shown by Members of Parliament in their work as representatives of their constituents, not least through parliamentary questions, which serve as a tool for scrutinising the Executive. He also reminded that members of the public can always follow the parliamentary sittings from the Strangers' Gallery and that they can attend committee meetings, which are open to the public. The public is also invited to the various exhibitions hosted in the lobby of the Parliament building throughout the year, which exhibitions are both the fruit of and a reflection of the partnership between Parliament and civil society.

5.12 Book launch: 'Disa' krizijiet fil-Parlament'

On 10 November, Speaker Anġlu Farrugia presided over the launch of the book *Disa' krizijiet fil-Parlament* (Nine crises in Parliament), authored by Dr Tonio Borg, former European Commissioner and former Minister.

In his opening address, Speaker Farrugia stated that this book offers an analysis of the history of Malta's parliamentary democracy from 1921 to date. During this 96-year span, Malta has gone through significant changes which have left their mark on the Maltese nation and people. He recalled that uncertainty and fear were present each time Maltese and Gozitan citizens were called to take important decisions, including Malta's Independence in 1964, the proclamation of Malta as a Republic in 1974, the closure of the military bases in Malta in 1979, and Malta's entry into the European Union in 2004. He added that these instances should help the public better appreciate the importance of parliamentary democracy and constitutional rights.

Prof. Joe Pirotta and Dr Tonio Borg also addressed the audience.



5.13 Tetra għall-Istrina Campaign

For the second consecutive year, Parliament together with Green MT, launched the environmental initiative 'Tetra għall-Istrina' (Tetra for I-Istrina) on 21 November. This year, Green MT pledged to donate €60 to I-Istrina for every ton of milk cartons collected between 18 and 26 November. In his address, Speaker Anġlu Farrugia explained that once again, the country's highest institution was participating in this initiative which has the twofold role of promoting the respect for the environment, as well as collecting funds for the Malta Community Chest Fund Foundation. Hon. Clayton Bartolo and Hon. Frederick Azzopardi attended the event.



5.14 International Day against Domestic Violence

On 23 November the House of Representatives hosted a press conference on the occasion of the *International Day against Domestic Violence*. When addressing the media, Speaker Anġlu Farrugia stated that Maltese authorities receive around 1,200 reports of domestic violence annually which indicates that a considerable number of families and society are in a dire situation. He called for individuals to be more appreciative of others and cognisant of the needs of others so that everyone can enjoy respect and be treated with dignity. Speaker Farrugia also called for more measures which ensure that victims of domestic violence are well protected and supported, including prevention programmes, national awareness campaigns and strengthening State support services.

Minister for the Family, Children's Rights and Social Solidarity Hon. Michael Falzon, present at this press conference, stated that the domestic environment is one in which intimacy should prevail and thus, violence is the antithesis of the environment that one should be able to enjoy at home. Nonetheless, domestic violence remains a reality which exists and should be addressed. Minister Falzon called for increased consciousness on the matter in the hope that the stigma against domestic violence will be eliminated, thereby encouraging victims to speak up and seek support.



Deputy Speaker Claudette Buttigieg, also present, advocated for further focus on children in any action against domestic violence. She also called for harsher penalties for perpetrators of violence and for commitment from parliamentarians to strengthen the laws surrounding domestic violence.

The conference was also addressed by the Chief Executive Officer of the Foundation for Social Welfare Services Alfred Grixti.

5.15 Students in Parliament against Domestic Violence

Deputy Speaker Claudette Buttigieg chaired a special session themed '*Students in Parliament against Domestic Violence*', which was organised by the Commission for Domestic Violence in collaboration with the House of Representatives and the Education Department. This activity, held on 1 December in the parliamentary Chamber, brought together students from several secondary schools and Members of Parliament.



Those present discussed five motions, all of which were unanimously approved. These motions called for:

- harsher fines for those found guilty of domestic violence and the introduction of preventive measures, support and rehabilitation for the aggressor;
- dating violence to be considered a crime akin to domestic violence and an information campaign aimed at encouraging victims to report such violence in a supportive environment;
- the need for members of the judiciary, the police, educators and other professionals, such as psychologists, counsellors and social workers, to receive regular training to be better equipped to work against domestic violence and dating violence;
- continual campaigns aimed at achieving equal rights between genders; and
- legislation that outlaws the gender-pay gap and which encourages both boys and girls to enrol in courses traditionally associated with one gender.

