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The first parliamentary sitting which was held in the new parliamentary building opened officially on 4 May 2015.

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Cover: *Exterior view of the new parliamentary building.*

Ritratti/*Photos*:
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Daħla

Foreword

Qegħdin inwasslulkom l-ewwel ħarġa ta' dan il-perjodiku minn meta l-Parlament mexa għall-binja l-ġdida tiegħu fid-daħla tal-Belt. Bla dubju, il-perjodu li fih saret din il-mixja kien wieħed li jirrikjedi sforzi kbar minn dawk li b'xi mod kienu involuti, iżda b'sodisfazzjon ngħid li t-transizzjoni saret mingħajr diffikultajiet kbar.

Matul dawn l-aħħar xhur, minbarra s-seduti parlamentari u t-tlaqqigħ ta' diversi kumitati parlamentari, kellna wkoll tliet delegazzjonijiet parlamentari li żaru l-Parlament Malti u li pparteċipaw f'diversi laqgħat bilaterali importanti.

F'Ġunju nżamm f'Malta l-5th Westminster Workshop tal-Kumitati tal-Kontijiet Pubbliċi tal-Commonwealth. Din kienet l-ewwel darba li dan il-Workshop nżamm barra minn Londra, u għal din l-okkażjoni kien organizzat flimkien mal-Parlament Malti. Matul dan il-Workshop ġiet imwaqqfa l-Commonwealth Association of Public Accounts Committee, magħrufa aħjar bħala l-CAPAC. Din l-assoċjazzjoni sa issa għandha aktar minn 27 membru. Matul il-Workshop saret ukoll l-elezzjoni għall-ħatra tal-Kumitat Eżekuttiv ta' din l-assoċjazzjoni. L-Onor. Tonio Fenech ġie maħtur bħala l-ewwel chairperson ta' din l-assoċjazzjoni. Din hija ħatra ta' preġju għal Membru Parlamentari minn Malta, speċjalment fid-dawl tal-fatt li l-Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting (CHOGM) li jmiss ser jitlaqqa' f'Malta f'Novembru li ġej.

Għall-ewwel darba wkoll il-Parlament fetaħ il-bibien tal-binja l-ġdida tiegħu għall-pubbliku fuq jumejn, fejn waqt dawn l-open days eluf ta' Maltin kellhom l-opportunità jżuru l-binja u jaraw mill-qrib il-faċilitajiet li toffri.

Matul dawn it-tliet xhur tlaqqgħet ukoll is-sessjoni tal-Eko Skola, li saret opportunità annwali sabiex tfal tal-iskola jżuru l-binja tal-Parlament u jorganizzaw numru ta' sessjonijiet proprju fis-Sala tal-Parlament.

Attività annwali oħra li nżammet ix-xahar li għadda kienet il-kommemorazzjoni tal-avvenimenti tas-Sette Giugno. Fid-diskors tiegħi, minbarra li enfasizzajt l-importanza tat-tifsira dan il-jum nazzjonali għad-demokrazija parlamentari, appellajt sabiex l-awtoritajiet jagħmlu dak li hemm bżonn sabiex nindirizzaw id-diversi sfidi li għandna quddiemna, ewlenin fosthom li x-xandir televiżiv tas-seduti tal-Parlament jimxi l-pass naturali li jmiss, ċjoé li bi dritt ikun disponibbli b'xejn għal kulħadd. Hemm ukoll sfidi oħrajn. M'hemmx dubju li rridu naraw kif intejbu x-xogħol parlamentari billi naraw li l-ħin tas-seduti parlamentari jintuża aħjar u bl-aktar mod vantaġġjuż, dan sabiex ix-xogħol isir b'aktar armonija u effiċjenza. Nittama li fix-xhur li ġejjin ikun hemm aġġornament tajjeb tal-Ordnijiet Permanenti biex, ngħidu hekk, inkunu dejjem f'pożizzjoni li mmexxu l-ħidma tagħna b'mod aħjar u aktar effiċjenti.

F'din il-ħarġa hemm ukoll diversi rapporti dwar il-ħidma ta' diversi membri parlamentari u S-Sedja f'numru ta' laqgħat interparlamentari barra minn Malta.

F'din il-ħarġa qegħdin inwasslulkom ukoll l-ewwel parti minn artiklu dwar l-istorja tal-binja tal-Parlament kif żvolġiet bejn l-1921 sal-lum, 2015, mill-Professur Godfrey Pirotta.

Fl-aħħar nett, filwaqt li nieħu l-okkażjoni biex nawgura lil kulħadd, partikolarment lill-Membri Parlamentari taż-żewġ naħat tal-Kamra, il-mistrieħ meħtieġ biex b'hekk meta nerġgħu niltaqgħu jkollna aktar enerġija biex inkomplu x-xogħol parlamentari, nittama li sa tmiem din is-sena naraw li l-Att dwar is-Servizz Parlamentari jsir realtà biex b'hekk il-Parlament verament ikollu d-dinjità li tixraqlu.

Anġlu Farrugia

This is the first issue of this periodical which is being brought to you since Parliament moved to its new building at the entrance of Valletta. Undoubtedly, the migration period required considerable efforts from all those who were somehow involved, but I am pleased to say that the transition was done without major difficulties.

Over the last few months, in addition to the regular parliamentary sittings and meeting of the various parliamentary committees, three parliamentary delegations have visited the Maltese Parliament and participated in several important bilateral meetings.

In June, the 5th Workshop Westminster Public Accounts Committee of the Commonwealth was organised in Malta. This was the first time that the Workshop was held outside London, and on this occasion was organised together with the Parliament of Malta. During this Workshop the Commonwealth Association of Public Accounts Committee, better known as the CAPAC, was founded. Until now this association has over 27 members. During the Workshop elections for the appointment of the Executive Committee of this association were held. Hon. Fenech was appointed as the first chairman of this association. This is a prestigious appointment for a Member of Parliament from Malta, especially in light of the fact that the next Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting (CHOGM) will be organised in Malta this November.

For the first time since the migration, Parliament also opened its doors to the public for two days. During these open days thousands of people had the opportunity to visit the new Parliament building and observe the facilities it offers.

During these three months, Parliament also hosted the Eko Skola activity, which has become an annual opportunity for school children to visit Parliament and organise a number of sessions in the plenary hall of Parliament.

Another annual activity which was held last month was the commemoration of the events of the Sette Giugno. In my speech, I emphasised the importance of the meaning of this national day for parliamentary democracy, and appealed to the authorities to do what is necessary to tackle the many challenges ahead, including taking forward the broadcasting of parliamentary sittings to the natural next step, namely making it available to everyone for free. There remain, however, other challenges. There is no doubt that we want to look at how the parliamentary work can be improved, especially making sure that the best use is made of parliamentary time, thereby ensuring that we perform our work with greater efficiency and harmony. I trust that in the coming months the Standing Orders will undergo a thorough review, which will enable us to manage our work better and more efficiently.

In this issue you will find a number of reports on the work of several MPs and the Chair on their participation in a number of interparliamentary meetings abroad.

In this issue you can also read the first part of an article by Professor Godfrey Pirotta about the various discussions concerning the Parliament building, dating back from 1921 to date.

Finally, whilst taking the opportunity to wish everyone, particularly to the MPs from both sides of the House, a restful period so that when we meet again we will be full of energy to carry on with our parliamentary work, I hope that by the end of this year the Parliamentary Service Act will become a reality so that Parliament can really have the dignity it deserves.

Anġlu Farrugia

Diskors fl-Okkażjoni tas-Sette Giugno

Bħal kull sena, il-Parlament ta' Malta ċċelebra l-avvenimenti tas-Sette Giugno, b'ċerimonja li din is-sena nżammet fil-5 ta Ġunju quddiem il-monument tas-Sette Giugno li jinsab fil-ġonna ta' Hastings.

Dan li ġej huwa d-diskors tal-Ispeaker Anġlu Farrugia f'din l-okkażjoni.

Prim Ministru,
Kap tal-Oppożizzjoni,
Presidenti Emeriti, Speakers Emeriti,
Onorevoli Membri,
Membri Anzjani,
Eċċellenzi,
Mistiedna distinti.

Kull sena jkollna appuntament hawnhekk biex niċċelebraw Jum is-Sette Giugno li bla dubju jibqa' dejjem jum speċjali marbut ma' ġrajja ta' importanza kbira. Huwa appuntament marbut żgur mad-demokrazija parlamentari. Huwa jum li jfakkar li fl-1919, proprju fil-ġurnata tas-7 ta' Ġunju, il-poplu Malti u Għawdxi, b'vuċi waħda u f'għaqda nazzjonali, mexa biex wassal il-ġlieda għad-drittijiet tiegħu bħala nazzjon Malti.

Din ir-rabta bejn l-avvenimenti li jfakkarna fihom dan il-monument u l-istorja tal-Parlament Malti ġġibni għall-ewwel punt li xtaqt nagħmel f'dan id-diskors. Hawnhekk nagħmel referenza għal talba li saritli fit-18 ta' Marzu ta' din is-sena mill-Kumitat Festi Nazzjonali dwar kif taħsibha s-Sedja fuq il-proposta li dan il-monument, xogħol l-iskultur Anton Agius, ma jibqax imwarrab f'dan il-ġnien fejn kien ġie rilokat b'mod temporanju. Ngħid mill-ewwel li naqbel ma' din il-proposta u jien tal-fehma li għandu jiġi mqiegħed fil-viċinanza immedjata tal-bini tal-Parlament. B'hekk ir-rabta intrinsika bejn dak li jirrappreżenta dan il-monument, li qed nikkommemoraw illum, u l-Parlament Malti tkun riflessa wkoll b'mod fiżiku u fid-deher.

Huwa dejjem interessanti li wieħed jistudja b'mod iktar profond x'ġara eżattament dak iż-żmien u għalhekk irrid naqsam magħkom xi fatti interessanti ġodda li rnexxieli nsib bil-għajnuna ta' diversi riċerki li għamilt u li għamlu kittieba oħrajn li kitbu fuq din il-ġrajja. Nixtieq naqsam magħkom ukoll siltiet minn minjiera ta' dokumenti li ltqajt magħhom ta' investigazzjonijiet li ġew ordnati jsiru wara l-irvellijiet tas-7 ta' Ġunju. Qed ngħid dan għaliex minn dak li se ngħid joħroġ ċar kemm huwa importanti li aħna nibqgħu naħdmu mingħajr biża' li nżidu t-trasparenza fl-operat tagħna.

Nibda billi nsemmi l-ewwel inkjesta li ġiet ordnata, li kienet dik mill-Qorti Militari Ingliża, li minnha jidher li l-awtoritajiet mexxew investigazzjoni biex jipprovaw jiġġustifikaw l-għemil tagħhom; dan għaliex ġie rrapportat li allegatament l-ewwel tiri ġew sparati mill-Maltin fuq is-suldati. Fil-fatt, il-kummissjoni li stħarrġet x'ġara dakinhar, fir-rapport tal-inkjesta tagħha tgħid hekk:

> *"That shots have been fired [by the Maltese] is borne out by the evidence of Major General Hunter Blair, Colonel Saville, one soldier and by two civilian gentlemen."*

Din hija evidenza li mill-bidu nett kienet inkjesta dubjuża, tant li ntbagħtet ittra anonima lill-istess gvern fis-16 ta' Settembru 1919, fejn l-awtur tagħha akkuża lil Hunter Blair li kien qed jivvinta gidba. Mill-bidu kien jidher ċar li kien hemm reżistenza għal din l-inkjesta militari. Fil-fatt, għalkemm il-gazzetti kollha dak iż-żmien kellhom ħalqhom magħluq biċ-ċensura - għaliex kulħadd kien jibża' - kien hemm għaqda ta' politiċi - magħrufa aħjar bħala Comitato Patriottico - li dejjem irreżistew li jikkoperaw mal-Gvern Kolonjali u li dejjem emmnu li t-tmexxija ta' pajjiżna kellha tkun f'idejn il-Maltin. Dawn kienu jsostnu - u bir-raġun - li għandha ssir inkjesta oħra, inkjesta pubblika, inkjesta li toħroġ il-verità kollha ta' dak li ġara u mhux għaliex ġara hekk.

Fil-fatt il-Gvernatur il-ġdid Lord Plumer, li ħa s-setgħa fl-10 ta' Ġunju 1919, ried inaqqas kemm jista' l-oppożizzjoni tal-kunsilliera, u allura ħatar kummissjoni biex tistħarreġ mill-ġdid l-inċidenti, imma dan għamlu mingħajr ma kkonsulta lill-istess membri tal-Kunsill tal-Gvern. Dan kien żball ieħor u l-kunsilliera eletti urew l-oppożizzjoni tagħhom għal dan għaliex kien jidher ċar li ma kienx hemm trasparenza u li kollox kien qed isir għal skop wieħed. Hawnhekk interessanti ninnotaw li l-Avukat tal-Kuruna, Sir Mikelanġ Refalo, dak iż-żmien membru fil-Kunsill tal-Gvern, kien qed jgħid li l-inċidenti li nqalgħu fl-irvellijiet kienu minħabba tixwix tal-politiċi. Hekk kellu jgħid. Insibu wkoll li fix-xena politika ta' dak iż-żmien in-Nazzjonalisti kienu akkużaw lill-Imħallef Alfred Parnis, li kien qed imexxi l-kummissjoni maħtura mill-Gvernatur Plumer, li kien qed jaspira għall-Presidenza tal-Qorti tal-Appell u li għalhekk kellu jaċċetta u joqgħod għall-istruzzjonijiet tal-Gvernatur. Ġie nnutat ukoll li wieħed mill-membri tal-kummissjoni, il-Maġistrat Luigi Camilleri, laħaq imħallef xahar wara l-istess ħatra tiegħu f'din il-kummissjoni.

Il-verità hi li kien hemm diversi raġunijiet għaliex kien hemm l-irvellijiet, fosthom il-prezz tal-ħobż li kien għola bi tliet darbiet fi żmien qasir, u l-għoli fil-prezz tal-patata - li ddaħħlet f'Malta mill-Ingliżi u li fl-1919 kienet tifforma parti mid-dieta tal-poplu - tant li kienet titqies bħala t-tieni ħobża għall-Maltin. Minbarra l-għoli fil-prezz tal-ikel, kien hemm raġunijiet oħrajn li setgħu wasslu biex is-sitwazzjoni eskalat, bħas-sensji lill-ħaddiema. Fil-fatt, kienu qed jingħataw ħafna sensji lill-ħaddiema tat-Tarzna u meta f'April tal-1919 l-Imperial Government Workers Union talbet laqgħa mal-Gvernatur Methuen, insibu li fit-22 ta' April 1919 l-istess Gvernatur kiteb lill-Gvern Kolonjali biex jitwaqqfu s-sensji mit-Tarzna. Fl-ittra tal-Gvernatur Methuen insibu hekk:

Diskors fl-Okkażjoni tas-Sette Giugno (Kont.)

