



PARLAMENT TA' MALTA

**SETTE GIUGNO**

**2023**

**Il-Belt Valletta  
6 ta' Ġunju 2023**



Ritratt tal-qoxra: Dipartiment tal-Infommazzjoni

**Programm Uffiċjali u**  
**Diskors mill-Onorevoli Anġlu Farrugia**  
**Speaker tal-Kamra tad-Deputati**  
**Parlament ta' Malta**  
**fl-okkażjoni tat-tifkira**  
**tas-SETTE GIUGNO**

**It-Tlieta, 6 ta' Ġunju 2023**



## Programm Uffiċjali

6.15 pm Programm muzikali mill-Banda tal-Korp tal-Pulizija biswit il-Monument tas-Sette Giugno fi Pjazza San Ġorġ, il-Belt Valletta.

6.30 pm Wasla tal-Onorevoli Anġlu Farrugia, Speaker tal-Kamra tad-Deputati, Parlament ta' Malta, fi Pjazza San Ġorġ.

L-Ispeaker jilqa' lill-Onorevoli Bernard Grech MP, Kap tal-Oppożizzjoni, mal-wasla tiegħu fi Pjazza San Ġorġ.

L-Ispeaker jilqa' lill-Onorevoli Robert Abela MP, Prim Ministru ta' Malta, mal-wasla tiegħu fi Pjazza San Ġorġ.

6.45 pm Diskors mill-Onorevoli Anġlu Farrugia, Speaker tal-Kamra tad-Deputati, Parlament ta' Malta fl-okkażjoni tat-tifkira tas-Sette Giugno.

L-Ispeaker tal-Kamra tad-Deputati, flimkien mal-Prim Ministru u l-Kap tal-Oppożizzjoni, jieħdu posthom quddiem il-Monument tas-Sette Giugno.

Tindaqq il-Last Post.

Tiġi osservata minuta silenzju.

Tindaqq ir-Reveille.

L-Ispeaker iqiegħed kuruna f'riglejn il-Monument tas-Sette Giugno.

Tqegħid ta' kuruni mill-Prim Ministru segwit mill-Kap tal-Oppożizzjoni, minn mistiedna distinti, familjari tal-vittmi u organizzazzjonijiet ohra.

Jindaqq l-Innu Nazzjonali.



## **DISKORS FL-OKKAŻJONI TAS-SETTE GIUGNO 2023**

Il-jum tas-Sette Giugno huwa jum fejn aħna nirriflettu fuq dak li kien ġara fl-1919. L-irvellijiet li sehħew fis-Sette Giugno, f'it 'il bogħod minn fejn ninsabu llum, sehħew f'kuntest ta' perjodu fl-istorja fejn pajjiżna kien ikkaratterizzat minn problemi ekonomiċi kbar, fosthom faqar u ġuħ minħabba l-prezzijiet għoljin tal-hobż u ta' bżonnijiet oħrajn. Kienet sitwazzjoni ta' taqlib politiku kbir, fejn pajjiżna lanqas biss kellu Kostituzzjoni li tixraqlu għaliex lanqas kienet tagħtih setgħa jesprimi l-opinjoni tiegħu dwar min imexxih. Din is-setgħa, għalkemm b'mod limitat, ingħatat tliet snin wara bis-saħħa tal-Kostituzzjoni Amery-Milner, żvilupp politiku importanti li nattribwuh lil dak li ġara fl-1919. Nattribwuh fuq kolloxx lil dawk l-erba' persuni li dakinhar tal-protesti tilfu hajjithom, u li isimhom huwa mnaqqax fuq dan il-monument kif ukoll fl-istorja ta' pajjiżna. Dawn kienu Emanuël Attard, Karmenu Abela, Ġużè Bajada u Wenzu Dyer. Tilfu hajjithom wara li mhux inqas minn 64 suldat Inġliż li kienu ordnati jferrxu lin-nies fil-Belt, fetħu n-nar fuq il-folla. Ma rridx ninsa lil dawk li wara l-jum tas-Sette Giugno mietu jew baqgħu jbatu l-konsegwenzi kaġun tal-feriti gravi li garrbu riżultat tat-tiri li ġew sparati fid-direzzjoni tagħhom u tad-daqqiet ta' bajunetta li ngħataw.