Following the students' debate, several Ministers and Members of Parliament made an intervention, addressing the points raised by the students. Commissioner for Domestic Violence Joe Gerada, and Commissioner for Children Pauline Miceli also addressed the special session.

5.16 Exhibitions

The foyer of the administration block of the Parliament building offers a space which is earmarked for permanent and temporary exhibitions, which exhibitions can be visited by the public free of charge. The following exhibitions have been organised in 2017.

5.16.1 Tribute to George Fenech – Artist and Educator

A collective exhibition by local artists who were students of the artist George Fenech was launched by Speaker Anġlu Farrugia and Hon. Evarist Bartolo, Minister for Education and Employment, on 6 January, George Fenech, one of Malta's foremost artists of the 20th century, was art master at the St Joseph Secondary Technical School in Paola. He received the National Order of Merit for his contribution to art in 2010.

The artists participating in the exhibition were George Fenech, Lino Borg, Joseph Paul Cassar, Joseph Chetcuti, Alex Dalli, Jo Debono, Anthony Ellul, George Farrugia, Gilbert Fenech, Frans Galea, Anthony T. Mamo, Louis Lagana, Carmelo Said and Andrew Said. The event also included a public lecture by art teacher Lino Borg and a meeting for Maltese artists.

5.16.2 Photographic exhibition by the Malta Sports Journalists Association

On 23 February, Speaker Anġlu Farrugia presided over the official inauguration of a photographic exhibition organised by the Malta Sports Journalists Association. In his address, Speaker Farrugia described sports as both a physical activity essential for physical and mental wellbeing, and a social activity through which people congregate and interact with one another. Speaker Farrugia referred to the dual nature of sports as enjoyable but simultaneously demanding self-sacrifice as a prerequisite for success. Hon. Farrugia mentioned that lack of due adherence to the rules of the game leads to improper behaviour that may require sanction, and that unethical behaviour (such as bribery, corruption, racism and the use of illegal substances to stimulate physical action) tarnishes the culture of sports and renders such persons ransom to illegal activities. Speaker Farrugia called on journalists to acclaim the participatory achievements of genuine sportsmen and sportswomen in a bid to promote good sportsmanship. The Executive Committee of the Association Internationale des Journalistes Sportives – Europe, led by Vice-President AIPS-Europe Lev Rossoshick, attended the opening ceremony. Parliamentary Secretary for Research, Innovation, Youth and Sport Hon. Chris Agius, Hon. Godfrey Farrugia, Hon. David Agius, and President of the Malta Sports Journalists Association Charles Camenzuli, were also present.

5.16.3 Catch the Drop Campaign Exhibition

On 13 March, Speaker Anġlu Farrugia inaugurated the *Catch the Drop Campaign Exhibition*, an artistic exhibition on the preservation of water, organised by the students of St Ignatius College in collaboration with HSBC (Malta) plc.



The Speaker highlighted that water is a necessity and a basic human right and as such, access to safe and clean water should be considered as a fundamental element for the preservation of human dignity. The problem of water scarcity is a threat to the well-being and survival of our planet.

Malta is a country that lacks sufficient fresh water availability and is dependent on desalination. Extraction of groundwater and the desalination process constitute an economic burden and therefore efficient and responsible use of water is essential.

Speaker Farrugia praised the artistic and educational initiative of St Ignatius College, through which students learned about civic and social values and showed solidarity with people in need through donations to the Malta Community Chest Fund Foundation. Also present for the inauguration were the Minister for Education and Employment Hon. Evarist Bartolo, Hon. Marthese Portelli and HSBC (Malta) plc CEO Andrew Beane.

5.16.4 Commemoration of ANZAC day and the diplomatic relations between Malta and Turkey

On 20 April, Speaker Anġlu Farrugia inaugurated an art exhibition to mark ANZAC day and the 50th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations between Malta and Turkey. The exhibition consisted of paintings by Raymond Agius and Hikmet Cetinkaya.

In his opening speech, Hon. Farrugia referred to the Gallipoli landings in April 1915 and to the great number of casualties and deaths which resulted from this battle. He also reiterated how in spite of the distance between Malta, Australia and Turkey, their distinct cultural characteristics, the familial bonds, and the common interest to further progress, have led their respective governments to collaborate in a friendly manner.