"I apprehend that if the general discharge of workmen from his Majesty's Dockyard is allowed to proceed while trade is still slack and emigration is beset by great difficulties, it might result in aggravating seriously an already difficult and anxious position. ...

It does not seem unfair to urge that every effort should be made to avoid cessation of work when cessation entails, as it now must, destitution to many."

Jibqa' l-fatt li minkejja li uffiċjalment- biex ngħid hekk- kien hemm dawn iż-żewġ rakkonti ta' x'ġara waqt l-irvellijiet, il-poplu Malti aktar ingħaqad u baqa' hekk magħqud sal-ewwel snin wara l-irvellijiet. L-Aġent Gvernatur Hunter Blair kien ħass li r-rewwixti donnhom saru bi pjan deliberat minn moviment antigovernattiv u anti-Ingliż. Saħansitra l-Kummissjoni tal-Inkjesta Militari bdiet tipponta subgħajha lejn Nerik Mizzi bħala l-promotur tal-propaganda u l-attivitajiet kontra l-Ingliżi. Dak kien iż-żmien meta Nerik Mizzi kien qed jiġi deskritt fl-istess inkjesta - u nikkwota - "*a man of abnormal views*" u ngħad ukoll li dawk li jaqblu miegħu kienu "*semi-imbeciles or hotheads*". Fil-frattemp insibu wkoll li filwaqt li l-Unione Politica Maltese - il-partit magħruf aħjar bħala "il-Partit ta' Panzavecchia" - kien qed jimxi id f'id mal-Gvernatur Plumer li donnu kien qed jiskarta milli jagħti l-verżjoni tiegħu fuq x'ġara fis-Sette Giugno, iż-żewġ partiti l-oħra, il-Partit Laburista permezz ta' Ġużè Orlando u l-Partit Nazzjonalista Demokratiku mmexxi minn Nerik Mizzi, kienu qed jaħdmu prattikament id f'id, it-tnejn jikkritikaw ir-rapporti taż-żewġ inkjesti.

Fil-fatt, Ġużè Orlando, dak iż-żmien kien qed jgħid illi l-inkjesti u r-rapporti uffiċjali qallbu l-ġrajjiet b'tali mod li rriduċewhom għal att baxx u ta' stmerrija. Min-naħa l-oħra, in-Nazzjonalisti sostnew li r-rapporti kienu mimlija "sottile veleno anti-Maltese" u "servilismo italo falso".

Il-verità hi li dawk li verament riedu progress politiku fost il-Maltin kienu l-Partit Laburista u l-Partit Nazzjonalista. Huwa veru wkoll li minkejja li kienu traġedja għall-pajjiż, l-irvellijiet tas-Sette Giugno u l-avvenimenti li seħħew b'konsegwenza tagħhom, wasslu għall-Kostituzzjoni tas-Self-Government tal-1921, jew kif nafuha aħjar bħala l-Amery-Milner Constitution.

Barra min hekk, meta wieħed iħares lejn x'kien għaddej f'dawk iż-żminijiet, jinnota wkoll li l-ġrajjiet li seħħew wara l-irvellijiet tas-7 ta' Ġunju 1919, bla dubju influwenzaw ħafna l-mod ta' kif il-poplu beda jħares lejn il-Gvernatur ġdid, Lord Plumer. Qiegħed nirreferi primarjament għall-mod kif il-Gvernatur Plumer indirizza mill-ewwel waħda mill-problemi li l-aktar kienet qiegħda tweġġa' lill-poplu Malti - l-għoli tal-prezz tal-ħobż - tant li l-prezz ta' ħobża ta' ratal, minn ħames soldi u nofs ġie sussegwentement imraħħas għal erba' soldi u nofs. Dan kien pass sinfikanti speċjalment għaliex il-Gvernatur ta' qablu, Lord Methuen, kien deher li tbiegħed sew mill-Maltin u kien litteralment maqtugħ minn kulħadd, tant li f'April 1919 kien talab huwa stess li jirriżenja minn Gvernatur. Rajna wkoll kif wara t-tluq tal-Gvernatur Methuen, ġie appuntat minfloku Major General Hunter Blair bħala Aġent Gvernatur, jiġifieri l-istess persuna li, biex ngħid hekk, immanipula l-inkjesta militari. Dan baqa' fil-kariga sakemm ftit wara ġie appuntat Lord Plumer bħala Gvernatur.

Irrid ngħid li Lord Plumer, li kien serva bħala Ġeneral fl-Ewwel Gwerra Dinjija, kellu personalità interessanti; kien bniedem diplomatiku, kellu kariżma u personalità li tiġbdek u kien irnexxielu joħloq djalogu bejnu u bejn il-politiċi. Fil-fatt jidher li l-istess personalità simpatika ta' Plumer kienet strumentali sabiex fl-1921 wasalna għall-kisba politika ta' gvern responsabbli- il-punt minn fejn aħna tlaqna lkoll. Dan joħroġ ċar minn dak li qal is-Sotto-Segretarju tal-Kolonji Leo Amery, li kien inkarigat ifassal il-Kostituzzjoni ġdida tal-1921, meta fid-19 ta' Novembru 1919 fil-Parlament Ingliż ħabbar l-għoti ta' "full responsible control of their purely local affairs" lill-Maltin:

"It is upon the advice of Field-Marshal Lord Plumer, and with his complete concurrence, that His Majesty's Government are taking this step, and undoubtedly their confidence in his judgment both of the military and political aspects of the question has played a considerable part in influencing their decision."

Hawnhekk issa nixtieq niġi għal ġrajjiet oħra li seħħew dak iż-żmien. Minbarra li jidher li l-inkjesti li saru ma ħarġux il-verità kollha dwar l-erba' persuni li nqatlu u l-għexieren li sfaw feruti, l-Ingliżi, biex jagħmlu l-punt tagħhom, riedu wkoll iwasslu l-messaġġ li l-vittmi kienu dejjem huma. Dan narawh fil-proċeduri li ġew istitwiti kontra numru ta' Maltin li tressqu l-Qorti u ntbagħtu l-ħabs wara r-rewwixta tas-Sette Giugno sempliċement għaliex waqt li kienu l-Belt fil-ħin tal-irvellijiet esprimew ruħhom u qalu xi kliem. Pereżempju, każ partikolari li sibt kien ta' ċertu Ċensu Arpa li meta ra wieħed mill-morini Ingliżi jispara fuq il-Maltin, ipprova jikkalma l-folla u biex ma jippanikjawx qalilhom dan il-kliem: "Dak kien tir fl-ajru." Fuq dan il-kliem ġie akkużat li kien qed iqanqal l-irvell u ntbagħat sena ħabs b'xogħol iebes. Każ ieħor huwa ta' persuna li ntbagħtet ħames snin ħabs b'xogħol iebes mill-Qorti Marzjali fit-23 ta' Settembru 1919. Dan kien ċertu Ċikku Debattista minn Ħal Qormi, kuċċier ta' 33 sena, li ngħata din is-sentenza talli kien biss preżenti u m'għamilx l-almu tiegħu biex iwaqqaf l-irvell. Minn dan joħroġ li l-awtoritajiet ma kinux qed ifittxu l-verità ta' kif ġraw l-affarijiet imma riedu jitfgħu l-ħtija ta' dak li ġara fuq l-istess poplu Malti. Hija xi ħaġa tal-mistħija li l-poplu Malti kellu jgħaddi minn dan kollu.

Għalhekk huwa importanti li aħna qegħdin hawnhekk illum, sabiex l-istorja tiggwidana kif għandna dejjem

Diskors fl-Okkażjoni tas-Sette Giugno (Kont.)

nagħmlu l-affarijiet aħjar, kif għandna nkunu rappreżentanti aħjar tal-poplu tagħna. Il-poplu Malti jrid jara tmexxija demokratika fejn tingħad il-verità u fejn ikun hemm trasparenza fil-makkinarju leġiżlattiv. Il-ħidma tagħna trid tkun dejjem miftuħa u jien illum ninsab sodisfatt li matul din is-sena għamilna passi importanti lejn din id-direzzjoni. Kien pass importanti meta fl-4 ta' Mejju, wara li mxejna lejn binja ġdida mgħammra b'faċilitajiet moderni li ppermettew lill-Parlament jaħdem b'mod aktar trasparenti, is-seduti parlamentari bdew jiġu trasmessi b'mod viżiv u dirett fuq is-sit elettroniku tal-Parlament u fuq stazzjon tat-televiżjoni.

Dan kien pass importanti, imma mhux biżżejjed. Issa rridu naraw li l-Parlament ikollu l-istazzjon tat-televiżjoni free-to-air tiegħu, u dan sabiex dawk in-nies li jridu jsegwu-bi dritt- id-demokrazija parlamentari tiffunzjona b'mod ħaj, ma jkunux jiddependu fuq jekk għandhomx abbonament ma' xi kumpanija lokali. Għalhekk, il-Parliamentary TV Channel irid ikun disponibbli wkoll free-to-air u dan għaliex ma nistgħux nikkondizzjonaw dan id-dritt li għandu jkollu kull min irid isegwi d-demokrazija parlamentari f'pajjiżna. L-infrastruttura qiegħda hemm; il-platform tal-free-to-air li huwa operat mis-sistema tal-GO, qiegħed hemm; hemm kanal televiżiv disponibbli; u allura qiegħed ngħid li dan għandu minnufih jingħata lil din l-ogħla istituzzjoni tal-pajjiż sabiex ikompli jissaħħaħ il-livell ta' trasparenza fid-demokrazija parlamentari f'pajjiżna. Għaldaqstant inħeġġeġ lill-awtoritajiet biex din il-faċilità li l-poplu, nerġa' ngħid, għandu jkollu bi dritt, tingħata kemm jista' jkun malajr.

Is-sena l-oħra, waqt din l-attività, kont semmejt li fil-21 ta' Mejju 2014, proprju l-għada li tressaq u ġie approvat l-Ewwel Qari tal-Abbozz ta' Liġi dwar l-iStandards fil-Ħajja Pubblika, is-Sedja kienet qiegħdet fuq il-Mejda tal-Kamra rapport dwar l-awtonomija amministrattiva tal-Parlament li ġie mħejji minn kummissjoni interna li ħtart jien stess fis-16 ta' April 2014. Flimkien ma' dak ir-rapport kien ġie mqiegħed ukoll Abbozz ta' Liġi dwar is-Servizz Parlamentari bil-ħsieb li dan id-dokument iservi ta' bażi għal diskussjoni dwar att leġiżlattiv li jġib fis-seħħ l-awtonomija amministrattiva sħiħa tal-Parlament Malti. Kemm l-Abbozz ta' Liġi dwar is-Servizz Parlamentari kif ukoll l-Abbozz ta' Liġi dwar l-iStandards fil-Ħajja Pubblika huma imperattivi, biex ngħid hekk, biex l-istituzzjoni tal-Parlament tkompli timxi 'l quddiem. Hemm bżonn li nkomplu naħdmu sabiex insaħħu aktar il-kredibilità tagħna l-parlamentari; dan għaliex il-kredibilità ta' din l-ogħla istituzzjoni tal-pajjiż hija riflessjoni tal-kredibilità ta' kull wieħed u waħda minna.

Hawnhekk nixtieq ngħid li dan il-Parlament ma qagħadx lura milli fuq din il-materja ta' trasparenza u kontabilità anke jipparteċipa b'mod sħiħ f'laqgħat importanti barra minn Malta. Qiegħed nirreferi għas-66 sessjoni plenarja tal-GRECO - il-Grupp ta' Stati kontra l-Korruzzjoni fi ħdan il-Kunsill tal-Ewropa - li jien ipparteċipajt fiha b'mod dirett, fejn bl-assistenza tal-Avukat Ġenerali, Dr Peter Grech u d-Deputat Avukat Ġenerali, Dr Donatella Frendo Dimech, kelli l-okkażjoni nirrispondi għal numru ta' domandi kif ukoll nara x'miżuri jistgħu jittieħdu dwar prevenzjoni ta' kull tip ta' korruzzjoni f'dak li għandu x'jaqsam ma' Membri Parlamentari.

Matul din is-sena s-Sedja kkontribwixxiet ukoll f'konferenza li trattat il-materja ta' kif il-Commonwealth jista' jibqa' relevanti fiż-żmenijiet tal-lum. F'dan ir-rigward, f'diskors li jien għamilt f'attività li nżammet fil-Parlament Ingliż fl-4 ta' Frar ta' din is-sena, għedt hekk:

> *"As part of a wider Commonwealth reform, to which I will return shortly, I feel that for this organization to be a true promoter and guardian of the rights of its citizens as set out in the Harare Declaration, it requires a centralized organ responsable for ensuring the respect of these set of core values across all its territories. Two models come to my mind namely:*

Diskors fl-Okkażjoni tas-Sette Giugno (Kont.)

One based on the United Nations Human Rights Council which would be responsible for strengthening the promotion and protection of human rights in the member countries and for addressing situations of human rights violations and make recommendations on them; or

based on the Council of European Court of Human Rights, with which individuals or group of individuals could lodge their complaints against Member States on breaches of Human Rights issues not satisfactorily resolved in the home country."

Dan huwa eżempju wieħed ċar ta' kif il-Parlament Malti jwassal il-vuċi taċ-ċittadini f'fora internazzjonali bil-għan li jkunu mistħarrġa mekkaniżmi li permezz tagħhom jissaħħaħ id-dritt taċ-ċittadini għal rimedju.

Hemm ħafna x'wieħed jagħmel biex dejjem itejjeb il-livell ta' trasparenza u l-kontabilità ta' kull wieħed u waħda minna lejn il-poplu li nirrappreżentaw. Pereżempju, naħseb li wasal iż-żmien li nindirizzaw il-kwestjoni ta' meta ċittadin iħossu aggravat b'dak li jintqal fil-konfront tiegħu fil-Parlament, u f'dan ir-rigward ngħid illi wasal iż-żmien li jkun hemm mekkaniżmu li jagħti dritt għal rimedju lill-istess ċittadin. Ovvjament dan irid isir mingħajr ma nnaqqsu d-dritt u l-privileġġ li jgawdi Membru Parlamentari fil-Kamra, għaliex dan il-privileġġ qiegħed hemm biex Membru Parlamentari jkun jista' jitkellem mingħajr biża'. Min-naħa l-oħra rridu naraw li ma jkunx hemm abbuż minn dan il-privileġġ f'din l-ogħla istituzzjoni tal-pajjiż, u f'dan ir-rigward naħseb li wasal iż-żmien li nibdew inħarsu lejn mudelli li jindirizzaw din il-kwestjoni. Barra minn hekk, fl-eżerċizzju li għaddej biex nirrevedu l-Ordnijiet Permanenti tal-Kamra, għandna nagħtu kas li ndaħħlu regolamenti li jagħtu aktar dinjità lil dan il-Parlament, anke fil-mod ta' kif kull Membru jindirizza lill-Kamra.