L-iżvilupp politiku li rreferejt għalih aktar kmieni kien dovut ukoll għal min dak iż-żmien kellu l-kuraġġ li jieħu ċertu deċiżjonijiet importanti. Wiehed minnhom kien Filippo Sciberras li kien mexxej li ma kellux ideoloġija politika li tifred u li emmen u ġġieled biex il-poplu jkollu Kostituzzjoni li tagħtih vuċi fit-tmexxija ta' pajjiżna. Minkejja li sab hafna ċirkostanzi li ostakolaw il-hidma tiegħu, inkluż il-qtil ta' numru ta' Maltin fis-Sette Giugno, irnexxielu jkompli jgħib l-għaqda sakemm fl-1921 pajjiżna wasal biex ikollu Kostituzzjoni li kienet tipprovdi għal rappreżentanza diretta tal-poplu.

Din ir-reżiljenza fil-mexxejja u l-poplu tagħna narawha wkoll fis-snin sussegwenti meta l-Maltin baqgħu sodi quddiem il-hakma Inġliża li dejjem rat kif żammet lura lil dawk in-nies li kellhom viżjoni għal pajjiżna. Bla dubju hawnhekk ma rridx ninsa nsellem lil dawk il-Maltin li ġew internati fosthom, lill-Eks Prim Ministru Nerik Mizzi. Niftakar sew meta f'it tas-snin ilu kont qed immexxi delegazzjoni għall-Konferenza Parlamentari tal-Commonwealth ġewwa l-Uganda u hadna l-opportunità li nżuru l-belt ta' Bombo, li huwa l-post fejn Nerik Mizzi nżamm eżiljat minn pajjiżu.

L-istess reżiljenza ntweriet fil-każ tar-referendum demokratiku li sar f'pajjiżna fl-1956 bir-riżultat jintrebaħ, dak iż-żmien, minn dawk li kienu favur l-integration mar-Renju Unit. Minkejja li d-demokrazija kienet titlob li r-riżultat tar-referendum jiġi rispettat, l-awtoritajiet Ingliżi rrifjutaw li jaċċettawh. Hawnhekk ukoll saru protesti, ġustament immexxija dak iż-żmien mill-Prim Ministru Dom Mintoff, li spiċċa rriżenja fis-sena 1958. U minhabba li l-membri tal-Kabinett ta' dak iż-żmien baqgħu jiġġieldu għad-drittijiet tal-Maltin, dawn mhux biss ġew arrestati iżda saħansitra ġew mogħtija sentenza ta' ħabs. Waħda minnhom kienet Agatha Barbara li fl-1981 saret l-ewwel President mara ta' Malta.

Wara li ma ġiex rispettat ir-riżultat demokratiku tar-referendum, il-poplu Malti, bil-mexxejja tiegħu, ħadmu biex Malta tingħata l-Indipendenza. Dan narawh jiġri fl-1964, erba' snin wara li fl-Assemblea Ġenerali tal-Ġnus Magħquda fl-1960, adottat id-Dikjarazzjoni tal-Għoti tal-Indipendenza lill-pajjiżi kolonjali.

Dawn li semmejt huma biss ftit eżempji minn dak li għadda minnu l-poplu tagħna għaliex baqa' jzomm fih dik ir-rieda soda li jtejjeb il-qagħda tiegħu; dik l-istess rieda li wera fl-1919, u dan minkejja li ma kien xejn faċli li jittieħdu ċertu deċiżjonijiet peress li konna taħt ħakma kolonjali.