The inauguration was also attended by the Minister for Foreign Affairs Hon. George Vella, Ambassador of the Republic of Turkey HE Reha Keskintepe, and High Commissioner of Australia HE Julienne Patricia Hince.

5.16.5 Commemoration of diplomatic relations between the People's Republic of China and the Republic of Malta

On 10 May, Speaker Anġlu Farrugia inaugurated an exhibition marking the 45th anniversary of

diplomatic relations between the People's Republic of China and the Republic of Malta (1972-2017). The exhibition consisted of a photographic exhibition depicting some of the important highlights of China-Malta relations, and a fine arts exhibition presented by Maltese artists, titled *Inspired in China*.



In his inaugural address, the Speaker described the decision to establish diplomatic relations between China and Malta in 1972 as an important political act that brought together in friendship a small European nation in the central Mediterranean and a large nation in Asia.

Though the two countries are distant from one another, the governments of Malta and China managed to identify common interests to serve as good foundations for close friendly ties between the two countries. The Speaker expressed his confidence that the existing strong friendly ties can be further enhanced through innovative forms of economic activities that would further contribute to the well-being of the people of China and Malta.

The Ambassador of the People's Republic of China HE Jiang Jiang paid tribute to the leaders of the older generation of both countries for their historic contribution to China-Malta ties. He also praised all those who have worked hard to promote the China-Malta relationship throughout the years.

5.16.6 Bonsai Exhibition



On 26 May, when inaugurating the annual *Bonsai* exhibition for 2017, Speaker Anġlu Farrugia spoke of Chinese and Japanese traditions, including that of growing miniature trees, a tradition that has flourished worldwide. This tradition is directly linked with a love for nature, plants and trees as well as the skills to cultivate small (Bonsai) trees and individual artistic expression. The Speaker praised the effort and work carried out by the Bonsai Culture Group (Malta) so that Malta will have more trees and greenery in urban areas, and the initiative that public gardens in Malta be well maintained for citizens to relax in. The Speaker also referred to the collaboration between the Bonsai Culture Group (Malta) and the Malta Argotti Resource Centre at the University of Malta that carry out studies on botany in Malta.

5.16.7 Exhibition on fashion in Malta since 1917

On 1 July Speaker Anġlu Farrugia inaugurated an *exhibition on fashion in Malta since 1917*. In his opening address, Speaker Farrugia claimed that dress and fashion are evidence of societal changes through the ages, since the style, the design and the art of clothing reflect the period in which the clothes were made and worn and the ties that Maltese people had with different peoples. He said that the need for Maltese people to strengthen their business ties with other countries reflects the dynamic nature with which Maltese people built a strong economic framework for Malta. The Speaker encouraged Maltese entrepreneurs to invest more in clothing and fashion, a sector that can grow into another spur for the Maltese economy. Minister for European Affairs and Equality Hon. Helena Dalli and Member of the European Parliament Marlene Mizzi also addressed the audience during the official opening of the exhibition



5.16.8 'Science in the House' Exhibition

On 29 September, Speaker Anġlu Farrugia opened the 6th edition of the *Science in the House* exhibition, which was held in the Parliament building as part of European Researchers'

Night/Science in the City. The exhibition was organised by the Malta Chamber of Scientists, the University Research Trust (RIDT), and the European Researchers' Night/Science in the City consortium, that exhibited a media forum showing scientific research being carried out at the University of Malta and other academic institutions in Malta for discussion with Members of Parliament. Within this year's theme of 'Futures Science; Today's Research; Tomorrow's Society', the exhibition hosted various topics including photovoltaics, cystic fibrosis, Maltese human genome, treatment of stroke, electromagnetic fields, the archaeology of Maltese sites, the geology of rock formations, searching for freshwater under the sea, quantum physics and molecular biochemistry.



In his address, the Speaker described this annual exhibition as a window to the research carried out by Maltese academics and scholars, claiming that the outputs and outcomes of researchers' work encourages further investment in research, teaching and innovation, thus researchers should be supported to explore their innovative ideas, particularly when the ultimate aim of such research is that of improving people's standard of living.

The opening was attended by Professor Joseph Cilia, delegate of the University of Malta Rector, and Professor Alex Felice, Chairman, European Researchers' Night/Science in the City consortium.