Bil-mixja tal-Parlament lejn il-binja l-ġdida, għamilna pass 'il quddiem f'dik li hija relazzjoni bejn il-Parlament u l-pubbliku. Dan għaliex filwaqt li qed niltaqgħu ma' nies minn kull qasam tal-ħajja li qed jiġu jżuru din il-binja, xogħol il-perit rinomat Renzo Piano, qed nieħdu l-opportunità sabiex nispjegawlhom x'xogħol isir mir-rappreżentanti tagħhom, kemm fil-plenarju kif ukoll fil-kumitati tal-Kamra. Qed inħajru nies minn kull settur tas-soċjetà biex jersqu lejn il-Parlament anke permezz tal-esibizzjonijiet li qed jittellgħu f'din il-binja. Fil-fatt l-ewwel esibizzjoni- li għadha għaddejja- ġiet imtellgħa mir-residenti tal-Faċilità Korrettiva ta' Kordin. L-għan li ttellgħet proprju din l-esibizzjoni kien kemm bħala sinjal li l-binja tal-Parlament hija miftuħa għal kulħadd, kif ukoll bħala messaġġ lill-istess ħabsin li huma għadhom jifformaw parti mis-soċjetà.

Matul din il-ġimgħa l-Parlament ta l-kontribuzzjoni tiegħu wkoll fil-ħidma interparlamentari għaliex flimkien mal-Fergħa tar-Renju Unit tal-Assoċjazzjoni Parlamentari tal-Commonwealth organizza f'Malta l-5th Westminster Workshop għall-kumitati tal-kontijiet pubbliċi tal-Commonwealth bit-tema Effective, Independent & Transparent Public Accounts Committees for Robust Public Financial Oversight. Ta' min wieħed jgħid din kienet l-ewwel darba li dan il-Workshop inżamm barra r-Renju Unit. It-tema tittratta funzjoni u rwol importanti ħafna ta' parlament f'pajjiż demokratiku, jiġifieri dak ta' skrutinju tal-ħidma tal-Eżekuttiv, speċifikament f'dak li għandu x'jaqsam mal-finanzi tal-gvern. Matul l-istess Workshop ġiet istitwita l-CAPAC (il-Commonwealth Association of Public Accounts Committees) li ħarġet minn riżoluzzjoni tal-Commonwealth Heads of Government tal-2013 li ssejjaħ għal tisħiħ tal-kumitati dwar il-kontijiet pubbliċi fil-Commonwealth bħala rikonoxximent tal-importanza tal-governanza tajba f'demokrazija.

Imxejna ħafna, iżda baqa' ħafna wkoll x'nistgħu nagħmlu. M'għandniex naqtgħu qalbna; irridu nkomplu nfittxu kif nistgħu nwettqu ħidmietna dejjem b'mod aħjar. Kull wieħed u waħda minna li qegħdin fil-Parlament u kull min ħadem f'din l-istituzzjoni, għandu d-dmir li jibqa' jagħti

SPEECH ON THE OCCASION OF THE SETTE GIUGNO

As in previous years, the Parliament of Malta celebrated the events of the Sette Giugno, in a ceremony which this year took place on 5 June in front of the monument of the Sette Giugno located in the Hastings Gardens.

The following is the Speaker's speech on this occasion.

Prime Minister,
Leader of the Opposition,
Presidents Emeriti,
Speakers Emeriti,
Honourable Members,
Former Members,
Your Excellences,
Distinguished guests,

Every year we convene to commemorate the *Sette Giugno*, which undoubtedly remains a special day associated with an event of great importance. This is a day which is deeply associated with parliamentary democracy, when we remember that on 7 June 1919, the Maltese and Gozitan people acted in unison in a manifestation of national unity to further their cause and assert their rights as a Maltese nation.

The link between the events this monument reminds us of, and the history of the Maltese Parliament brings me to the first point which I would like to raise during this speech. I refer to a request received on the 18 of March of this year from the National Festivities Committee, for the Chair's opinion on the relocation of this monument, the work of sculptor Anton Agius. I wish to immediately declare myself in favour of this monument being relocated to the immediate vicinity of the Parliament building. Thus the intrinsic link between this monument's significance, which we are commemorating today, and the Maltese Parliament will also be reflected physically and visually.

It is always interesting to study in greater detail what happened exactly at the time, and I would therefore like to share some new interesting facts which I managed to discover from my own research and from writings by other authors who have delved into this subject. I would also like to share with you extracts from a goldmine of documents which I came across, consisting of investigations which were ordered following the riots of the 7 of June. The prevailing message from this research is the great importance of continuing to strive, without fear, to enhance transparency in our work.

I start by referring to the first inquiry ordered by the British Military Court, which reveals that the authorities carried out an investigation with the intention of justifying their actions, by alleging that the first shots were fired by the Maltese against the British soldiers. In fact, the inquiring commission stated the following in its report:

> "That shots have been fired [by the Maltese] is borne out by the evidence of Major General Hunter Blair, Colonel Saville, one soldier and by two civilian gentlemen."

This evidence was suspect from the outset, to the extent that an anonymous letter was sent to the Colonial Government alleging that Hunter Blair had fabricated a lie. While all newspapers at the time were muted by censorship and fear, the political group known as the Comitato Patriottico, which persistently refused to cooperate with the Colonial Government and promoted the Maltese people's right of self-determination, rightly insisted on having a new public inquiry which would reveal the full truth of what actually occured and not the reason leading to such events.

The new Governor Lord Plumer, who assumed office on 10 June 1919, in an effort to quell opposition by the councillors, appointed a commission to reinvestigate the events, but without consulting the members of the Council of Government. This was yet another mistake which drew strong opposition from the elected councillors since it was clear that there was a lack of transparency and that everything was being done with one intention. In this context, it is worth noting that Sir Mikelanġ Refalo, who was Crown Advocate and also a Member of the Council of Government, asserted that the incidents arose due to incitement by politicians. He seems to have had no other choice. The Nationalist party of the time also alleged that Judge Alfred Parnis, who was leading the commission appointed by Governor Plumer, harboured ambitions for the Presidency of the Court of Appeal, and was therefore compelled to accept and abide by the Governor's instructions. It was also pointed out that one of the members of the commission, Magistrate Luigi Camilleri, was appointed judge one month following his nomination to the commission.

The truth is that that various factors contributed to the riots, including the threefold increase in the price of bread over a short period of time, and the soaring price of potatoes, which in 1919 had become the second staple food in Malta after being introduced to the Island by the British. Besides the steep rise in food prices, other contributing factors included mass redundancies, in particular for dockyard workers. In fact, on 22 April 1919 Governor Methuen sent a letter to the Colonial Government, following a meeting with the Imperial Government Workers Union, requesting an end to dockyard redundancies:

> "I apprehend that if the general discharge of workmen from his Majesty's Dockyard is allowed to proceed while trade is still slack and emigration is beset by great difficulties, it might result in aggravating seriously an already difficult and anxious position. ...

> It does not seem unfair to urge that every effort should be made to avoid cessation of work when cessation entails, as it now must, destitution to many."

The fact remains that although – so to say – officially there were these two versions of events, the Maltese people became more united and remained so united up to the first few years following the riots. Acting Governor Hunter Blair believed that the riots were instigated deliberately by an anti-government and anti-British movement. The Military Inquiry Commission even started pointing fingers at Nerik Mizzi as the promoter of anti-British propaganda and activities. This was a time when Nerik Mizzi was being described by the same inquiry as "a man of abnormal views", and that his acolytes were "semi-imbeciles or hotheads". In the meantime we find that while the Unione Politica Maltese, also known as "Panzavecchia's Party", was supporting Governor Plumer who seemed reluctant to provide his version of events in connection with Sette Giugno, the other two parties, namely the Labour Party, through Ġużè Orlando, and the Democratic Nationalist Party, led by Nerik Mizzi, were practically working in tandem criticising the two inquiry reports.

In fact, Ġużè Orlando claimed that the inquiries and official reports distorted the events to such extent that they amounted to little more than a vile act of contempt. On the other hand, the Nationalists insisted that the reports were infused with "subtle anti-Maltese poison" ("*sottile veleno anti-Maltese*") and "false Italo-servilism" ("*servilismo italo falso*").

The truth of the matter is that those who genuinely wanted progress for the Maltese people were the Labour Party and the Nationalist Party. It is also true that although tragic, the *Sette Giugno* riots and the ensuing events led to the 1921 Self-Government Constitution, better known as the Amery-Milner Constitution.

Furthermore, on taking stock of the situation at the time, it appears that the events which unfolded following the riots of 7 June 1919 undoubtedly had a major bearing on the people's perception of the new Governor, Lord Plumer. I am referring primarily to the way in which Governor Plumer immediately addressed one of the most hard-hitting problems for the Maltese people – the soaring price of bread – to such extent that the price of a loaf weighing one rotolo (approximately 800 grammes) was reduced from five-and-a-half pence to four-and-a-half pence. This was a significant step because the previous Governor, Lord Methuen, had become very detached from the Maltese and was literally isolated from everyone, to the extent that in April 1919 he requested to resign from his post. Following Governor Methuen's departure, the person appointed in his stead as Acting Governor was Major General Hunter Blair, namely the same person who had, so to speak, manipulated the military inquiry. He remained in office for a brief period until Lord Plumer was appointed Governor.

It is worth mentioning that Lord Plumer, who had served as General in the First World War, was a remarkable character. He was gifted with the art of diplomacy, endowed with a charismatic and endearing personality, and had the ability to engage in dialogue with politicians. In fact it seems that Plumer's charming personality was instrumental in achieving self-government in 1921, our Parliament's point of departure. This was stated clearly by Under-Secretary of State for the Colonies Leo Amery, who was entrusted with the drafting of the 1921 Constitution, when in the House of Commons on 19 November 1919, he announced the granting to the Maltese people "full responsible control of their purely local affairs".

> "It is upon the advice Field-Marshal Lord Plumer and with his complete concurrence, that his Majesty's Government are taking this step and undoubtedly, their confidence in his judgement both of the military and political aspects of the question has played a considerable part in influencing their decision."

At this point I would also like to refer to other events which took place during that period. Besides the fact that it appears that the inquiries carried out did not reveal the full truth concerning the event which left four dead and many injured, the British were keen on driving home the point that they were the victims. This is evident from the proceedings filed against many Maltese persons who were indicted in Court and imprisoned following the Sette Giugno riots, simply because they happened to be in Valletta at the time of the riots and uttered some words. A particular case I found involves a man called Ċensu Arpa who, on seeing one of the British marines shoot on the Maltese, tried to calm down the crowd and quell panic by shouting the words: "That was a shot in the air." On the basis of these words he was accused of inciting the riot and was convicted to one year imprisonment with hard labour. Another case concerns a person who on 23 September 1919 was convicted by the Martial Court to five years imprisonment with hard labour. This was a man named Ċikku Debattista from Ħal Qormi, a coachman aged 33, who was convicted for being present and not doing his utmost to stop the riot. This shows that the authorities were not seeking to establish what really happened, but to shift the blame unto the Maltese people. It is indeed disgraceful that the Maltese people had to endure such treatment.

This underlines the importance of our presence here today; so that history may guide us to improve our ways and be better representatives of our people. The Maltese people deserve democratic leadership where the truth is told and which is characterised by a transparent legislative

SPEECH ON THE OCCASION OF THE SETTE GIUGNO (CONT.)

mechanism. Our work must always be performed in an open manner, and I am satisfied that during the past year we have taken important steps in this direction. 4 May was an important milestone; following the move to the new premises, which are equipped with modern facilities allowing Parliament to operate in a more transparent manner, Parliamentary sittings started being broadcast live, audiovisually and in real time, on Parliament's website and on television.

This was an important step, but it is not sufficient. The next objective is for Parliament to have its own free-to-air television station, so that all those who want to exercise their right to follow parliamentary democracy in action would not be dependent on a TV subscription. Consequently, the Parliamentary TV Channel must also be available on a free-to-air basis since the right to follow parliamentary democracy in our country should not be conditional. The infrastructure already exists, the free-to-air platform operated by GO is in place, a television channel is available, and therefore this channel should be assigned immediately to the country's highest institution in order to further consolidate the level of transparency of parliamentary democracy in our country. I therefore appeal to the relevant authorities to ensure immediate access to this facility which, I repeat, our people should have as a matter of right.

Last year, during this activity, I had mentioned that on 21 May 2014, exactly the day after the First Reading of the Bill on Standards in Public Life was moved and adopted in Parliament, the Chair tabled a report on Parliament's administrative autonomy which was drawn up by an internal commission which I had personally appointed on 16 April 2014. This report was accompanied by a Parliamentary Service Bill which was intended as a basis for discussion for a legislative act in this regard. Both the Parliamentary Service Bill and the Standards in Public Life Bill are imperative for Parliament to continue moving forward. It is necessary to persevere in our efforts to further strengthen our credibility as Members of the House, since the credibility of the country's highest institution is a reflection of the credibility of each and every one of us.

In this regard I would like to state that our Parliament has not held back on this matter of transparency and accountability, even in international parliamentary fora. I am referring to my participation in the 66th GRECO plenary session – GRECO being the Group of States Against Corruption within the Council of Europe – where with the assistance of Attorney General Dr Peter Grech and Deputy Attorney General Dr Donatella Frendo Dimech, I had the opportunity to reply to a number of questions while examining what measures can be adopted for the prevention of any type of corruption by Members of Parliament.

During the course of this I have also, in my role as Speaker of the House, participated in a conference dealing with how the Commonwealth can remain relevant in present times. In this regard, during an activity held at the UK Parliament on 4 February of this year, I argued that:

> "As part of a wider Commonwealth reform, to which I will return shortly, I feel that for this organization to be a true promoter and guardian of the rights of its citizens as set out in the Harare Declaration, it requires a centralized organ responsible for ensuring the respect of these set of core values across all its territories. Two models come to my mind namely:
>
> One based on the United Nations human rights Council which would be responsible for strengthening the promotion and protection of Human Rights in the member countries and for addressing situations of human rights violations and make recommendations on them; or
>
> based on the Council of European Court of Human Rights, with which individuals or group of individuals could lodge their complaints against Member States on breaches of Human Rights issues not satisfactoraly resolved in the home country."

This is a clear example of how the Maltese Parliament speaks on behalf of citizens in international fora with the aim of investigating mechanisms whereby citizens' right to redress may be strengthened.

