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PRESS RELEASE BY THE OFFICE OF THE SPEAKER

Speaker Farrugia participates in the 2023 Conference of Speakers and Presiding Officers

Between the 3rd and 6th of January, Speaker of the House of Representatives Anglu Farrugia took part in the Conference of Speakers and Presiding Officers of the Commonwealth (CSPOC), which was hosted by the Parliament of Australia in Canberra, Australia.

The conference, which meets every two years, brings together the speakers and presiding officers of the national parliaments of the independent sovereign states of the Commonwealth and 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.

The main topics on the agenda of the 2023 CSPOC were: Parliamentarians and the Pandemic, Security, E-Parliament and the Role of Presiding Officers in Leading Parliamentary Innovation. Keynote speeches were delivered by various speakers and presiding officers from across the Commonwealth, with a more informal debate among the participants taking place in a number of workshops.

Speaker Farrugia led the session on Parliamentarians and the Pandemic. Opening the workshop on this topic the Speaker spoke about the responses to the Covid-19 pandemic by the Maltese Parliament. He explained that, in addition to rigorous sanitisation and other public health measures, the major change that was introduced was the possibility for Members of Parliament, who had either tested positive for Covid-19 or were categorised as vulnerable persons, to participate in committee meetings via Zoom. This facility was also made available to witnesses or experts who were required to appear before any of the committees. The Speaker noted that these adjustments were possible following agreement by both sides of the House without the need to amend the Standing Orders of the House, and the swift action of the administration to set up the necessary infrastructure. In this regard, he argued that smaller administrations tend to be more flexible and able to react more swiftly to unforeseen situations. Speaker Farrugia noted that the need for parliamentary scrutiny and public engagements should not be compromised during times of crisis, no matter the urgency of the decisions that require approval by the House; on the contrary, parliaments have an even greater role to play in times of crisis.

On the margins of the conference, Speaker Farrugia also met with the Secretary General of the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association (CPA) Mr Stephen Twigg, with whom he discussed Malta's active participation in events organised by the CPA, as well as the future plans of the CPA Secretariat.



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At the end of the conference, Speaker Anglu Farrugia will be visiting the Maltese High Commission in Canberra and meeting with the Maltese communities in Sydney.