5.16.9 Malta Architect Awards

Opening the exhibition in conjunction with the 2017 Malta Architect Awards on 31 October, Speaker Anġlu Farrugia stated that the Malta Architect Awards served to honour architects who created architectural work of excellence. Such excellence combines aesthetic beauty with advanced technology to create buildings which respect their natural and built environment and which themselves will become part of Malta's heritage. Speaker Farrugia also recalled that regulatory entities are responsible for ensuring that construction is carried out in full respect of public health, structural soundness, building regulations

and laws, and that these authorities are employed for the good of society at large.



In attendance were Minister for Transport, Infrastructure and Capital Projects Hon. Ian Borg, who also addressed the audience, and Parliamentary Secretary for Planning and the Property Market Hon. Chris Agius.

5.16.10 Photographic exhibition by Sebjo Aquilina: 'Maltese Feasts through the Lens'

On the occasion of the 70th anniversary since the establishment of the Malta Band Clubs Association in 1947, the foyer of the House of Representatives hosted a photographic exhibition wherein the esteemed photographer Sebjo Aquilina captured the charm of Maltese feasts. During the opening of the exhibition 'Maltese Feasts through the Lens' on 1 December, Speaker Farrugia recalled the timeliness of Mikiel Anġ Delia's idea that band clubs in Malta and Gozo should unite through an association to promote their role in society, and congratulated current president Dr Noel Camilleri for the Association's many years of service.



Speaker Farrugia described band clubs as schools of music which help form people's character, as well as social centres that unite people since music can be described as an international language that unites all peoples. He concluded by highlighting the importance of respect for others within our communities and societies, which includes offering practical help to those in need.

5.16.11 Art exhibition in aid of the Dar tal-Providenza



Speaker Anġlu Farrugia inaugurated an *art exhibition in aid of the Dar tal-Providenza* on 15 December. In his address, the Speaker recalled that Mons. Mikiel Azzopardi established the Dar tal-Providenza in 1965, and in so doing encouraged the population to respect and support persons with disability. He hailed the artists who generously donated their works to be auctioned in aid of the Dar tal-Providenza, saying that this is living proof that the spirit and value of social solidarity is alive within Maltese and Gozitan society.

6. OBITUARIES

During 2017 the House expressed its grief:

- on 6 February at the death of Mr Rokku Abdilla, former Member of Parliament, who passed away on 22 January;
- on 15 February at the death of Mr Joe Grima, former Member of Parliament and Minister, who passed away on 3 February;
- on 13 March at the death of Ms Antoinette Callus, mother of Member of Parliament Hon. Ryan Callus, who passed away on 9 March;
- on 28 June at the death of Dr Joseph Cassar, former Member of Parliament and Parliamentary Secretary, who passed away on 2 May;
- on 28 June at the death of Mrs Giorgia Refalo, mother of Member of Parliament and former Minister Hon. Anton Refalo, who passed away on 21 June;
- on 2 October at the death of former Member of Parliament Dr Albert Borg Olivier de Puget, who passed away on 8 August;
- on 16 October at the death of journalist Ms Daphne Caruana Galizia, who was assassinated on the same day; and
- on 13 November at the death of Prof. Anthony Zammit, former Member of Parliament, who passed away on 4 November.

7. MEMBERS OF PARLIAMENT

13th Legislature as on 31 December 2017

Speaker of the House of Representatives: Hon Anġlu Farrugia

Government Honourable

Abela Carmelo
Abela Robert
Agius Chris
Agius Decelis Anthony
Bartolo Clayton
Bartolo Evarist
Bedingfield Glenn
Bonnici Owen
Borg Ian
Camilleri Byron
Camilleri Clint
Cardona Chris
Caruana Justyne
Cutajar Rosianne
Dalli Helena
Debattista Deo
Falzon Michael
Farrugia Aaron
Farrugia Michael
Farrugia Portelli Julia
Fearne Chris
Galdes Roderick
Grech Etienne
Grima Clifton
Grixti Silvio
Herrera Josè
Mallia Emmanuel
Mizzi Joe
Mizzi Konrad
Muscat Alex
Muscat Joseph
Parnis Silvio
Refalo Anton
Schembri Silvio
Scicluna Edward
Zammit Lewis Edward
Zrinzo Azzopardi Stefan