Much remains to be done to continue improving the level of transparency and accountability of each and every one of us towards the people we represent. For instance, I believe that the time has come to address issues which arise when citizens feel aggrieved by statements made about them in Parliament, and to establish a mechanism which grants citizens a right of redress. This obviously needs to be done without impinging on Parliamentary rights and privileges, since these are intended to allow Members of Parliament to speak without fear. On the other hand we must ensure that this privilege is not abused of in the country's highest institution, and in this regard I believe that the time has arrived to start looking at models which address this issue. Furthermore, within the framework of the ongoing exercise to review the Standing Orders of the House of Representatives, we need to ensure that we introduce regulations which bestow greater dignity to this Parliament, even in which each Member addresses the House.

With the move to the new Parliament building, designed by the renowned architect Renzo Piano, we have made a positive step forward in the relationship between Parliament and the public. This is due to the fact that when meeting people from all walks of life who come to visit this new building, we are taking the opportunity to explain to them the work carried out by their representatives, both in plenary and committee sittings. We are encouraging people from all the sectors of society to come closer to Parliament, by providing an area where they can exhibit their work. In fact the first exhibition, which is still ongoing, was set up by residents of the Corradino Correctional Facility. The aim of this exhibition was precisely to show that the Parliament building is open to all, while also sending a message to the inmates that they still form part of society.

During this week Parliament also contributed towards supporting inter-parliamentary work by hosting in Malta, in conjunction with the UK Branch of the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association, the 5th Westminster Workshop for public accounts committees within the Commonwealth. The theme for this Workshop was 'Effective, Independent & Transparent Public Accounts Committees for Robust Public Financial Oversight'. It is worth adding that this was the first time that this Workshop was held outside the United Kingdom. The theme addresses a very important function and role of a parliament in a democratic country, namely that of scrutinising the Executive's operations, in particular in connection with government finances. The Commonwealth Association of Public Accounts Committees (CAPAC) was also set up during the same Workshop, following a resolution adopted in 2013 by the Commonwealth Heads of Government, calling for the strengthening of public accounts committees within the Commonwealth as recognition of the importance of good governance within a democracy.

We have achieved significant progress, but we can still do much more. We have no reason to feel discouraged; we need to continue exploring ways to constantly improve our work. Each Member of Parliament and all those who work for this institution are duty bound to continue giving their contribution so that the Maltese Parliament can satisfy the ever-increasing hopes and expectations of the Maltese people.

Attivitajiet tal-Parlament

Żjara minn delegazzjoni tal-Kunsill Leġiżlattiv tal-Istat ta' Victoria

Fid-29 ta' April, l-Ispeaker Anġlu Farrugia u l-Whip tal-Gvern, l-Onor. Godfrey Farrugia, il-Whip tal-Oppożizzjoni, l-Onor. David Agius, il-Ministru għall-Familja u Solidarjetà Soċjali, l-Onor. Michael Farrugia, l-Onor. Claudette Buttigieg, l-Onor. Joseph Cassar u l-Onor. George Pullicino, membri tal-Grupp Konġunt ta' Ħbiberija Interparlamentari bejn Malta u l-Awstralja, laqgħu żjara ta' korteżija mill-Onor. Bruce Atkinson, President tal-Kunsill Leġiżlattiv tal-Istat Awstraljan ta' Victoria u mill-Onor. Wendy Lovell MLC, Whip tal-Oppożizzjoni fil-Kunsill.

Istituzzjonijiet eċċellenti u r-rabtiet mill-qrib tal-komunità li jeżistu bejn iż-żewġ pajjiżi kienu enfasizzati matul il-laqgħa. Saret referenza wkoll għal-laqgħat bilaterali li saru sa mill-bidu tat-12-il Leġiżlatura, inkluża żjara ta' korteżija mill-Grupp Konġunt ta' Ħbiberija li saret f'Lulju 2013 u żjarat fl-Awstralja mill-Ispeaker Anġlu Farrugia f'Settembru 2013 u f'Jannar 2014. Il-membri preżenti tkellmu wkoll dwar il-5 Westminster Workshop tal-Kumitati tal-Kontijiet Pubbliċi li nżammet f'Malta f'Ġunju 2015 u l-Laqgħa tal-Kapijiet tal-Gvern tal-Commonwealth (CHOGM) li se ssir ukoll f'Malta f'Novembru 2015. Il-Membri preżenti fil-laqgħa tkellmu dwar diversi kwistjonijiet fosthom il-migrazzjoni; l-użu tat-teknoloġija u l-media biex itejbu r-rabtiet bejn iż-żewġ pajjiżi; kollaborazzjoni fil-qasam tal-isport; liġi Awstraljana riċenti li jista' jkollha impatt negattiv fuq pensjonanti Awstraljani li joqogħdu f'Malta u li jiddeċiedu li jmorru lura lejn il-pajjiż ta' oriġini tagħhom għal perjodu twil; kif ukoll l-importanza tal-promozzjoni ta' Malta bħala pjattaforma fejn kumpaniji Awstraljani jistgħu jistabbilixxu ruħhom fl-Unjoni Ewropea.

Żjara mill-Ispeaker tal-Kamra tad-Deputati Rumena

Nhar id-29 ta' April, l-Ispeaker Anġlu Farrugia rċieva delegazzjoni mill-Kamra tad-Deputati Rumena, immexxija mill-President Valeriu Ştefan Zgonea u magħmul mid-deputati Mihai Diaconu, Gliga Vasile, is-Senatur Rozália Biro u d-Direttur-Ġenerali tal-Kabinett tal-Ispeaker, is-Sja Adelina Palade.

Iż-żewġ naħat irrimarkaw li Malta u r-Rumanija jgawdu relazzjonijiet bilaterali eċċellenti, speċjalment mill-istabbiliment tar-relazzjonijiet diplomatiċi fl-1968, li komplew jitjiebu bħala riżultat tal-isħubija fl-UE. L-Ispeaker Farrugia rrimarka li l-momentum miksub fil-kummerċ bilaterali jista' jitjieb aktar, u li ż-żewġ naħat għandhom jesploraw mezzi kif jistgħu jikkollaboraw dwar kwistjonijiet relatati mal-edukazzjoni u t-turiżmu. Iż-żewġ naħat qablu li għandu jitfassal Memorandum ta' Ftehim bejn il-parlamenti ta' Malta, tar-Rumanija u pajjiż tal-Balkani tal-Punent, possibbilment l-Albanija, u li għandu jsir aktar xogħol biex din il-possibbiltà tkun esplorata fil-futur qarib. L-Ispeaker Anġlu Farrugia qal li Malta hija lesta li tagħti l-assistenza teknika kollha meħtieġa sabiex ir-Rumanija tkun tista' tikkwalifika għall-isħubija fiż-żona Schengen. Min-naħa tiegħu, il-President Valeriu Stefan Zgonea qal li r-Rumanija se tappoġġja l-isforzi ta' Malta biex tkun indirizzata l-kwestjoni tal-immigrazzjoni irregolari u l-problemi tat-traffikar tal-bnedmin fil-Mediterran.

Visit by a delegation of the Legislative Council of the State of Victoria

On 29 April, Speaker Anġlu Farrugia and Government Whip, Hon. Godfrey Farrugia, Opposition Whip, Hon. David Agius, Minister for the Family and Social Solidarity, Hon. Michael Farrugia, Hon. Claudette Buttigieg, Hon. Joseph Cassar and Hon. George Pullicino, Members of the Malta-Australia Joint Parliamentary Friendship Group, received a courtesy visit by Hon. Bruce Atkinson, President of the Legislative Council of the Australian State of Victoria and Wendy Lovell MLC, Opposition Whip in the Council.

The excellent relations and close community links that exist between the two countries were highlighted during the meeting. Reference was made to the bilateral meetings held since the beginning of the 12th Legislature, including a courtesy visit by the Joint Parliamentary Friendship Group which took place in July 2013 and visits to Australia by Speaker Anġlu Farrugia in September 2013 and in January 2014. The members present also made reference to the 5th Westminster Workshop of Public Accounts Committees which was held in Malta in June 2015 and the Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting (CHOGM) which will also be held in Malta in November 2015. The Members discussed several other issues including migration; the use of technology and the media to enhance the links between the two countries; collaboration in the area of sport; a recent Australian law with potential negative impact on Australian pensioners residing in Malta who decide to go back to their country of origin for a long period; as well as the importance of marketing Malta as a platform where Australian companies could establish themselves in the EU.

Visit by the Speaker of the Romanian Chamber of Deputies

On the 29 April, Speaker Anġlu Farrugia received a delegation from the Romanian Chamber of Deputies, led by President Valeriu Ștefan Zgonea and made up of Deputy Mihai Diaconu, Deputy Gliga Vasile, Senator Rozalia Biro and Director-General of the Cabinet of the Speaker, Ms Adelina Palade.

Both sides remarked that Malta and Romania enjoy excellent bilateral relations, especially since the establishment of diplomatic relations in 1968, which further improved as a result of EU membership. Speaker Farrugia remarked that the momentum gained in bilateral trade can be further improved, and that both sides can explore ways of collaborating on issues related to education and tourism. Both sides agreed that a Memorandum of Understanding between the parliaments of Malta, Romania and a Western Balkan country, possibly Albania, should be drawn up and that more work should be done to explore this possibility in the near future. Speaker Anġlu Farrugia said that Malta is ready to give all necessary technical assistance to Romania to assist it in its efforts to qualify for Schengen Membership and President Stefan Zgonea said that Romania will be supportive of Malta's efforts to tackle the irregular immigration and human trafficking problems in the Mediterranean.

Attivitajiet tal-Parlament (Kont.)

Żjara mill-Ispeaker tal-Parlament tal-Ġeorġja

Fl-20 ta' Mejju, l-Ispeaker Anġlu Farrugia rċieva żjara ta' korteżija mill-President tal-Parlament tal-Ġeorġja, David Usupashvili. Iż-żewġ dinjitarji tkellmu dwar ir-relazzjonijiet eċċellenti li jeżistu bejn Malta u l-Ġeorġja. L-Ispeaker Farrugia rrimarka li Malta kienet fost l-ewwel pajjiżi li rratifikaw Ftehim ta' Assoċjazzjoni tal-UE mal-Ġeorġja. Huwa rrimarka li l-kollaborazzjoni hija importanti ħafna għal stati żgħar bħal Malta u l-Ġeorġja, u żied li Malta issa għandha l-benefiċċju ta' aktar minn għaxar snin esperjenza ta' sħubija fl-UE li tista' taqsam mal-Ġeorġja. David Usupashvili rrimarka li l-iskambji dwar kwistjonijiet ta' interess reċiproku fil-livell parlamentari huma ideali sabiex tingħata spinta lill-ħidma li qed issir mill-Eżekuttiv dwar l-istess kwistjonijiet. Iż-żewġ naħat qablu li f'dan l-istadju, il-pass li jmiss għandu jkun li jiġi stabbilit Grupp Konġunt ta' Ħbiberija Interparlamentari bejn Malta u l-Ġeorġja sabiex iż-żewġ naħat ikollhom aġenda komuni dwar kwistjonijiet ta' interess komuni, speċjalment issa li l-ftehim ta' assoċjazzjoni ġie rratifikat.

Il-11-il Sessjoni tal-EkoSkola

Fis-27 ta' Mejju, aktar minn 150 student minn skejjel differenti ħadu sehem fil-11-il sessjoni tal-EkoSkola li nżammet fil-Parlament. Din is-sessjoni kienet ippreseduta mill-Ispeaker tal-Kamra tad-Deputati, l-Onor. Anġlu Farrugia, li sema' u laqa' l-proposti tal-istudenti dwar il- Għanijiet ta' Żvilupp tal-Millennju.

L-Ispeaker Anġlu Farrugia qal li l-ħidma favur il-paċi għandha tkun il-pedament jekk verament nemmnu li rridu nindirizzaw il-problemi u l-kriżijiet li qed jiffaċċjaw diversi persuni, l-aktar dawk li qed isofru l-faqar.

Visit by the Speaker of the Georgian Parliament

On 20 May Speaker Anġlu Farrugia received a courtesy visit by the Chairman of the Parliament of Georgia, David Usupashvili. The two dignitaries spoke about the excellent relations that exist between Malta and Georgia. Speaker Farrugia remarked that Malta was among the first countries to ratify the EU's Association Agreement with Georgia. He remarked that collaboration is very important for small states like Malta and Georgia, and added that Malta now has the benefit of more than ten years experience of EU membership which it can share. David Usupashvili remarked that exchanges at parliamentary level on issues of mutual interest are ideally placed to give an added impetus to the work being done by the Executive on the same issues. Both sides agreed that at this juncture, the next step should be the establishment of a Georgia-Malta Parliamentary Friendship Group in order for both sides to have a common agenda on issues of mutual interest, especially now that the association agreement has been ratified.

11th Edition of EkoSkola

On 27 May more than 150 students from different schools took part in the 11th session of EkoSkola which was hosted by Parliament. This session was chaired by Speaker Anġlu Farrugia, who heard and welcomed the proposals of the students concerning the Millennium Development Goals.

Speaker Angelo Farrugia reiterated that if we really believe that we have to address the problems and crises being faced by many people, especially those who suffer from poverty, our work has to be founded on peace.

Attivitajiet tal-Parlament (Kont.)

Il-Ħames Westminster Workshop tal-Kumitati dwar il-Kontijiet Pubbliċi

Fl-1 ta' Ġunju, l-Ispeaker Anġlu Farrugia fetaħ il-Ħames Westminster Workshop li kien organizzat f'Malta mill-Fergħa tar-Renju Unit tal-Commonwealth Parliamentary Association (CPA) u l-Parlament ta' Malta.

Il-parteċipanti fil-Workshop ħadu sehem f'sessjonijiet differenti dwar ix-xogħol tal-kumitati tal-kontijiet pubbliċi u approvaw ukoll il- Kostituzzjoni tal-Assoċjazzjoni tal-Kumitati tal-Kontijiet Pubbliċi tal-Commonwealth (CAPAC). L-Onor. Tonio Fenech, Chairperson tal-Kumitat dwar il-Kontijiet Pubbliċi tal-Parlament Malti kien elett President tal-Kumitat Eżekuttiv tal-CAPAC. Is-sessjoni tal-għeluq ta' dan il-Workshop inżammet fis-sala plenarja tal-Parlament Malti.