Fid-diskors tiegħi li għamilt eżatt sena ilu semmejt ukoll ir-rwol tal-Parlament Malti f'dak li għandu x'jaqsam ma' diplomazija parlamentari. Kont għidt kemm huwa importanti li dan l-aspett tal-ħidma parlamentari jibqa' b'saħħtu biex dejjem nagħmlu dak kollu possibbli ħalli bhala pajjiż indipendenti, sovrani u newtrali, kif huwa mfisser b'mod ċar fil-Kostituzzjoni, naħdmu favur il-paċi. B'konvinzjoni nishqu fuq din il-pożizzjoni f'organizzazzjonijiet internazzjonali u interparlamentari sabiex fejn nitkellmu dwar konflitti, gwerer u nuqqas ta' qbil bejn pajjiż u iehor, naħdmu kemm nistgħu biex nipprovaw inressqu l-partijiet lejn il-mejda tat-taħditiet. F'dan ir-rigward kont semmejt li fil-laqgħa tal-Assemblea tal-Unjoni Inter-Parlamentari li fiha jipparteċipaw il-parlamenti nazzjonali tal-istati membri kollha tan-Nazzjonijiet Uniti, waqt li kienet qed tiġi diskussa l-gwerra bejn l-Ukrajna u r-Russja, Malta mhux biss ipparteċipat imma ħadet pożizzjoni li kemm jista' jkun għandna naraw li nipprovdu opportunitajiet għal diskussjoni maż-żewġ parlamenti tal-pajjiżi rispettivi.

Jiddispaċini ngħid li din il-pożizzjoni spiss issib ċertu rezistenza u indifferenza, inkluż dan l-aħħar minn pajjiżi Ewropej waqt il-Konferenza tal-Ispeakers tal-Parlamenti tal-Istati Membri tal-Unjoni Ewropea li saret fi Praga proprju ftit tax-xhur ilu. F'din il-konferenza pproponejt li kellna naffermaw ir-rieda li naghmlu dak kollu possibbli biex kemm ir-Russja kif ukoll l-Ukrajna jieqfu mill-għied b'mod komplet biex b'hekk ikunu jistgħu jiddisktu pjan għall-paċi. Argumentajt li anke jekk bħalissa dan jidher impossibbli, għall-inqas wiehed għandu jtella' din il-proposta fuq il-mejda tad-diskussjoni proprju sabiex johloq opportunità ta' diskussjoni.

L-emenda kienet tgħid hekk:

“ ... affirm that an acceptable solution to end the war can only be achieved by open and effective dialogue amongst all the actors in the conflict, and insist that a permanent ceasefire in the region is a prerequisite for an acceptable peace framework.”

Hija hasra li għalkemm l-emenda kienet ċara, magħmula b'intenzjoni tajba u mressqa fil-perjodu propizju, minflok ma giet diskussa, semplicement giet injorata ma' oħrajn għaliex il-Presidenza eżerċitat id-dritt li tagħzel l-emendi li kellhom jiffurmaw parti mill-konklużjonijiet tal-Presidenza mingħajr ma tat l-opportunità li l-emendi l-oħrajn jiġu diskussi. Kien għalhekk li b'impenn sħiħ lejn il-paċi u fir-rappreżentanza ta' Parlament li jemmen li għandu mhux biss jirrispetta l-Kostituzzjoni ta' pajjiżna imma jaħdem fuqha, irrimarkajt b'mod ċar u iebes li mhuwiex aċċettabbli li fl-ogħla laqgħa interparlamentari fuq livell Ewropew ma jiġux konsidrati whud mill-emendi li jitressqu minn parlamenti nazzjonali, fosthom Malta.

Jien nemmen li għandna nibqgħu nishqu fuq din il-pożizzjoni għaliex fil-hajja, jekk wiehed joqgħod lura milli jieħu pożizzjoni favur dak li jemmen fih u favur deċiżjonijiet li jafu jkunu ta' salvagwardja għall-gid komuni, ikun qiegħed joqgħod lura milli jaħdem f'isem id-demokrazija, u allura mhux kif għamlu bosta li ġew qabilna. Din hija riflessjoni li għamilha wkoll il-Papa Franġisku meta kkwota s-Segretarju Ġenerali tal-Ġnus Magħquda, il-Ġeneral Dag Hammarskjöld li qal li l-abbuż mill-kelma huwa ekwivalenti għal disprezz tal-bniedem. Nikkwotaha kif qalha l-Papa Franġisku:

“Abusare della parola equivale a disprezzare l'essere umano.”

