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## **PRESS RELEASE BY THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES**

### *Malcolm Paul Agius Galea participates in the meeting of the Chairpersons of COSAC in Prague*

Malcolm Paul Agius Galea has participated in the meeting of the Chairpersons of the Conference of the Parliamentary Committees for Union Affairs of Parliaments of the European Union, hosted in Prague by the Czech Senate as part of the parliamentary dimension of the Czech Presidency of the Council of the EU.

The meeting comprised two sessions. The first session covered the priorities of the Czech presidency which were presented by Jan Lipavsky, Czech Minister of Foreign Affairs. During the debate that followed, Agius Galea stated that Europe is passing through unprecedented times as it is trying to recover from a global pandemic while facing a war on its continent. He stated that faced with this situation, a fine balance between ensuring security and peace on our continent, keeping our targets in the green and digital transition, and a sustainable and resilient economy in which people's jobs and food security are protected, needs to be reached. He emphasised that it is of utmost importance that whilst trying to cope with the current crisis, people with disabilities, low skilled workers who find it difficult to change jobs, the elderly and other vulnerable people are taken care of. He made particular reference to the challenge of mental health in our societies as it has been exacerbated by the pandemic and the war in Ukraine. Agius Galea concluded his remarks by stating that achieving this balance is easier said than done and that is why the Czech Presidency deserves the support to help achieve its targets in the months to come.

The second session focused on the current challenges of media and democracy. The debate focused on the role of free, independent, pluralistic and responsible media as a priceless tool in a well-functioning democracy. It is also an area where decision-makers are faced with delicate value judgements and must balance freedom of expression, information and media against security concerns. This session was addressed by Vera Jourova, Vice-President of the European Commission for Values and Transparency, Michal Klima, Commissioner for Media and Counter-Disinformation of the Czech Government, and Othmar Karas, First Vice-President of the European Parliament.