Tnedija tal-Kumitat għall-Għarfien tal-Kostituzzjoni Maltija

Fit-3 ta’ Ġunju, fil-Parlament, ġie mħabbar it-twaqqif tal-Kumitat għall-għarfien tal-Kostituzzjoni Maltija. L-Ispeaker Anġlu Farrugia spjega li dan il-Kumitat ser jagħmel lill-poplu aktar konxju tal-kontenut tal-Kostituzzjoni ta’ Malta u se jgħin sabiex l-istess poplu jkun jista’ jagħti l-kontribut tiegħu dwar xi tibdiliet li jidhirlu li hemm bżonn għal din l-ogħla liġi tal-pajjiż. Il-Kumitat, immexxi minn Dr Franco Debono, hu magħmul mill-Prof. Oliver Friggieri, il-Prof. Ray Mangion, ir-Rev. Prof. Saviour Chircop, l-Avukati Austin Bencini, Veronique Dalli u Aron Mifsud Bonnici, Dott. Andrew Azzopardi u s-Sur Trevor Żahra. L-Ispeaker irringrazzja lill-membri tal-Kumitat u awgura li l-ħidma tagħhom tissarraf f’aktar għarfien tal-istess Parlament peress li din l-Istituzzjoni hija mwaqqfa mill-Kostituzzjoni ta’ Malta.

5th Westminster Workshop of Public Accounts Committees

On 1 June, Speaker Anġlu Farrugia opened the 5th Westminster Workshop which was organised in Malta by the United Kingdom Branch of the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association (CPA UK Branch) and the Parliament of Malta.

The participants attending the Workshop took part in various sessions concerning the work of public accounts committees and also approved the Commonwealth Association of Public Accounts Committees (CAPAC) Constitution. Hon. Tonio Fenech, Chairperson of the Public Accounts Committee of the Maltese Parliament was elected Chair of the Executive Committee of CAPAC. The closing session of this Workshop was held in the plenary hall of the Maltese Parliament.

Launch of the Committee on Knowledge of the Constitution

On 3 June the establishment of the Committee on knowledge of the Constitution was announced in a press conference held in the Parliament building. Speaker Anġlu Farrugia explained that the Committee aims to make the people more aware of the content of the Constitution of Malta and will enable the same people to give their input with regard to any changes they think are needed to this supreme law of the country. The Committee, chaired by Dr Franco Debono, is made of Prof. Oliver Friggieri, Prof. Ray Mangion, Rev. Prof. Saviour Chircop, and lawyers Austin Bencini, Veronique Dalli and Aaron Mifsud Bonnici, Dr Andrew Azzopardi and Mr Trevor Żahra. The Speaker thanked the members of the Committee and augured that their work will result in greater awareness about Parliament in view of the fact that the institution is itself established by the Constitution of Malta.

Attivitajiet tal-Parlament (Kont.)

Ċerimonja tal-Kommemorazzjoni tas-Sette Giugno

Bħal kull sena, il-Parlament ta' Malta ċċelebra l-avvenimenti tas-Sette Giugno, b'ċerimonja li din is-sena nżammet fil-5 ta Ġunju quddiem il-monument tas-Sette Giugno li jinsab fil-ġonna ta' Hastings. Waqt id-diskors tiegħu, l-Ispeaker Anġlu Farrugia semma' r-rabta bejn dawn l-avvenimenti u l-istorja tal-Parlament Malti u qal kif hu tal-fehma li l-monument tas-Sette Giugno għandu jiġi rilokat eqreb lejn il-bini tal-Parlament. L-Ispeaker ta rendikont tal-avvenimenti li seħħew fis-7 ta' Ġunju 1919, kif ġew irrapportati fid-diversi inkjesti li saru, u l-mod ta' kif riżultat tagħhom żvolġiet l-istorja politika f'Malta. Waqt li saħaq li l-poplu Malti ma kienx ħaqqu jgħaddi minn dawn l-affarijiet, qal li l-istorja għandha tgħallimna kif nistgħu mmexxu aħjar, b'iktar trasparenza u kontabilità. L-Ispeaker qal li jinsab soddisfatt bil-passi tajbin li għamel il-Parlament Malti f'din l-aħħar sena, kemm fuq livell nazzjonali kif ukoll fuq dak internazzjonali u temm jgħid li kull min qiegħed fil-Parlament Malti jew jaħdem f'din l-istituzzjoni, irid ikompli jagħmel ħiltu biex jintlaħqu t-tamiet u l-aspettattivi tal-poplu Malti.

Wirja ta' xogħlijiet ta' priġunieri

Bejn l-1 u t-13 ta' Ġunju nżammet l-ewwel wirja fil-binja tal-Parlament, li kienet tikonsisti f'ġabra ta' għaxar settijiet ta' purtieri, bit-titlu 'Imħabba, Tama u Maħfra', magħmula mir-residenti tal-Faċilità Korrettiva ta' Kordin. Fil-messaġġ tal-ftuħ lil dawk preżenti, l-Ispeaker Anġlu Farrugia qal li din il-wirja hija l-ewwel waħda tax-xorta tagħha f'Malta għaliex saret minn persuni li m'għandhomx il-libertà. Il-Ministru għall-Intern u s-Sigurtà Nazzjonali, l-Onor. Carmelo Abela, il-Ministru għall-Familja u Solidarjetà Soċjali, l-Onor. Michael Farrugia, u s-Sja Michelle Muscat kienu wkoll preżenti għall-ftuħ ta' din il-wirja.

Rapport tal-Grupp ta' Ħidma Parlamentari dwar id-Dijabete

Fit-22 ta' Mejju l-Grupp ta' Ħidma Parlamentari dwar id-Dijabete (PWGD) ippreżenta rapport eżekuttiv bl-isem 'Prevention and Healthy Living with Diabetes' bħala kontribut lejn il-Politika Nazzjonali dwar id-Dijabete. Ir-rapport huwa addendum għar-rapport 'Health Choices' ippubblikat mill-istess Grupp ta' Ħidma f'Ottubru 2014 u huwa r-riżultat ta' proċess konsultattiv li sar ma' diversi partijiet interessati inkluż akkademiċi, professjonisti mediċi, il-komunità kummerċjali u persuni dijabetiċi stess matul tlettax-il laqgħa tal-Grupp ta' Ħidma. Il-Grupp ta' Ħidma jemmen li għandu jkun hemm politika li taħseb għall-prevenzjoni tad-dijabete f'dijabetiċi potenzjali; li għandu jingħata trattament f'waqtu lil kull pazjent; li għandu jkun hemm approċċ koordinat bejn il-professjonisti tas-saħħa; u tiżgura l-potenzjal sħiħ tal-ispejjeż tat-trattament li jtejbu l-ħajja ta' persuni dijabetiċi. Il-kontribuzzjoni tipproponi suġġerimenti maħsuba biex jottimizzaw inizjattivi li jipprovdu appoġġ ħolistiku permezz ta' sistema ta' kura tas-saħħa li qed tevolvi, iggwidata mill-aħjar prattiki.

Parliamentary Activities (Cont.)

Sette Giugno Commemoration Ceremony

On 5 June the Maltese Parliament commemorated the events of the Sette Giugno, in a ceremony which is an annual event in the parliamentary calendar. During his speech at the foot of the Sette Giugno monument in the Hastings Gardens, Speaker Anġlu Farrugia mentioned the link between these events and the history of the Maltese Parliament, and said that he believes that the Sette Giugno monument should be relocated nearer the Parliament building. The Speaker gave an account of the events which took place on 7 June 1919, as they had been reported in various inquiries conducted at the time, and how Malta's political history evolved as a result of these events. Stressing that the Maltese people did not deserve this treatment, he said that history should teach us how to be better leaders, and subject to more transparency and accountability. The Speaker said that he is satisfied with the advances made by the Maltese Parliament in the last year, both at national as well as international level, and he said that whoever is elected to the Maltese Parliament or works for the institution, must continue to strive to meet the hopes and expectations of the Maltese people.

Exhibition of works by prison inmates

The first exhibition in the Parliament building entitled 'Love, Hope and Forgiveness', was organised between 1 and 13 June. The items on display consisted of a collection of curtains sewn by a number of inmates of the Corradino Correctional Facility. In his address at the opening of the exhibition, Speaker Anġlu Farrugia said that this exhibition is the first of its kind in Malta because it displayed the work of those who do not have freedom. The Minister for Home Affairs and National Security, Hon. Carmelo Abela, Minister for the Family and Social Solidarity, Hon. Michael Farrugia and Mrs Michelle Muscat were also present for the opening of this exhibition.

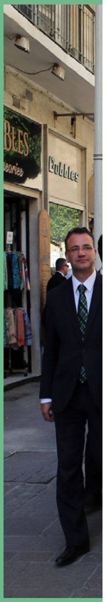
Report of the Parliamentary Working Group on Diabetes

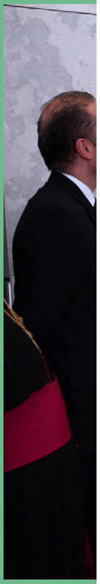
On 22 May Speaker Anġlu Farrugia tabled an executive brief on the subject of 'Prevention and Healthy Living with Diabetes' as a contribution towards the National Policy on Diabetes prepared by the Parliamentary Working Group on Diabetes (PWGD). The brief is an addendum to the 'Health Choices' report published by the same Working Group in October 2014 and is the result of a consultative process that took place with various stakeholders including academics, medical professionals, the commercial community and the diabetics themselves during thirteen parliamentary working group sessions. The Working Group believes in having a policy that caters for prevention of diabetes in potential diabetics; giving timely treatment to each patient; having a coordinated approach between healthcare professionals; and ensuring the full potential of treatment costs to improve the lives of diabetics. The contribution puts forward suggestions intended to optimise initiatives that provide holistic support through an evolving health care delivery system guided by best practices.

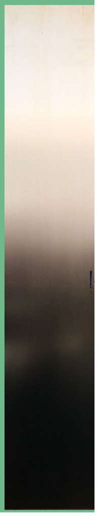
Attivitajiet tal-Parlament (Kont.)

Ftuħ uffiċjali tal-bini l-ġdid Parlament

L-inawgurazzjoni tal-bini l-ġdid tal-Parlament seħħet fl-4 ta' Mejju fiż-żona bejn il-Blokka tas-Sala u l-Blokka tal-Amministrazzjoni. L-Ispeaker Anġlu Farrugia u l-Membri tal-Parlament ħallew is-Sala tal-Palazz tal-Gran Mastri, li serviet bħala l-post fejn iltaqgħet il-Kamra tad-Deputati sa mill-1976, u mxew flimkien lejn il-binja l-ġdida. F'ċerimonja simbolika, ir-responsabbiltà għas-sigurtà tal-Parlament għaddiet mingħand il-Forzi Armati ta' Malta għal għand il-Korp tal-Pulizija. L-Ispeaker Anġlu Farrugia u l-President Marie Louise Coleiro Preca kixfu plakka kommemorattiva. Fid-diskors tiegħu, l-Ispeaker Anġlu Farrugia qal li din kienet l-ewwel darba fl-istorja tiegħu li l-Parlament kellu l-bini tiegħu stess li minnu jista' jwettaq ix-xogħol tiegħu, u ddeskriva dan l-avveniment bħala pass importanti lejn l-awtonomija sħiħa tal-Parlament. Il-President Coleiro Preca enfasizzat il-ħtieġa għar-rispett bejn il-Membri Parlamentari u qalet li l-Parlament għandu jkun il-vuċi ta' kulħadd, inkluż tal-gruppi ta' minoranza.L-ewwel Seduta fil-bini il-ġdid saret ukoll dakinhar, ftit wara ċ-ċerimonja tal-ftuħ. Din is-seduta ġiet video-streamed live fuq il-websajt tal-Parlament u għall-ewwel darba ġiet imxandra fuq il-kanal tat-televiżjoni tal-Parlament.







Parliamentary Activities (Cont.)

Official opening of the new Parliament building

The inauguration of the new Parliament building took place on 4 May in the area between the Chamber Block and the Administration Block. Speaker Anġlu Farrugia and the Members of Parliament left the Chamber in the Grand Masters' Palace, which served as the meeting place of the House of Representatives since 1976, and walked together towards the new building. In a symbolic ceremony, the responsibility for the security of Parliament was handed over from the Armed Forces of Malta to the Police Force. A commemorative plaque was unveiled by Speaker Anġlu Farrugia and President Marie Louise Coleiro Preca. In his speech, Speaker Anġlu Farrugia said that this was the first time that Parliament had its own building from which it could carry out its work, and described this event as an important step towards the full autonomy of Parliament. President Coleiro Preca emphasized the need for respect between members of Parliament and said that Parliament should be the voice for all people, including minority groups. The first Sitting in the new building was held on the same day, shortly after the opening ceremony, which was also video-streamed live on the parliamentary website and broadcast on the parliamentary TV channel for the first time.

Attivitajiet tal-Parlament (Kont.)

Open days fil-Parlament

Is-Sibt 6 ta' Ġunju u l-Ħadd 7 ta' Ġunju, il-Parlament kien miftuħ għall-pubbliku li xtaq iżur il-binja l-ġdida tal-Parlament biex jara mill-qrib il-faċilitajiet li toffri, u jsir jaf iktar dwar il-ħidma li ssir f'din l-Istituzzjoni. F'dawn il-jumejn il-pubbliku kellu wkoll l-opportunità jara l-wirja ta' xogħlijiet magħmula minn residenti tal-Faċilità Korrettiva ta' Kordin. Fis-6 ta' Ġunju, l-Ispeaker nieda wkoll ktieb bl-isem Winning People's Hearts, xogħol ta' Paul A. Bartolo, li jittratta d-demokrazija f'Malta u li jinkludi analiżi tal-kampanja elettorali li wasslet għall-elezzjoni ġenerali tal-2013.

Rapport tal-Kumitat Konġunt dwar id-Donazzjoni tal-Organi

Il-kumitati permanenti dwar l-Affarijiet Soċjali u dwar is-Saħħa ppreżentaw rapport li jittratta d-donazzjoni tal-organi. Dan ir-rapport sar wara li ż-żewġ kumitati, b'mod konġunt, iltaqgħu ma' numru ta' esperti f'dan il-qasam sabiex jifhmu aħjar kif taħdem is-sistema preżenti, x'nuqqasijiet hemm u x'titjib jista' jsir.

Fl-aħħar laqgħa tiegħu, il-Kumitat Konġunt iddiskuta r-rapport u ra wkoll dak li qed ikun propost mill-Gvern fil-White Paper li saret fuq l-istess suġġett. Fl-istess laqgħa, il-Kumitat konġunt approva numru ta' rakkomandazzjonijiet li ġew inklużi fir-rapport, fosthom illi d-dikjarazzjoni ta' kull persuna, jekk tixtieqx tagħti l-organi tagħha jew le, titniżżel f'reġistru elettroniku u għandha tiġi rispettata wara l-mewt tal-persuna. Dan ir-rapport tqiegħed fuq il-Mejda tal-Kamra nhar l-20 ta' Mejju u kopja tiegħu ngħatat lis-Segretarju Parlamentari għas-Saħħa, l-Onor. Chris Fearne, bħala kontribuzzjoni għall-konsultazzjoni pubblika li saret dwar id-donazzjoni tal-organi.