Meta wiehed jabbuża mill-kelma u jxekkel diskussjoni li tkun qed titqajjem, aktar u aktar f'kuntest ta' demokrazija parlamentari, ikun qed jiddisprezza l-istess dritt tal-persuna. Għandna nirriflettu lkoll fuq dan id-diskors għaqli li originarjament ingħad minn dan id-diplomatiku Žvediz li okkupa l-kariga ta' Segretarju Ġenerali tal-Ġnus Magħquda bejn l-1953 u l-1961.

Għandna x'nitgħallmu minnu bħal m'għandna x'nitgħallmu wkoll mid-diskors tal-Papa Ġwanni Pawlu II quddiem il-Ħamsin Assemblea Ġenerali tal-Ġnus Magħquda fil-5 ta' Ottubru 1995 meta qal li kull pajjiż għandu dritt għall-eżistenza tiegħu u li ebda Stat jew nazzjon jew organizzazzjoni internazzjonali ma tkun ġustifikata meta tasserixxi mod ieħor. Žied li allura kull pajjiż għandu d-dritt li jfassal lilu nnifsu fuq it-tradizzjonijiet tiegħu basta dawn it-tradizzjonijiet ma jkunux jimpingu b'mod negattiv fuq id-drittijiet umani bażiċi b'mod partikolari fuq id-drittijiet tal-minoritajiet.

Jien nara li dan huwa l-veru spirtu tal-paċi u l-baži biex ikun hemm solidarjetà u rispett bejn il-pajjiżi. Hidma sabiex tingħata kull opportunità għal diskussjoni huwa kontribut favur tali solidarjetà u rispett.

Għalhekk nemmen li l-Parlament Malti għandu jkompli jahdem - kif qegħdin nagħmlu – favur il-paċi. Tant hu hekk li f'it granet ilu l-Parlament Malti organizza konferenza internazzjonali mal-Kunsill Globali għat-Tolleranza u l-Paċi fejn iddiskutejna ma' rappreżentanti ta' diversi pajjiżi x'inhil l-aħjar triq biex nifhmu lil xulxin. Biex ikollok il-paċi huwa importanti li jkollok it-tolleranza. Bi pjaċir ngħid li l-Parlament Malti huwa wiehed mill-membri fundaturi tal-Parlament Internazzjonali għat-Tolleranza u l-Paċi.

Issa nixtieq niġi għal materja li għamilt referenza għaliha f'diversi diskorsi matul is-snin li ilni President tal-Kamra. Irridu naħdmu biex nintroduċu proċedura parlamentari sabiex nagħtu rimedju liċ-ċittadin meta dan iħoss li Membru Parlamentari jkun abbuża mill-privileġġ parlamentari meta jsemmih fil-Parlament.

Sal-lum persuni li jħossu li fil-konfront tagħhom saru dikjarazzjonijiet skorretti jew mhux veritieri minn xi Membru tal-Kamra waqt xi seduta jew kumitat parlamentari, għadhom bla rimedju, anke jekk forsi daww il-persuni jkunu qed ibatu konsegwenzi minhabba dak li jkun intqal dwarhom fil-Parlament. Irid jingħad li dawn il-konsegwenzi jista' jkunu tali li

jkollhom effett kuntrarju għall-interessi tagħhom fir-rigward ta' proċeduri li jkunu għaddejnin minnhom fil-Qrati. Nemmen illi wasal iż-żmien biex mid-diversi mudelli li hemm f'diversi pajjiżi, l-aktar fil-pajjiżi tal-Commonwealth, għandna nsibu u nimplimentaw dak il-mudell li l-aktar huwa applikabbli għalina.

Insemmi proposta li kont ukoll għamilt dwar il-ħidma parlamentari fejn jirrigwarda x-xhieda li jiġu msejha jidhru quddiem il-kumitati tal-Kamra. Naħseb li għandna nistharrġu l-possibilità li xhieda li tingħata quddiem dawn il-kumitati parlamentari tkun privileġġjata u prekluża milli tintuża quddiem il-Qrati jew xi awtorità ġudizzjarja oħra. Nifhem li biex din il-proposta tiġi implimentata jrid ikun hemm impenn politiku u diskussjoni dwar il-konsegwenzi legali tagħha anke għaliex tali sugġeriment aktarx ikun irid jiġi fis-seħħ permezz ta' emendi fil-liġijiet Maltin.