Opposition Honourable

Agius David
Aquilina Karol
Arrigo Robert
Azzopardi Frederick
Azzopardi Jason
Bartolo Ivan
Bezzina Toni
Busuttil Simon
Buttigieg Claudette
Callus Ryan
Comodini Cachia Therese
Cutajar Robert
de Marco Mario
Debono Kristy
Delia Adrian
Deguara Maria
Farrugia Godfrey
Farrugia Marlene
Fenech Adami Beppe
Galea Mario
Gouder Karl
Grech Claudio
Mifsud Bonnici Carmelo
Portelli Marthese
Puli Clyde
Said Chris
Schivavone Hermann
Spiteri Stephen
Stellini David
Vassallo Edwin

8. OTHER ACTIVITIES OF THE OFFICE OF THE SPEAKER OF THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

5 January

Presentation of the fifth edition of the publication *Is-Sedja Tittkellem* to Prime Minister Hon. Joseph Muscat

11 January

The Speaker receives the President of the European Commission Jean Claude Juncker

11 January

The Speaker attends the Opening Ceremony of the Maltese Presidency of the Council of the European Union in Valletta

17 January

The Speaker receives the Mosta Women's Group

19 January

Meeting with Dr Charlie Abela from the Faculty of Information and Communication Technology at the University of Malta

20 January

The Speaker receives HE Ahmad Bamarni, Ambassador of the Republic of Iraq to Malta

20 January

The Speaker receives HE Jashim Uddin, High Commissioner of the People's Republic of Bangladesh to Malta

20 January

The Speaker receives Mr Mohammad Alnuaimi, Deputy Ambassador and *Chargé d'Affaires* of the State of Kuwait to Malta

23 January

The Speaker meets with the Italian Secretary of State for European Affairs Sandro Gozi, and Ambassador of the Italian Republic to Malta HE Giovanni Umberto De Vito

27 January

Farewell call from HE Kenneth Enos Kofi Tachie, High Commissioner of the Republic of Ghana to Malta

27 January

The Speaker receives HE Florêncio de Almeida, Ambassador of the Republic of Angola to Malta

30 January

The Speaker receives HE Abdullatif bin Rashid Al Zayani, Secretary General of the Gulf Cooperation Council

1 February

The Speaker receives HE Sandra Elisabeth Alas Guidos, Ambassador of the Republic of El Salvador to Malta

5 February



The Speaker meets with members from the Malta Unborn Child Movement who proposed holding a National Conference in Malta about the Womb Ecology and Quality of Life for the Unborn Child

6 February

Presentation by the Auditor General Charles Deguara and the Deputy Auditor General Noel Camilleri of the report *Contribution of the Structural Funds to the Europe 2020 in the Areas of Employment and Education*, dated January 2017

15 February

The Speaker receives HE Stuart William Gill, British High Commissioner to Malta

15 February

The Speaker receives HE Yevhen Perelygin, Ambassador of the Republic of Ukraine to Malta

17 February

The Speaker receives HE Janine Tagliante-Saracino, Ambassador of the Republic of Ivory Coast to Malta

17 February

The Speaker receives HE Anila Bitri Lani, Ambassador of the Republic of Albania to Malta

23 February

The Speaker receives HE José Maria Pons Irazazabal, Ambassador of Spain to Malta

28 February

The Speaker meets with the Dean and Members of the Faculty of Social Wellbeing at the University of Malta

1 March

The Speaker receives HE Glenna Kathleen Hill, Ambassador of the United States to Malta

2 March

The Speaker presents the Basic First Aid certificates to parliamentary staff and members of the Police Force assigned with the Maltese Parliament following a training programme organised by the Civil Protection Department and the Malta Red Cross

6 March



The Speaker receives a delegation of the Swedish Parliament in relation to the Maltese Presidency of the Council of the European Union, led by Member of Parliament Eskil Erlandsson

21 March

The Speaker receives a delegation from the Global Network of Parliamentary Champions for Diabetes

22 March

The Speaker receives a visit from Senator of the French Republic Professor Jacques Legendre

24 March

The Speaker receives Republic of Armenia to Malta

24 March

The Speaker receives HE Sergey Nurtayev, Ambassador of the Republic of Kazakhstan to Malta

24 March

The Speaker receives HE Jambaldorj Tserendorj, Ambassador of Mongolia to Malta

24 March

The Speaker receives HE Manuel Amante da Rosa, Ambassador of the Republic of Cape Verde to Malta

28 March

Presentation by the Auditor General Charles Deguara and Deputy Auditor General Noel Camilleri of the report *Work and Activities of the National Audit Office 2016*

29 March

The Speaker receives the President of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe (PACE) Pedro Agramunt