Wirja ta' skulturi mill-Artist Philippe Agius

It-tieni wirja li ttellgħet fil-binja tal-Parlament kienet tal-artist Philippe Agius u kienet tikkonsisti f'biċċiet ta' arti skulturati, li ħafna minnhom huma ispirati minn postijiet storiċi f'Malta, fosthom il-Palazz tal-Inkwiżitur, it-Tempjji ta' Ħaġar Qim, l-Ipoġew ta' Ħal Saflieni, it-Tempji Neolitiċi u l-Katakombi tar-Rabat. Fil-messaġġ tiegħu fil-ftuħ tal-wirja, l-Ispeaker Anġlu Farrugia qal li ma hemmx għalfejn tkun famuż jew persuna importanti fil-ħajja, l-importanti huwa li l-messaġġ tiegħek jasal għand min għandu jasal kif preċiżament għandu jasal, u dan huwa proprju l-messaġġ tal-artist Philppe Agius lil dawk neqsin mid-dawl, li lejhom hija indirizzata din il-wirja. Il-wirja kienet miftuħa għall-pubbliku bejn 22 ta' Ġunju u l-5 ta' Lulju.

Open days in Parliament

On Saturday 6 June and Sunday 7 June, the new Parliament building was open to the public who wished to visit the new building in order to see what facilities were available and to find out more about the work done in this Institution. During these days the public also had the opportunity to see the exhibition by residents of the Corradino Correctional Facility. On 6 June, the Speaker also launched a book by Paul A. Bartolo Winning People's Hearts, dealing with democracy in Malta and includes an analysis of the electoral campaign leading to the general election of 2013.

Report of the Joint Committee on Organ donation

The standing committees on Social Affairs and Health submitted a report dealing with organ donation. This report was made after the two committees, jointly, met with a number of experts in the field to better understand how the current system works, what deficiencies there are and what improvements can be made. In its last meeting, the Joint Committee discussed the report and also considered what was proposed by the Government in the White Paper on the same subject. During the same meeting, the Joint Committee approved a number of recommendations that were included in the report, including that the declaration of every person, stating whether it wishes to donate its organs or not, be entered in an electronic register, and is to be respected on the person's death. This report was tabled in the House on 20 May and a copy was given to the Parliamentary Secretary for Health, Hon. Chris Fearne, as a contribution to the public consultation on organ donation.

Sculpture exhibition by Artist Philippe Agius

The second exhibition set up at the Parliament building was by artist Philippe Agius. The exhibition consisted of a number of artefacts, many of which are inspired by historical places in Malta, including the Inquisitor's Palace, Ħaġar Qim Temples, the Hypogeum of Ħal Saflieni, the Neolithic Temples and the Catacombs of Rabat. In his message at the opening of the exhibition, Speaker Anġlu Farrugia said that one need not be famous or an important person in life, the important thing is that your message reaches those to whom it was intended; and this is precisely the message of the artist to visually impaired persons, to whom this exhibition is addressed. The exhibition was open to the public between 22 June and 5 July.

Attivitajiet tal-Parlament (Kont.)

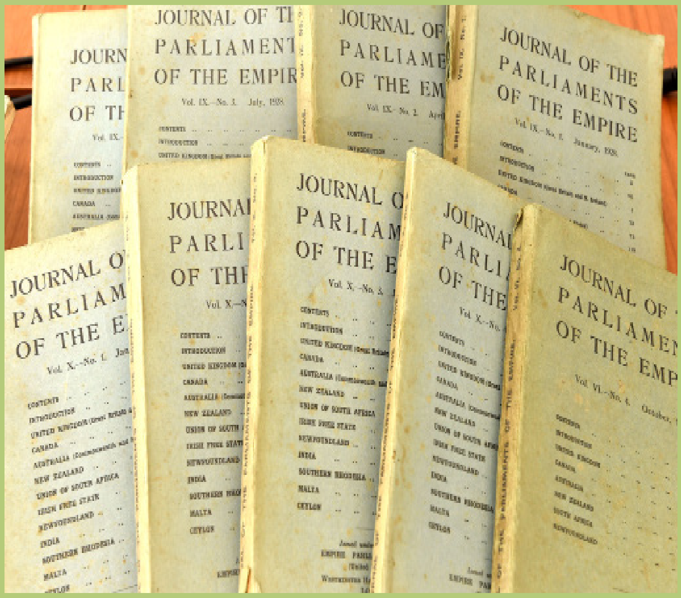
DONAZZJONI TA' KOTBA LILL-PARLAMENT

Fl-10 ta' Ġunju, il-President Emeritu Dr Ugo Mifsud Bonnici ppreżenta kollezzjoni ta' rivisti lill-Ispeaker Anġlu Farrugia, li kien akkumpanjat mill-Whips taż-żewġ naħat tal-Kamra, l-Onor. Godfrey Farrugia u l-Onor. David Agius. Din il-kollezzjoni tinkludi 32 ħarġa tar-rivista *Journal of the Parliaments of The Empire,* sitt ħarġiet tal-*Journal of the Parliaments of The Commonwealth*, żewġ ħarġiet ta' *Parliamentary Affairs*, 15-il ħarġa tar-rivista *Report on World Affairs*, erba' ħarġiet tal-*Aussen Politik* u ħarġa tal-*UN Monthly Chronicle*, illi issa tqiegħdu fil-librerija tal-Parlament. Parti minn din il-kollezzjoni kienet proprjetà tal-Prof. Carmelo Mifsud Bonnici (li kien Deputat bejn l-1923 u l-1933) u l-kumplament tar-rivisti kienu jappartjenu lill-President Emeritu nnifsu (li serva bħala Deputat mill-1966 sal-1994). L-Ispeaker irringrazzja lill-President Emeritu li għoġbu jagħti din il-kollezzjoni bħala donazzjoni lill-Parlament ta' Malta u rrefera għal numru ta' rivisti, li permezz tagħhom il-ħidma ta' membri parlamentari Maltin inxterdet mal-erba' rjiħat tal-Imperu Ingliż.

LAQGĦA MA' MEMBRI TAL-KAMRA TAL-AVUKATI

Fit-12 ta' Ġunju l-Ispeaker laqa' numru ta' avukati membri tal-Kamra tal-Avukati u indirizzhom f'laqgħa li nżammet propja fis-Sala tal-Parlament. Huwa qal li għalih ma kinitx deċiżjoni faċli li jħalli l-professjoni ta' avukat iżda hu kien ħass li din kienet l-aħjar għażla sabiex ikunu evitati kunflitti ta' interess possibbli. L-Ispeaker qal li minbarra x-xogħol li jsir fil-plenarja, isir ukoll ħafna xogħol fil-kumitati. L-Ispeaker qal li ħafna mix-xogħol li jsir fil-Parlament jirrelata mal-ħajja ta' kuljum tal-istess avukati, peress illi l-liġijiet jiġu msawra f'din l-istituzzjoni.

DONATION OF BOOKS TO PARLIAMENT



On 10 June, President Emeritus Dr Ugo Mifsud Bonnici presented a collection of publications to Speaker Anġlu Farrugia, who was accompanied by the Whips of both sides of the House, Hon. Godfrey Farrugia and the Hon. David Agius. This collection includes 32 issues of the Journal of the Parliaments of The Empire, six issues of the Journal of the Parliaments of The Commonwealth, two issues of Parliamentary Affairs, 15 issues of the journal Report on World Affairs, four issues of Aussen Politik and one issue of the UN Monthly Chronicle, which have now been added to the parliamentary library. Part of this collection belonged to Prof. Carmelo Mifsud Bonnici (who was a Deputy from 1923 to 1933) and the rest of the publications belonged to the President Emeritus himself (who served as Deputy from 1966 to 1994). The Speaker thanked President Emeritus Mifsud Bonnici for donating this collection to the Parliament of Malta and referred to a number of publications, whereby the work of Maltese parliamentarians was spread across the British Empire.

MEETING WITH MEMBERS OF THE CHAMBER OF ADVOCATES

On 12 June the Speaker welcomed a number of lawyers from the Chamber of Advocates and addressed them in a meeting held in the parliamentary Chamber. He said that for him it was not an easy decision to give up his profession as a lawyer but he felt that this was the best decision in order to avoid any possible conflicts of interest.The Speaker said that in addition to the work carried out in the plenary, a lot of work was carried out in the committees. The Speaker said that a good part of the parliamentary work related to the lawyers' daily work, as Parliament is the place where laws are enacted.

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Malta għandha Parlament ġdid. Għalkemm l-inawgurazzjoni tiegħu ma waqqfitx il-kontroversji li akkumpanjaw dan il-proġett, huwa ġust li jingħad illi din wasslet għall-għeluq ta' dibattitu li kien ilu għaddej kważi 100 sena. Dan l-artiklu jixtarr dan id-dibattitu hekk kif seħħ fil-Parlament matul din il-medda kollha ta' snin. Ser naraw kif id-dibattitu beda sa mill-1921 meta r-Renju Unit ikkonċeda għall-ewwel darba lil Malta li jkollha Kostituzzjoni Responsabbli u naraw kif din kienet kwistjoni importanti sa mill-bidu nett. Qabel l-1921 Malta ma kellha l-ebda Parlament iżda Kunsill tal-Gvern żgħir taħt il-kontroll dirett tal-Gvernatur. Taħt il-Kostituzzjoni tal-1921, Malta kellu jkollha Parlament bikamerali magħmul minn Senat u minn Assemblea Leġiżlattiva.[i] Għaldaqstant, is-Sala tal-Arazzi li fiha kienu jsiru s-seduti tal-Kunsill kienet kemmxejn żgħira għal dan l-iskop. Għalhekk inħasset il-ħtieġa li jinstab post iktar adegwat.

Il-Parlament il-ġdid, kif innutat, kellu jikkonsisti f'żewġ Kmamar: is-Senat magħmul minn 17-il Membru li minnhom sebgħa biss kienu eletti mill-votanti, u Assemblea Leġiżlattiva ta' 32 membru eletti minn tmien distretti elettorali. Billi dak iż-żmien kien hemm sala waħda biss li kienet adegwata, is-seduti taż-żewġ Kmamar kellhom isiru fis-Sala tal-Arazzi li kienet kemmxejn żgħira u s-seduti taż-żewġ Kmamar kellhom isiru f'jiem differenti minn xulxin. Minbarra dan, kien hemm kumplikazzjoni oħra: il-Kostituzzjoni tal-1921 kienet tistabilixxi wkoll l-obbligu, illi f'ċerti ċirkostanzi, kellhom isiru seduti konġunti bejn is-Senat u l-Assemblea Leġiżlattiva u għaldaqstant il-problema tan-nuqqas ta' spazju kienet iktar akuta. U meta ż-żewġ Kmamar kienu obbligati li jiltaqgħu flimkien kellhom jintużaw żewġ swali differenti.[ii]

Għaldaqstant, ma kinetx xi ħaġa sorprendenti illi din il-kwistjoni ssemmiet sa mill-ewwel jum illi l-Parlament ta' Malta fetaħ għas-Senaturi u għall-Leġiżlaturi. Fil-fatt kien il-Gvernatur innifsu illi qajjem din il-kwistjoni meta lissen l-ewwel Diskors mit-Tron għas-seduta konġunta taż-żewġ Kmamar fit 3 ta' Novembru 1921 fis-sala ta' San Mikiel u San Ġorġ. Il-Gvernatur Plumer ma qagħadx jomgħod il-kliem: fisser li l-kwistjoni ta' spazju adegwat li seta' jippermetti liż-żewġ Kmamar jagħmlu xogħlhom sew kienet waħda urġenti. Huwa qal li s-Sala attwali setgħet isservi biss jekk iż-żewġ Kmamar setgħu jaslu għal ftehim bejniethom dwar l-użu tagħha. Huwa ħeġġeġ lill-Membri sabiex iqisu liema Kamra kellu jkollha s-Sala tagħha jew inkella jekk is-Senat u l-Assemblea kellhomx jiltaqgħu f'binjiet separati filwaqt li fakkarhom biex dejjem jikkonsidraw l-ispejjeż involuti. Huwa sejjaħ ukoll lill-membri taż-żewġ Kmamar sabiex iqisu liema tip ta' akkomodazzjoni jkun hemm bżonn sabiex il-Ministri jkunu jistgħu jaqdu dmirijiethom billi diġà kien ċar illi l-Membri Parlamentari kollha kienu tal-fehma illi l-faċilitajiet eżistenti ma kinux adegwati. Is-Sala tal-Arazzi ma setgħetx tilqa' b'mod komdu lill-Membri tal-Kamra, lir-rappreżentanti tal-midja u oħrajn preżenti minħabba ċ-ċokon tagħha hekk kif il-faċilitajiet għall-Ministri fil-Palazz kienu għadhom iridu jiġu vvintati. Biżżejjed ngħidu illi lanqas il-Kap tal-Ministeru ma kellu l-faċilitajiet adegwati għaliex kellu jgħaddi ż-żmien qabel il-Berġa ta' Aragona setgħet tinbidel f'uffiċċju.[iii] In-nuqqas ta' spazju għall-ewwel Parlament ta' Malta jissemma fil-kumment sarkastiku ta' Strickland, wara l-approvazzjoni tar-riżoluzzjoni mill-Assemblea Leġiżlattiva sabiex titwaqqaf bibljoteka fil-Parlament, hekk kif qal li l-uniku spazju disponibbli għaliha kienet l-iskrivanja tal-Ispeaker.[iv]

M'għaddiex ħafna żmien qabel il-kwistjoni tqajmet mill-ġdid, din id-darba minn Giovanni Adami, *backbencher* tal-Assemblea. Adami staqsa lill-Kap tal-Ministeru jekk kienx qies li kienet tkun idea tajba għall-Gvern li jipprova jakkwista, sabiex tintuża bħala Parlament, waħda mill-Bereġ li f'dak iż-żmien kienu f'idejn l-awtoritajiet militari Ingliżi. Dan is-suġġeriment kien ġie nnutat iżda ma ngħatat l-ebda tweġiba konkreta. Għaldaqstant, kellu jkun Gerald Strickland illi f'seduta oħra qajjem din il-kwistjoni b'mod iktar qawwi hekk kif innota illi n-nuqqas ta' spazju għall-viżitaturi kien qiegħed itellef lill-Kamra milli taqdi r-rwol tagħha. 'Il-qalb u r-ruħ ta' gvern responsabbli,' qal lill-Assemblea Leġiżlattiva, 'hija l-pubbliċità. L-eletturi għandhom ikunu jafu x'qegħdin nagħmlu; ... (huma) għandhom id-dritt ikunu jafu x'jiġri f'din il-Kamra.'[v] Għaldaqstant, huwa ssuġġerixxa li fil-ġejjieni s-seduti jsiru fis-Sala ta' San Mikiel u San Ġorġ u ħeġġeġ lill-Gvern sabiex jitlob permess lill-awtoritajiet biex tintuża din is-sala.