Kif qed nitkellmu dwar il-ħidma fil-Parlament ma nistax ma nsemmix materja li ilha ftit li tqajmet, u ċjoè dwar jekk wasalx iż-żmien li jkollna Membri Parlamentari full-time. Jiena għadni tal-fehma li biex inħajru aktar nisa u rġiel jidhlu għall-ħajja tal-politika u biex fl-istess ħin ma noholqux ostakoli għal min diġà huwa stabbilit b'mod professjonali u jixtieq jikkontribwixxi lejn is-soċjetà permezz tal-politika, għandna nintroduċu sistema fejn Membru tal-Kamra jkun jista' jagħżel jekk iridx iservi lil pajjiżu fuq bażi full-time jew part-time.

Niġi issa għal punt ieħor li nħobb nirrimarka dwaru f'dawn id-diskorsi u ċjoè li l-Parlament Malti huwa wiehed mill-aktar parlamenti nazzjonali fl-Ewropa li għandu rata ta' ħidma għolja. Fil-fatt matul is-sena li għaddiet mill-aħħar diskors tiegħi, il-Kamra ltaqgħet 117-il darba biex ġew mgħoddija 34 Att tal-Parlament, ġew ippreżentati 52 Abbozz ta' Liġi u 101 Mozzjoni, ġew imqiegħda fuq il-Mejda tal-Kamra mal-1,600 dokument, kien hemm mhux inqas minn 134 laqgħa tal-kumitati parlamentari u ngħataw mhux inqas minn 21 deċiżjoni tas-Sedja li wħud minnhom kienu deċiżjonijiet ta' ċertu portata.

Irrid ngħid li fl-għoti ta' dawn id-deċiżjonijiet is-Sedja tkun obligata ssegwi u tapplika d-dispożizzjonijiet li johorġu mill-Ordniġiet Permanenti tal-Kamra tad-Deputati u liġijiet oħra applikabbli. Minbarra hekk, fil-maġġor parti tal-każijiet, dawn l-istess deċiżjonijiet ikunu bbażati fuq każijiet simili u deċiżjonijiet ta' Speakers li ppresedew il-Kamra matul

is-snin, u fuq preċedenti u prattiċi tal-House of Commons tar-Renju Unit u ta' pajjiżi oħrajn fil-Commonweath bħalma huma l-Awstralja, il-Kanada u l-Indja. Dan ifisser li dawn ikunu deċiżjonijiet fejn il-proċedura parlamentari tkun qiegħda tiġi studjata u spjegata b'reqqa u b'attenzjoni, u għalhekk huwa importanti li l-Membri kollha jkunu a konoxxenza ta' dawn id-deċiżjonijiet. Huwa daqstant iehor importanti għall-istess istituzzjoni parlamentari li dawn ir-rulings jiġu rispettati, u li f'każ li xi Membru jkun jixtieq jikkontesta deċiżjoni tas-Sedja, għandu jirrikorri għar-rimedju li jagħtuh l-istess Ordnijiet Permanenti fir-rigward, u mhux għal azzjonijiet oħrajn li jmorru lil hinn minn dak li jipprovdur r-regoli tal-Kamra. Dan qed ngħidu għaliex minkejja li huma veru ftit l-istanzi fejn Membri rrikorrew għal dawn l-azzjonijiet, is-Sedja tibqa' dejjem obligata u kommessa li tishaq fuq l-osservanza tal-Ordnijiet Permanenti tal-Kamra u tal-preċedent stabbilit mis-Sedja matul is-snin.

Nirrimarka wkoll li daqstant iehor huwa importanti li l-Kamra tinzamm aġġornata bl-aħħar żviluppi li jkunu qed isehħu, per eżempju, permezz tal-istqarrijiet ministerjali u t-tweġibiet għall-mistoqsijiet parlamentari. Dan kif stabbilit mill-istess Kodiċi ta' Etika tal-Ministri u Segretarji Parlamentari.