30 March

Presentation by the Ombudsman Anthony C. Mifsud of the *2016 Annual Report of the Office of the Ombudsman*

30 March

The Speaker receives the Ambassador of the Sovereign Military Order of St John of Jerusalem, Rhodes and Malta, Prince of Scilla Don Augusto Ruffo di Calabria

4 April

The Speaker receives the President of the Assembly of the Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe Christine Muttonen

10 April



The Speaker, together with the Deputy Speaker Ċensu Galea, Hon. Michael Falzon and Hon. Frederick Azzopardi, meet the Vice Chairman of the Standing Committee of the Nationalist Party of China Zhang Baowen

11 April

The Speaker receives HE Alma Lamak, Ambassador of the Republic of Kosovo to Malta

11 April

The Speaker receives HE Oliver Shambevski, Ambassador of the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia to Malta

11 April

The Speaker receives HE Francisco Ribeiro Telles, Ambassador of the Republic of Portugal to Malta

18 April

The Speaker receives a delegation from Azerbaijan led by the Minister of Foreign Affairs Elmar Mammadyarov

21 April

The Speaker receives a delegation from the Budget Committee of the German Bundestag led by Member of Parliament Bernhard Schulte-Drüggette

4 May

The Speaker participates in the 'Blood Unites Us All' blood-drive at the House of Representatives, organised in collaboration between the House of Representatives, the Ministry for the Family and Social Solidarity, the Health Department and the National Blood Transfusion Centre

4 May

The Speaker addresses Eurochambres, the Association of European Chambers of Commerce and Industry, meeting in Malta

9 May

The Speaker pays a courtesy visit on the President of the Republic of Croatia Kolinda Grabar-Kitarović at the Palace of the President of Malta in Attard

16 May

The Speaker calls on the President of the Republic of Ukraine Petro Poroshenko, accompanied by Pavlo Klimkin, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Ukraine and Maria Ionova, Deputy Chairperson of the Committee of the Verkhovna Rada (Parliament of Ukraine) on European Integration and HE Yevhen Perelygin, Ambassador of Ukraine to Malta, at the Palace of the President of Malta in Attard

17 May

The Speaker addresses the European Federation of Carnival Cities in Parliament

18 May

The Speaker addresses the European Notarial Network Conference Meeting in Malta

19 May



Speaker addresses a Press Conference regarding the progress of the 'Apps for Parliament' project being implemented through a collaboration and sponsorship agreement between the House of Representatives, the University of Malta and the Malta Information Technology Agency (MITA)

31 May

The Speaker meets with members from the OSCE ODIHR election assessment mission led by Ambassador Jorge Fuentes

14 June

The Speaker addresses the first symposium organised by the Electronic Components and Systems for European Leadership

16 June



The Speaker receives a delegation from the Christian Democratic Union of the German Bundestag, led by Member of Parliament Ralf Brauksiepe

20 June

The Speaker receives the Honorary Consul of Brisbane Sandra Micallef

21 June

The Speaker receives HE Juan Mesa Zuleta, Ambassador of the Republic of Colombia to Malta

21 June

The Speaker receives HE Esti Andayani, Ambassador of the Republic of Indonesia to Malta

21 June

The Speaker receives HE Antonio de Aguiar Patriota, Ambassador of the Federative Republic of Brazil to Malta

23 June

The Speaker welcomes a delegation from the Forum Żgħażaġh Laburisti

27 June

Presentation by the Auditor General Charles Deguara and Deputy Auditor General Noel Camilleri of the report *Protecting Consumers through the Market Surveillance Directorate's Monitoring Role*, dated June 2017

3 July

Presentation by the Auditor General Charles Deguara and Deputy Auditor General Noel Camilleri of the Performance Audit Report *Procuring the State Schools' Transport Service*, dated June 2017

7 July

The Speaker receives the Maltese Consular Representatives

17 July

Presentation by the Auditor General Charles Deguara and Deputy Auditor General Noel Camilleri of the reports *An investigation of property transfers between 2006 and 2013: The expropriation of the property at Fekruna Bay, St Paul's Bay* and *An investigation of property transfers between 2006 and 2013: The transfer of the property at 83 Spinola Road, St Julian's*, both of which are dated July 2017

21 July

Farewell call from HE Jubran Taweel, Ambassador of Palestine to Malta

21 July

The Speaker receives HE Zaheer Pervaiz Khan, High Commissioner of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan to Malta