Huwa kien appoġġjat minn Enrico Mizzi li madankollu argumenta illi l-Kamra m'għandhiex titlaq minn idejha l-kontroll tas-Sala tal-Arazzi. Mizzi argumenta wkoll illi l-pubbliku kellu dritt leġittimu li jattendi s-seduti tal-Parlament u billi l-Palazz kien proprjetà pubblika, l-ebda individwu – kien qed jgħid għall-Gvernatur – ma kellu xi dritt privileġġjat fuqha. L-argument ta' Mizzi rrifletta lment antik dwar il-proprjetà miżmuma mis-Servizzi Ingliżi u li l-Maltin saħqu li kienu proprjetà tal-gvern ċivili. Joseph Howard, bħala Kap tal-Ministeru, argumenta li kienet meħtieġa riżoluzzjoni tal-Kamra li tistabilixxi b'mod ċar liema binjiet il-Membri kienu jqisu li kellhom jiġu akkwistati mill-gvern u wiegħed li l-Kabinett tiegħu kien ser jagħmel mill-aħjar li jista' sabiex jakkwistahom. Dan is-suġġeriment ġie kkunsidrat minn Gerald Strickland waqt is-seduta tat-30 ta' Jannar 1922, meta ppropona li l-Kamra għandha tagħmel 'appell umli' lill-Gvernatur sabiex iġib il-kunsens tal-Awtoritajiet Imperjali sabiex il-Berġa ta' Kastilja tkun disponibbli biex tintuża bħala Parlament. Huwa ppropona 'appell umli' għaliex emmen li din il-kwistjoni ta' proprjetà kienet waħda sensittiva u legalment ambigwa u ħass li jekk ma kinetx ser tkun ittrattata b'mod meqjus u b'korteżija, din kienet ser tfalli. Il-Gran Brittanja qabel kienet qablet li tibgħat arbitru sabiex jeżamina u jipprova jsolvi n-nuqqas ta' ftehim Anglo-Malti dwar il-proprjetà pubblika u beża' li kull ħaġa iktar minn 'appell umli' setgħet tipperikola dawn it-taħdidiet.

Enrico Mizzi, filwaqt li appoġġa lil Strickland, irnexxielu jgħaddi emenda li sejħet għan-nomina ta' Kumitat magħmul minn Membri Parlamentari sabiex iħejju l-abbozz tal-appell propost. Huwa ried li l-Gvernatur jappoġġa t-talba tagħhom biex il-Parlament jimxi lejn Kastilja li,

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huwa insista, kienet proprjetà tal-gvern ċivili u kellha tkun taħt il-kontroll tiegħu. Eventwalment dan il-Kumitat iltaqa' darbtejn u tħejja rapport, li ddeskriva l-appell li kellu jsir lill-Gvernatur, li tpoġġa fuq il-Mejda tal-Kamra fl-14 ta' Frar 1922. Dan ġie diskuss iktar tard fl-istess seduta fejn l-artikli varji tiegħu ġew eżaminati. Id-diffikultà ewlenija li kellhom jiffaċċjaw il-Membri Parlamentari kienet li ma xtaqux, bl-appell tagħhom, jidhru lesti jċedu d-drittijiet fuq il-binjiet li huma kienu jqisu li kienu għall-użu tal-gvern ċivili. Fl-istess ħin riedu juru li kienu lesti jkunu flessibbli u għalkemm kienu sodi fil-fehma li l-Berġa ta' Kastilja kienet proprjetà tal-awtoritajiet ċivili, huma kienu lesti li jaslu f'xi tip ta' ftehim mas-servizzi militari għall-użu tagħha. Fl-istess waqt, il-membri tas-Senat, waqt li kienu qrib ta' kull ma kien qiegħed iseħħ fl-Assemblea Leġiżlattiva, kienu qegħdin jippruvaw isibu post iktar adegwat għas-seduti tagħhom u, f'Ottobru 1921, kellhom laqgħa informali u privata fil-Berġa ta' Franza biex jaraw jekk setgħetx tiġi adattata għall-ħtiġijiet tagħhom. Iżda anke hawn l-affarijiet qajla mxew 'il quddiem.

Id-Dibattitu Jitqanqal

Sal-elezzjonijiet tal-1924 sar ftit progress. Għaldaqstant, il-kwistjoni kellha terġa' tieħu prominenza fit-tieni leġiżlatura ta' Malta. Fil-fatt, sa Novembru tal-1924 Gerald Strickland reġa' qajjem din il-kwistjoni waqt dibattitu tal-Assemblea Leġiżlattiva meta esprima t-tama li t-trasferiment għall-Berġa ta' Kastilja jsir malajr billi l-kondizzjonijiet fil-Kamra kienu qegħdin isiru tassew oppressivi.[vi] L-Ispeaker informa lil Strickland li, flimkien mal-President tas-Senat u mal-Ministri l-oħra, kien żar Kastilja biex jinvestiga l-adegwatezza tal-binja bħala Parlament u kien kuntent li seta' jirrapporta illi s-Sala l-Kbira kienet kemm itwal kif ukoll ikbar mill-Kamra attwali. Dawn kienu jidhru li huma aħbarijiet inkoraġġanti.

Madankollu, f'Diċembru, Strickland tant kien ħerqan fuq din il-kwistjoni li reġa' qajjimha. Il-Kap tal-Ministeru wieġeb illi l-qisien kienu ttieħdu u kienu qegħdin jitħejjew pjanijiet sabiex jiġi aċċertat jekk l-Assemblea Leġiżlattiva, is-Senat u numru ta' dipartimenti importanti tal-gvern setgħux jiġu akkomodati hemm u jekk id-Dipartiment tal-Gwerra, li kien qiegħed jokkupa Kastilja, setax jiġi akkomodat fil-Palazz u possibilment fil-Berġa ta' Franza. Madankollu, sa tmiem Frar tal-1925, il-kwistjoni kienet għadha ma ġietx solvuta u Dr Magri, backbencher, staqsa lill-Kap tal-Ministeru biex ipoġġi fuq il-Mejda tal-Kamra il-korrispondenza bejn il-Gvern u l-awtoritajiet militari rigward it-trasferiment.[vii] Il-Kap tal-Ministeru wieġeb illi dan ma kienx il-mument għal miżura bħal din u ħa l-opportunità biex jiċħad ix-xnigħat li l-Gvern tiegħu kellu l-intenzjoni li jċedi s-Sala tal-Arazzi bi bdil mal-Berġa ta' Kastilja. Iżda Dr Magri qajjem kwistjoni oħra u dan rigward dak li hu qies li kien affront lejn il-Kamra minħabba l-prattika tal-Gvernatur li juża s-Sala tal-Arazzi bħala gwardarobba waqt il-Ballijiet Statali. Il-Kap tal-Ministeru fakkar lill-Membru kkonċernat dwar l-appoġġ li l-Gvernatur kien qiegħed jagħti liż-żewġ Kmamar sabiex jara illi jimxu lejn Kastilja.

Iżda, f'Mejju tal-1925, il-Kap tal-Ministeru nnifsu qajjem il-kwistjoni għall-ewwel darba. Huwa ressaq Mozzjoni li sejħet sabiex jiġi stabbilit Kumitat Magħżul Konġunt taż-żewġ Kmamar 'sabiex jikkunsidra u jirrapporta dwar kemm ikun rakkomandabbli illi ssir pressjoni fuq l-Awtoritajiet Imperjali sabiex iċedu l-Berġa ta' Kastilja lill-gvern ċivili biex din tintuża prinċiparjament bħala Parlament fi bdil ma' bini ieħor'.[viii] Il-Kumitat Magħżul kellu jkun magħmul minn għaxar Membri, ħamsa minn kull Kamra. Huwa diġà kien informa lis-Senat kif kienu l-affarijiet fil-mument u mid-dikjarazzjoni tiegħu u mill-ittri tal-Gvernatur dwar dan is-suġġett kien jidher li x'aktarx l-awtoritajiet militari kien ser jagħtu l-kunsens tagħhom sabiex isir it-trasferiment sakemm is-Signal Station setgħet tibqa' fuq il-binja. Tabilħaqq, mill-korrispondenza li ġiet ippreżentata, iżda speċjalment mill-ittri tal-Gvernatur, il-Membri ngħataw l-impressjoni li kienet meħtieġa azzjoni mill-Kabinett biex tiġi solvuta din is-sitwazzjoni.

Għalkemm il-Mozzjoni tal-Kap tal-Ministeru rċeviet l-appoġġ taż-żewġ kmamar, ħafna mid-dibattitu li sar fuqha kien ikkundizzjonat mill-biżgħat tal-imgħoddi; li sabiex jieħdu l-Berġa ta' Kastilja l-Membri kien ser ikollhom iċedu proprjetà oħra, fosthom is-Sala tal-Arazzi, fi bdil magħha. Il-Kumitat Magħżul li rriżulta minn dan id-dibattitu kellu jkun magħmul mill-Ispeaker Salvatore Borg Olivier, mill-Kap tal-Ministeru, Dr Ugo Mifsud (UPM), Augustus Bartolo (CP), Kur. Savona (LP), u Carmelo Mifsud Bonnici (PDN).[ix] Is-Senat, filwaqt li qabel man-nomina tal-Kumitat Magħżul konġunt, ippropona emenda li kellha tara illi l-ebda parti mill-Palazz tal-Gvernatur ma tiġi nnegozjata ma' Kastilja, u b'hekk jagħmel in-negozjati mal-awtoritajiet Brittaniċi virtwalment impossibbli.[x] Sa ċertu punt din l-emenda kienet imbarazzat personalment lill-Kap tal-Ministeru għaliex waqt li kien qiegħed jippreżenta l-Mozzjoni huwa kien żvela illi l-proposta sabiex jitpartu partijiet mill-Palazz ma' Kastilja kienet ġejja mill-Gvernatur u huwa kien iddeskriva r-rwol tal-Gvernatur f'din il-kwistjoni bħala wieħed ġeneruż. Dan kien wassal ukoll għall-akkuża fil-gazzetti illi l-Kap tal-Ministeru kien ċeda kemmxejn malajr hekk kif offra li jċedi l-bini pubbliku storiku ta' Malta lis-servizzi armati Brittaniċi.

Għaldaqstant, f'seduta segwenti tal-Assemblea Leġiżlattiva, il-Kap tal-Ministeru ddikjara li l-kwistjoni kienet tirrigwarda kull Membru taż-żewġ Kmamar iktar milli lill-Gvern, u għalhekk kien ħa jħalli l-kwistjoni f'idejhom. Għaldaqstant huwa rtira sehmu fil-Kumitat Magħżul u rrifjuta li jinnomina Ministru sabiex jeħodlu postu fil-Kumitat Magħżul.[xi] Madankollu, l-emenda tas-Senat ġiet aċċettata mill-Assemblea Leġiżlattiva kif ukoll ix-xewqa tal-Kap tal-Ministeru li jiġi eskluż mill-Kumitat. Postu ttieħed mill-Prof. Galea tal-Partit Kostituzzjonali. Bħala r-rappreżentanti tiegħu fuq il-Kumitat Magħżul, is-Senat innomina lill-President tiegħu, Max Debono, lill-Marquis Paolo Apap Bologna, lill-Konti Alfredo Caruana Gatto, lil Antonio Cassar Torregiani, u lill-Kur. Alexander Mckean.[xii]

Ir-Rapport tal-Kumitat Magħżul Konġunt, jekk wieħed jista' jsejjaħlu hekk, inġieb quddiem l-Assemblea Leġiżlattiva

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fil-15 ta'Ġunju, 1925. Ma kien xejn ħlief ripetizzjoni tar-riżoluzzjoni addottata miż-żewġ Kmamar f'Mejju u l-punt fih kien li l-ballun jerġa' jintefa' fuq in-naħa tal-Gvern. Il-Kumitat argumenta illi ma setax jipproċedi bir-riżoluzzjonijet tiegħu qabel ma jiġi aċċertat jekk l-awtoritajiet militari kinux lesti jaċċettaw binjiet oħra minn dawk f'idejn il-gvern ċivili fil-Palazz bi bdil ma' Kastilja. Għalhekk sar suġġeriment lill-Gvern sabiex jerġa' javviċina lis-servizzi militari bil-ħsieb li jara kif jaħsbuha fuq din il-kwistjoni. Il-Kap tal-Ministeru wiegħed illi l-Gvern kien ser jagħmel mill-aħjar li jista' biex iġib l-informazzjoni meħtieġa iżda għamilha ċara li l-intenzjoni tiegħu kienet li jippreżenta r-Rapport lill-Gvernatur.

Madankollu, kien ċar illi n-negozjati mas-servizzi militari kienu sfaxxaw. Dan kien aċċertat kemm minn Gerald Strickland kif ukoll mill-Kap tal-Ministeru fil-bidu tas-seduta tal-15 ta' dak ix-xahar. Strickland ilmenta - ilment aċċettat mill-Ispeaker – illi minħabba l-istorbju li kien ġej mil-lobby ma seta' bl-ebda mod jifhem il-Minuti waqt li dawn kienu qegħdin jinqraw. Imbagħad esprima d-dispjaċir tiegħu 'li n-negozjati għat-trasferiment ta' Kastilja' kienu sfaxxaw. L-Ispeaker issimpatizza kompletament sal-punt li ddeskriva l-faċilitajiet eżistenti bħala xi ħaġa 'tal-mistħija.' Il-Kap tal-Ministeru mar lil hinn, hekk kif flimkien mad-dikjarazzjoni li kien hemm nuqqas ta' anke 'faċilitajiet ordinarji tal-ħajja,' huwa ddeskriva kif il-Ministri spiss kellhom jaqdu dmirijiet importanti fil-kuritur u kif f'okkażjoni waħda servjent tal-Gvernatur kien ġentili biżżejjed li sellfu l-kamra tiegħu stess ħalli jkun jista' jagħmel biċċa xogħol urġenti li kienet inqalgħet.[xiii]

L-Assemblea Leġiżlattiva ddiskutiet din il-kontroversja għal darb'oħra fi Frar tal-1926, din id-darba wara stedina mill-Ispeaker.[xiv] Billi l-Ispeaker m'għandu l-ebda jedd biex jibda d-dibattitu, qabel ipproċeda huwa talab u ġab permess mill-Kamra biex iħalli s-Sedja tiegħu. Wara li l-Iskrivan tal-Kamra qara xi korrispondenza bejn il-Gvern u l-awtoritajiet militari, l-Ispeaker ta rendikont dettaljat tad-diffikultajiet li kien qiegħed ikollha tiffaċċja l-Kamra fil-qadi ta' dmirijietha. Huwa ddeskriva wkoll kif l-offerta ta' Kastilja kienet ġiet mill-Gvernatur u kif kien issuġġerit li, fi bdil ma' Kastilja, il-militar kellu jieħu f'idejh bini ieħor fil-Palazz. Huwa fakkar lill-Kamra illi Kumitat Magħżul Konġunt kien ġie ffurmat biex jaffronta l-kwistjoni iżda l-emenda tat-Termini ta' Referenza min-naħa tas-Senat, li eskludiet iċ-ċessjoni ta' kull parti tal-Palazz lill-militar, kien xejnet l-isforzi tiegħu. Żjara f'Kastilja, qal, kienet ikkonvinċietu li l-binja kienet kbira biżżejjed biex mhux biss tipprovdi l-faċilitajiet meħtieġa mill-Parlament iżda biex takkomoda wkoll numru ta' dipartimenti tal-gvern. Kien tal-fehma, qal lill-Membri, illi filwaqt li għandhom imorru lura mid-deċiżjoni tagħhom illi jżommu l-Palazz milli jgħaddi f'idejn il-militar, bla ma jċedu s-Sala tal-Arazzi, huma għandhom ikunu lesti jinnegozjaw it-trasferiment lejn Kastilja. Is-Senat, huwa qal, għandu jintalab jirtira l-emenda tiegħu tat-termini ta' referenza tal-Kumitat Magħżul u jekk il-Kamra kellha tinsisti li din tinżamm, l-Assemblea Leġiżlattiva kellha, jekk dan ikun meħtieġ, tmexxi għal rasha.