Bħal ma għamlu ta' qabilna għandna nkomplu naħdmu u niehdu dawk id-deċiżjonijiet biex inżommu l-Parlament Malti haġ u relevanti għal dak li qiegħed jiġri madwarna, kemm lokalment kif ukoll 'il barra minn xtutna. Inżid li meta wiehed ihares lura lejn l-iżvilupp tal-Parlament tagħna tul medda ta' aktar minn 100 sena, jista' japprezza aħjar li demokrazija parlamentari haġja titlob li dejjem nirriflettu fuq dak li għamilna u fuq dak li forsi stajna għamilna b'mod aħjar, biex inkomplu ntejbu u nsaħħu lil dan il-Parlament tagħna u biex inkomplu naghmlu l-almu tagħna sabiex nilhqu l-aspettattivi tal-poplu. Biex isir dan m'hemm dubju li hemm bżonn il-koperazzjoni u l-impenn tal-Membri Parlamentari kollha.

Nemmen li din il-kommemorazzjoni tas-Sette Giugno li ssir ta' kull sena biex infakkru u napprezzaw dak li għaddew minnu missirijietna, isservi biex mill-ġdid nitheggu bl-enerġija halli nkomplu nsaħħu din l-oghla istituzzjoni tal-pajjiż mhux biss għall-ġid ta' pajjiżna llum, imma anke għall-generazzjonijiet li ġejjin warajna.



PARLAMENT TA' MALTA

# SETTE GIUGNO

2023



Valletta  
6 June 2023

Cover photo: Department of Information

**Official Programme and  
Address by the Honourable Anglu Farrugia  
Speaker of the House of Representatives  
Parliament of Malta  
on the occasion of the commemoration of  
SETTE GIUGNO**

**Tuesday, 6 June 2023**



## Official Programme

6.15 pm Musical programme by the Malta Police Force Band by the Sette Giugno Monument in St George's Square, Valletta

6.30 pm Arrival of the Honourable Anġlu Farrugia, Speaker of the House of Representatives, Parliament of Malta at St George's Square.

The Speaker greets Honourable Bernard Grech MP, Leader of the Opposition, upon his arrival at St George's Square.

The Speaker greets Honourable Robert Abela MP, Prime Minister of Malta, upon his arrival at St George's Square.

6.45 pm Speech by the Honourable Anġlu Farrugia, Speaker of the House of Representatives, Parliament of Malta on the occasion of the commemoration of the Sette Giugno.

The Speaker of the House of Representatives, the Prime Minister and the Leader of the Opposition take their places in front of the Sette Giugno Monument.

The Last Post is sounded.

A minute of silence is observed.

The Reveille is sounded.

The Speaker of the House of Representatives lays a wreath at the foot of the Sette Giugno Monument.

Laying of wreaths by the Prime Minister followed by the Leader of the Opposition, other distinguished guests, relatives of the victims and other organisations.

The National Anthem is played.



## **SPEECH ON THE OCCASION OF SETTE GIUGNO 2023**

The Sette Giugno commemoration prompts us to reflect on the events of 1919. The riots that occurred not far from where we are today took place during a period of significant economic challenges in our country. Poverty and hunger were widespread due to the soaring price of bread and of other essential needs. It was a time of great political upheaval, with our country lacking a suitable Constitution that did not even allow the people to express their opinions on who should govern them. This power, though limited, was granted three years later by way of the Amery-Milner Constitution, a crucial political development attributed to the events of 1919. It is for this reason that on this day we pay tribute to the four individuals – Emanuel Attard, Karmenu Abela, Ġużè Bajada and Wenzu Dyer – who lost their lives during the 1919 riots after no less than 64 British soldiers who were ordered to disperse the protestors in Valletta, opened fire on the crowd. Their names are engraved on this monument and are etched in the annals of our nation’s history. We must also remember those who perished or sustained severe injuries as a result of gunfire and the use of bayonets during the Sette Giugno riots.

I would also like to acknowledge the courage of individuals who made important decisions during that time, such as Filippo Sciberras, who was a leader who embraced a non-dividing political ideology and who believed and fought for a Constitution that provided citizens with a say in the running of our country, overcoming various obstacles, including the killing of Maltese citizens during the Sette Giugno riots. Sciberras succeeded in creating a common front leading to the establishment of a Constitution in 1921 that provided for self-government.

