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Maltese Parliamentary Delegation participates in the 145th Inter-Parliamentary Assembly in Kigali

MPs Randolph De Battista and Robert Cutajar participated in the 145th Inter-Parliamentary Assembly that was held between 11th and 15th October in Kigali, Rwanda. The main theme debated during the assembly was gender equality and gender-sensitive parliaments as drivers of change for a more resilient and peaceful world.

Head of Delegation Randolph De Battista spoke briefly during the general debate on the main theme of the assembly. He commenced his address by referring to the Maltese elections in 1947 in which women voted in the general election for the first time. He also referred to the recent changes to the electoral law thanks to which, although controversial, the percentage of women in Parliament reached 28 percent. He argued that Parliament cannot be gender sensitive only by increasing female representation. It is useless boasting about equality between genders, when this is not representative of the unique differences in our populations, including age, sexual orientation and disability. Mr De Battista mentioned the Istanbul Convention and made an appeal to those countries that did not yet ratify this convention, including members of the Council of Europe and of the European Union, to do so. He also referred to the inclusion of femicide as an aggravated form of homicide by the Maltese Parliament in June this year. While stressing the fact that women are at a far greater risk of violence and discrimination, violence can take many forms, including hate speech. He remarked that Malta has a strong law against hate speech, and a new bill on cyberbullying is in the pipeline. De Battista concluded his speech by expressing solidarity and support to Ukraine.

The Maltese delegates also participated in the standing committees that met in parallel to the assembly. Mr Cutajar participated in the Standing Committee on Sustainable Development, making a brief intervention during the debate on parliamentary efforts in achieving negative carbon balances of forests. He reminded committee members that way back in 1988 Malta put climate change on the agenda of the United Nations and the aim of the Maltese Government was to encourage all nations to take effective measures and actions to improve the global environment and leave a better world for the generations to come. Unfortunately, after 34 years, actions that could reverse the unsustainable trend that the world undertook are still lacking. He encouraged politicians to assume responsibility so that required decisions and actions are taken, for the benefit of today's generations and those of the future. Mr Cutajar also participated in a workshop on climate change in which an agenda has been drafted for a forthcoming meeting that will be held in Israel in collaboration with the Inter-Parliamentary Union.

MP De Battista participated in the Standing Committee on Democracy and Human Rights. The committee debated a draft resolution titled 'Parliamentary impetus to local and regional development of countries with high levels of international migration and to stopping all forms, including state-sponsored, of human trafficking abuses'. In his brief intervention, Mr De Battista thanked the drafters for presenting a very good resolution. While



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stressing the importance of adopting a whole-of-route approach when tackling migration, nations should safeguard the interests and rights of people on the move throughout the whole journey. He stressed that people should not risk their lives at sea to have a chance to improve their lives and they should not be allowed to trust their lives in the hand of smuggling criminal groups. He continued by saying that to have a successful whole-of-route approach, the strategy must not exclude the crucial input of countries of origin and transit. Excluding these countries would strengthen the indifference towards those who lose their lives during the voyage and give a carte blanche to people smugglers. The draft resolution was later adopted by the committee and later by the assembly.

The Maltese delegation also supported the emergency item proposed by the parliamentary delegation of Chile, condemning the invasion of Ukraine by Russia and of the subsequent annexation of territories in defence of the territorial integrity of all states. The proposed item gathered the required two thirds of the votes and was then debated in the assembly. A resolution was drafted by a drafting committee appointed for the purpose and was later adopted by the assembly.

The Maltese delegation visited the Genocide Memorial in Kigali and paid respects to the victims of the genocide which took place in Rwanda between April and July in 1994.