24 July

The Speaker receives HE Vladimir Malugin, Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the Russian Federation to Malta

11 August

The Speaker receives Members of Parliament from the National Diet (Parliament) of Japan

28 August

Farewell call from HE Zohra Ladgham, Ambassador of the Republic of Tunisia to Malta

28 August

Farewell call from HE Magda Baraka, Ambassador of the Arab Republic of Egypt to Malta

28 August

Farewell call from HE Giovanni Umberto De Vito, Ambassador of the Italian Republic to Malta

14 September



The Speaker meets with the President of the Italian Republic HE Sergio Mattarella

14 September

Presentation by the Ombudsman Anthony C. Mifsud of the *Ombudsplan 2018*

19 September

The Speaker receives HE Yevhen Perelygin, Ambassador of Ukraine to Malta

19 September

Meeting with the Ombudsman Anthony C. Mifsud and the newly-appointed Commissioners from the Office of the Ombudsman

2 October



The Speaker meets with the President of Botswana, HE Seretse Khama Ian Khama

2 October

Presentation by the Auditor General Charles Deguara and Deputy Auditor General Noel Camilleri of the report *Landscaping Maintenance through a Public-Private Partnership*, dated September 2017

13 October

The Speaker receives HE Thongphane Savanphet, Ambassador of the People's Democratic Republic of Laos to Malta

18 October

The Speaker receives members of the Council of Maltese Living Abroad

23 October

Presentation by the Auditor General Charles Deguara and Deputy Auditor General Noel Camilleri of the report *Performance Audit: Maintaining and Repairing the Arterial and Distributor Road Network in Gozo*, dated October 2017

27 October



The Speaker meets with University students following the BA Criminology Course

30 October

The Speaker receives the President of the Global Council for Tolerance and Peace Ahmed bin Mohammed Al-Jarwan

10 November

The Speaker receives a delegation from the International Institute for Justice (IJ)

12 November

The Speaker lays a wreath at the foot of the National War Memorial on the occasion of Remembrance Day

13 November

The Speaker visits the National Audit Office and meets its staff

14 November

Presentation by the Auditor General Charles Deguara and Deputy Auditor General Noel Camilleri of the report *Follow-up Reports by the National Audit Office - 2017*, dated November 2017

17 November

The Deputy Speaker receives HE Zyed Bouzouita, Ambassador of the Republic of Tunisia to Malta

17 November

The Deputy Speaker receives HE Chailert Limsomboon, Ambassador of Thailand to Malta

17 November

The Deputy Speaker receives HE Margit F Tveiten, Ambassador of Norway to Malta

17 November

The Deputy Speaker receives HE Paul Dühr, Ambassador of Luxembourg to Malta

20 November

The Speaker receives Fr Firas Lutfi, a Franciscan monk from Aleppo, Syria

21 November

The Speaker addresses a joint press conference at the Parliament with Green MT regarding the Tetra għall-Istrina campaign

22 November

Presentation by the Auditor General Charles Deguara and Deputy Auditor General Noel Camilleri of the report *Performance Audit: Outpatient waiting at Mater Dei Hospital*, dated November 2017

29 November

Presentation by the Auditor General Charles Deguara and Deputy Auditor General Noel Camilleri of the report *Report by the Auditor General, Public Accounts 2016*

5 December

Presentation by the Auditor General Charles Deguara and Deputy Auditor General Noel Camilleri of the report *Report by the Auditor General on the Workings of Local Government for the year 2016*, dated November 2017

6 December

The Deputy Speaker receives HE Josip Gelo, Ambassador of Bosnia-Herzegovina to Malta

6 December

The Deputy Speaker receives HE Zenebu Tadesse Woldetsadik, Ambassador of Ethiopia to Malta

6 December

The Deputy Speaker receives HE Alexandra Bugailiskis, High Commissioner of Canada to Malta

6 December

The Deputy Speaker receives HE Jasen Mesić, Ambassador of Croatia to Malta

18 December

Presentation by the Auditor General Charles Deguara and Deputy Auditor General Noel Camilleri of the report *An Analysis on Revenue Collection for the financial year 2016*, dated December 2017

19 December

The Speaker meets with Leo Brincat, member of the European Court of Auditors

27 December

The Speaker, Deputy Speaker and Members of Parliament, exchange greetings for the new year with former Speakers, high officials in the Civil Service and members of various NGOs.