We can observe similar resilience shown by our leaders during the years that followed as the Maltese people remained steadfast in the face of British rule which often hindered the progress of those with a vision for our country. At this point I feel I should recall the memory of the numerous Maltese citizens who were interned, including former Prime Minister Nerik Mizzi. I remember well the visit by a Maltese delegation to Uganda during the Commonwealth Parliamentary Assembly during which we took the opportunity to visit the town of Bombo, the site of his exile.

These struggles continued throughout the years, as when, for example, the British opted not to respect the 1956 referendum result in favour of Malta’s

integration with the United Kingdom. Prime Minister Dom Mintoff, whose party led a number of protests, eventually resigned in 1958, and a number of his Cabinet Members who continued to fight for the rights of the Maltese were arrested and sentenced to prison, among them Agatha Barbara, who later became the first female President of Malta in 1981.

After the democratic result of the referendum was not respected, the Maltese people, alongside their leaders, worked towards achieving independence. In 1964, Malta gained independence, four years after the United Nations General Assembly adopted a Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries in 1960.

These examples represent only a few of the challenges faced by our people as they persevered in their pursuit of a better future, demonstrating the same determination shown in 1919. This notwithstanding that taking certain decisions during the colonial era was far from easy.

In last year's speech I referred to the important role that parliamentary diplomacy plays in the Maltese Parliament. I stressed the need for maintaining a strong focus on this aspect of parliamentary work, allowing us to actively work towards peace as an independent, sovereign and neutral country, as enshrined in our Constitution. We should assert this position firmly in international and inter-parliamentary organizations, particularly when discussing situations of conflict, war and disagreement among nations, by facilitating dialogue between the parties involved. In this regard, I mentioned that during the Inter-Parliamentary Union Assembly, where national parliaments of United Nations member states convene, I emphasized Malta's stance on facilitating discussions with the parliaments of Ukraine and Russia. Unfortunately, this position often encounters a certain resistance and indifference, even from European countries, as observed in the recent Conference of the Speakers of the Parliaments of the European Union member states that met in Prague a few months ago. In that conference, I proposed that we should express our commitment to exploring all possible avenues for Russia and Ukraine to cease hostilities and engage in peaceful dialogue. I argued that even if at the moment this seems impossible, one should at least bring this item up for discussion so as to create an opportunity for dialogue.

The proposed amendment stated:

“...affirm that an acceptable solution to end the war can only be achieved by open and effective dialogue amongst all the actors in the conflict, and insist that a permanent ceasefire in the region is a prerequisite for an acceptable peace framework.”

Regrettably, although the amendment was clear, well-intentioned and moved within the deadline, it was disregarded, along with others, by the Presidency, which exercised its right to select those amendments which were to form part of the Presidency’s conclusions without providing the opportunity to discuss the other amendments. That was why, with unwavering commitment towards peace and in representation of a Parliament that not only believes and respects its Constitution but which is ready to uphold it, I strongly expressed my dissatisfaction the certain amendments moved by national parliaments, including Malta, were disregarded.

I firmly believe that we should keep on advocating and insisting on this position, as holding back from taking a stand in support of our beliefs and decisions to safeguard the common good goes against the principles of democracy, unlike what was done by those who came before us. This sentiment was echoed by Pope Francis when he quoted General Dag Hammarskjöld, the former Secretary-General of the United Nations, who stated:

“Abusare della parola equivale a disprezzare l’essere umano” (“To misuse the word is to show contempt for man.”).

When we hinder discussions within the context of parliamentary democracy by abusing the right to speak, we disrespect the rights of individuals. We should all reflect on these wise words stated by this Swedish diplomat who served as United Nations Secretary-General from 1953 to 1961.

We all have something to learn from these words just as we have something to learn from Pope John Paul II’s address to the Fiftieth General Assembly of the United Nations on 5 October 1995 when he stated that every country has a right to its existence and that no State, nation or international organization is justified in asserting otherwise. He also emphasized that every nation has the right to mould its life according to its own traditions, as long as these do not infringe upon basic human rights, particularly the rights of minorities.

I recognize that this embodies the genuine essence of peace and serves as the foundation for fostering solidarity and respect among nations. Furthermore, I consider that actively striving to facilitate open dialogue contributes significantly to nurturing this sense of solidarity and respect.

This is why I believe that the Maltese Parliament should continue to work – as we are doing – for the pursuit of peace between nations. In this respect I refer to an international conference our Parliament organised in collaboration with the Global Council for Tolerance and Peace a few days ago, where we engaged in discussions with representatives from various countries to explore the best ways to foster mutual understanding. Tolerance plays a crucial role in achieving peace, and I am proud to state that the Maltese Parliament is one of the founding members of the International Parliament for Tolerance and Peace.

I would now like to address a matter that I have mentioned in several speeches during my tenure as Speaker of the House. We need to establish a parliamentary procedure that provides citizens with a means of redress when they feel that a Member of Parliament has abused of their parliamentary privilege by making incorrect or false statements about them in Parliament.

Presently, individuals in such situations have no recourse, even if they suffer adverse consequences as a result of statements made about them in the parliamentary Chamber or the committees. It is essential to recognize that these consequences may adversely affect their interests in ongoing court proceedings in which they are involved. I believe the time has come for us to explore models from various countries, especially those within the Commonwealth, and adopt the most suitable approach for our parliament.

I would also like to recall another proposal I made concerning parliamentary work relating to witnesses appearing before the committees of the House of Representatives. It is worth investigating the possibility of granting privileged status to evidence given before these committees, thereby preventing their use in a court of law or before any other judicial authority. I fully understand that the implementation of such a proposal would require political commitment, an in-depth discussion on its legal implications and most probably amendments to Maltese legislation.

I cannot fail to once more bring up the issue of full-time Members of Parliament. I still hold the view that in order to attract more individuals, both women and men, to engage in political life, while not hindering those already established in their professions who wish to contribute to society through politics, we should introduce a system that allows elected candidates to choose whether they wish to serve their country as full-time or part-time Members of Parliament.

I would now like to mention the parliamentary clearance rate, another matter which I normally refer to in my speeches. The Maltese Parliament stands out as one of the most active national parliaments in Europe. In the past year, during the 117 plenary sittings, 34 Acts of Parliament were enacted while 52 Bills and 101 Motions were presented. Additionally, some 1,600 documents were laid on the Table of the House and more than 134 Committee meetings were convened. Furthermore, the Chair delivered 21 rulings, some of which carried significant weight.

It is worth noting that in its decisions the Chair is obliged to adhere to, and strictly apply, the provisions of the Standing Orders of the House of Representatives, and any other applicable law. In many instances these decisions also draw from similar cases and decisions of past Speakers who have presided over the House throughout the years, as well as precedent and practice observed in other parliamentary systems, primarily the House of Commons in the United Kingdom, as well as those of other Commonwealth countries such as Australia, Canada and India. This means that these decisions are carefully studied and explained to ensure adherence to proper parliamentary procedure, and therefore it is crucial for all Members to be aware of them. It is equally important for the parliamentary institution that these rulings be respected and that when Members wish to challenge a decision of the Chair, they should resort to the prescribed remedy outlined in the Standing Orders rather than take actions that deviate from and go beyond long-established rules. I am pointing this out because although there have been very few instances where Members resorted to such alternative actions, it remains the Chair's responsibility to insist on the observance of the Standing Orders of the House and precedent established over the years.

I also wish to point out that it is equally important that the House be kept up to date with the latest developments, for example, through ministerial statements and replies to parliamentary questions, as required by the Code of Ethics of Ministers and Parliamentary Secretaries.

Just like our predecessors, we must persevere and take those decisions that will help us keep the Maltese Parliament alive and relevant to the ever-changing circumstances, both locally and abroad. I would like to add that upon reflecting on the progress made by our Parliament over the course of more than 100 years, one can better appreciate the need for continuous evaluation and improvement. It is imperative that we consistently strive to strengthen our Parliament and to meet our citizens' expectations. The cooperation and commitment of all Members of Parliament is unquestionably necessary in order to achieve this goal.

As we commemorate Sette Giugno each year, we honour and acknowledge the struggles faced by our forefathers, and are thereby motivated to further strengthen this esteemed institution, not only for the prosperity of our nation today, but also for that of future generations.