Id-diskors mill-Ispeaker, Salvatore Borg Olivier, wassal għal dibattitu mqanqal fost il-Membri tal-Kamra. Gerald Strickland tenna li l-kwistjoni kellha bżonn tiġi solvuta għaliex fil-fehma tiegħu, din kienet kwistjoni kruċjali għall-ġejjieni tal-awtonomija tal-Gvern f'Malta. 'Jekk,' qal lill-Membri, 'għandu jkollna gvern popolari li jagħmel il-ġid lil pajjiżna u li jgħolli lill-Maltin mill-kundizzjoni attwali tagħhom, għandna nagħmlu din il-Kamra mhux biss aċċessibbli imma attraenti għan-nies, għar-rappreżentanti tal-fergħat differenti tal-ħsieb u tat-tagħlim, biex ma nsemmux dawk kollha li misshom qegħdin jieħdu ħafna iktar interess fil-politika milli qegħdin jieħdu fiċ-ċirkostanzi attwali.' Il-Kap tal-Ministeru qabel ma' ħafna minn dak li ntqal fid-dibattitu u wiegħed li l-Gvern tiegħu kien ser jassisti b'kull mod. Madankollu, meta Augustus Bartolo ppropona li Kumitat ġdid kellu jiġi ffurmat mingħajr l-ebda limitazzjoni rigward l-għażliet li setgħu jiġu nnegozjati, il-kwistjoni twaqqfet bl-insistenza ta' Enrico Mizzi li l-Mozzjoni ta' Bartolo kellha tingħata avviż ta' erbat ijiem. Din l-oppożizzjoni għall-Mozzjoni ġejja min-naħa ta' Ministru, qanqlet l-atmosfera tant illi l-Professur Bartolo spiċċa tefa' l-Order Papers li kellu quddiemu.

Meta l-Mozzjoni ġiet diskussa erbat ijiem wara, l-isponsor tagħha kien Carmelo Mifsud Bonnici. Wara introduzzjoni qasira huwa għadda biex jinnomina l-membri li kellhom ipoġġu fuq il-Kumitat propost. Dawn kienu l-Ispeaker, Dr Ugo Mifsud, il-Kap tal-Ministeru, Prof Bartolo, Kur. Savona u l-proponent. Fl-aħħar, żewġ membri oħra, Prof Galea u Dr Adami, żdiedu mal-Kumitat. Il-fehma tal-Kap tal-Ministeru, li kienet li s-Senat kellu jintalab jagħti l-approvazzjoni tiegħu, sabet reżistenza iżda ġie miftiehem li ladarba il-Kumitat ikun għamel l-abbozz tar-rapport, is-Senat kellu jiġi kkonsultat.[xv]

Il-Kumitat irrapporta lura f'nofs Marzu.[xvi] Fir-Rapport tiegħu l-Kumitat tenna l-ħsieb li kien sab kunsens ġenerali illi l-Berġa ta' Kastilja kienet l-unika binja adegwata għall-Parlament iżda li l-ħtiġijiet tal-militar, jekk kellu jsir it-tpartit, kienu jirrikjedu li ċ-ċivil iċedi l-kontroll tal-Berġa ta' Franza u tas-sular kollu ta' isfel tal-Palazz, li madankollu l-Kumitat ma kienx lest li jirrakomanda. Għaldaqstant, fil-fehma tal-Kumitat, in-negozjati proposti mal-awtoritajiet militari ma kinux vantaġġjużi. Madankollu, ħassew li kien id-dmir tagħhom li jenfasizzaw l-ovvju u li jirrikonoxxu l-ħtieġa li jaslu għal ftehim sodisfaċenti sabiex il-Parlament u l-membri tiegħu jkunu jistgħu jaqdu dmirijiethom b'mod sodisfaċenti. Għaldaqstant ipproponew in-nomina ta' Kumitat Magħżul (Assemblea Leġiżlattiva u Senat) biex jinvestiga u jirrapporta dwar l-aħjar arranġament għas-Seduti tal-Parlament u l-proċediment ġenerali tal-affarijiet tagħha.'

Iżda diskussjoni fuq ir-Rapport, li l-maġġoranza tal-Membri riedu jaddottaw immedjatament, kienet twaqqfet minn Lewis Mizzi li oġġezzjona għal sospensjoni tar-regoli. Kien biss fit-22 ta' Marzu li Mozzjoni li talbet li jitwaqqaf Kumitat Magħżul Konġunt setgħet titressaq u tiġi diskussa. Ir-responsabbiltà sabiex iressaq il-Mozzjoni ġiet fdata f'idejn il-Kap tal-Ministeru li, filwaqt li nnomina

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lill-Ispeaker, Dr Adami, Prof. Galea, Prof Bartolo, Dr Carmelo Mifsud Bonnici, Kul. Savona u lilu nnifsu bħala membri li jirrappreżentaw lill-Assemblea Leġiżlattiva, huwa ddeskriva d-diffikultajiet li kienu qegħdin jiffaċċjaw f'xogħlhom u appella lill-Membri biex jappoġġaw il-Mozzjoni tiegħu. Il-Mozzjoni ġiet issekondata minn Bartolo li esprima t-tama li kull membru individwali tal-Kamra, 'li jħoss għad-dinjità tal-istatus' li Malta kienet kisbet, jgħin lill-Kumitat biex jilħaq l-għan tiegħu.[xvii]

Iżda l-kwistjoni waqfet hekk kif sa Ottubru 1926 il-Kumitat qajla mexa f'ħidmietu. Dan kien evidenti waqt dibattitu fuq vot tal-flus li dak iż-żmien kien quddiem l-Assemblea Leġiżlattiva. Il-Kap tal-Ministeru kien għadu kemm fisser li vot ta' £330 kien inkluż fl-estimi 'sabiex iserraħ moħħ il-membri ta' din il-Kamra.'[xviii] F'dan l-istadju membru staqsa lill-Kap tal-Ministeru tal-Informazzjoni jekk il-Kumitat Magħżul kienx wasal għal xi deċiżjoni. Il-Kap tal-Ministeru wieġeb li l-Kumitat ma kienx wasal għal konklużjoni u fin-nuqqas ta' dan huwa esprima l-intenzjoni li jipproponi, f'xi seduta fil-ġejjieni, li somma ta' flus tkun ivvutata sabiex l-Assemblea tkun tista' tiġi ttrasferita lejn il-Berġa ta' Franza. Kien hawn illi l-Prof. Bartolo intervjena u sfida lill-Kap tal-Ministeru biex jispjega ruħu. Bħala membru tal-Kumitat huwa ried jinforma lill-Kamra li l-Kumitat ma kien iltaqa' qatt. Din id-dikjarazzjoni wasslet għal dibattitu jaħraq bejn il-Membri u għall-akkuża li għalxejn kienu qegħdin jinħatru l-kumitati magħżula meta dawn kienu qegħdin jiġu kkunsidrati b'dan il-mod mill-Gvern. Il-Gvern, hekk kif innota Bartolo, meta ddikjara li kien qiegħed iħejji biex iressaq quddiem il-Kamra vot ta' flus ta' din ix-xorta, kien ukoll qiegħed jindika li kien wasal għal deċiżjoni unilaterali dwar it-trasferiment tal-Kamra lejn il-Berġa ta' Franza.[xix]

Iżda l-Kumitat Magħżul, li kien taħt it-tmexxija tal-President tas-Senat, iltaqa' għadd ta' drabi għalkemm mid-dehra, għal raġunijiet li mhumiex ċari, il-Prof Bartolo qatt ma ġie avżat. Dan ġie żvelat ġimagħtejn wara meta Gerald Strickland tlewwem mal-Kap tal-Ministeru waqt il-Ħin tal-Mistoqsijiet. Strickland kien staqsa lill-Kap tal-Ministeru jekk il-Kabinett jew il-Kap tal-Ministeru kienx ikkommetta ruħu dwar it-trasferiment tal-Parlament mingħajr il-kunsens tal-Kamra. Fil-battibekk li segwa, ittenniet l-akkuża li l-Kumitat ma kienx iltaqa' u kien f'dan l-istadju illi l-Ispeaker żvela li l-Kumitat kien tabilħaqq iltaqa' u li kien għamel numru ta' spezzjonijiet ta' postijiet li setgħu jintużaw bħala Parlament. Mhux ta' b'xejn Bartolo kien irrabjat, iżda kien il-Ħin tal-Mistoqsijiet u d-dibattitu kellu jitwaqqaf.[xx]

Ir-Rapport tal-Kumitat, bil-firma tal-Professur Bartolo fuqu, fl-aħħar tqiegħed fuq il-Mejda tal-Kamra mill-Ispeaker fis-6 ta' Diċembru 1926. Ir-Rapport tal-Kumitat Konġunt, filwaqt li tenna r-raġunijiet għalfejn kien hemm il-ħtieġa li jinstab post iktar adegwat, ikkonkluda li l-unika binja li setgħet tipprovdi l-ispazju u l-faċilitajiet meħtieġa, u li ma kinetx f'idejn il-militar, kienet il-Berġa ta' Franza. Il-Kumitat kien ukoll tal-fehma li l-ispiża biex dan il-bini jinbidel sabiex jintuża bħala Parlament kienet ta' madwar £2,400. Ġew innutati wkoll għadd ta' diffikultajiet, bħall-viċinanza tas-Sala għal binjiet oħra, l-istorbju mit-toroq, u l-fatt li d-dibattiti, 'speċjalment jekk ikunu mqanqlin, setgħu jinstemgħu mit-toroq u mill-binjiet tal-viċin'.[xxi] Madankollu, il-Kumitat ħass illi l-vantaġġi kellhom it-tendenza li jisbqu l-iżvantaġġi u rrakomanda li jittieħdu l-passi meħtieġa sabiex jiġi implimentat ir-Rapport. Is-Senat kellu jibqa' juża s-sala tal-Arazzi iżda l-Assemblea Leġiżlattiva kellha tirriżerva d-dritt li tuża dik is-Sala kull darba li kien jidhrilha li hemm bżonn. B'dan il-mod il-Kumitat Konġunt għamilha ċara illi n-naħa ta' Malta tad-dijarkija ma kinetx lesta li ċċedi l-Palazz. Wara l-qari tar-Rapport mill-Iskrivan tal-Kamra, il-Kap tal-Ministeru poġġa wkoll fuq il-Mejda pjan li juri t-tibdiliet proposti u stieden lill-Membri biex isibu ħin biex jispezzjonaw il-bini billi huwa kellu l-intenzjoni li jressaq l-addozzjoni tar-Rapport il-ġimgħa ta' wara.

Il-Kap tal-Ministeru żamm kelmtu hekk kif ġimgħa wara ppreżenta riżoluzzjoni fil-Parlament għal dan il-għan. Iżda ta' min jinnota illi waqt il-Ħin tal-Mistoqsijet, fi tweġiba għal mistoqsija minn Antonio Dalli jekk il-Kumitat kienx ikkunsidra l-użu tal-Bibljoteka Pubblika bħala bini adegwat għall-Parlament, huwa poġġa fuq il-Mejda rapport minn Hannibal Scicluna, Direttur tal-Bibljoteki, datat 11 ta' Diċembru 1926, li fisser għala ma kienx rakkomandabbli li l-Gvern jipproċedi b'din l-idea.[xxii] Il-fatt li r-rapport kien juri d-data tal-jum ta' qabel ta lil uħud mill-membri l-impressjoni li l-Gvern kien għadu mhux ċert li l-Berġa ta' Franza kienet l-iktar post adegwat.

Meta kien qed iressaq ir-Rapport, il-Kap tal-Ministeru għamel enfasi qawwija fuq l-espedjenza li ma tiġix ċeduta s-Sala tal-Arazzi, u wasal biex qal illi l-Awtoritajiet Imperjali kienu intimaw li din is-Sala kienet inkluża taħt affarijiet riżervati. Madankollu, huwa qal illi l-argument taż-żewġ Kmamar kien li tiġi rrifjutata din l-affermazzjoni u li jinsistu illi din is-Sala kellha tkun post fejn jiltaqa' l-Parlament. Li dan il-punt kellu jitqajjem b'mod daqshekk qawwi, jagħti l-impressjoni li meta n-naħa Ingliża tad-dijarkija saret taf bl-intenzjoni tal-Assemblea Leġiżlattiva li tmur f'binja oħra huma għamlu l-ħsieb li jieħdu f'idejhom is-Sala. Madankollu, il-Kap tal-Ministeru rrakkomanda li l-Parlament kellu jaġixxi skont il-parir mogħti fir-Rapport tal-Kumitat Konġunt. Huwa kkonkluda li l-kwistjoni ma kinetx waħda politika iżda waħda ta' interess għall-Membri kollha tal-Kamra.

Għalkemm fil-bidu tas-seduta, Strickland kien qal illi fuq din il-kwistjoni ma kienx hemm linja tal-partit, huwa wieġeb permezz ta' diskors provokatorju. Huwa akkuża lill-Gvern b'inkompetenza u ma setax jemmen kif is-Segretarju tal-Istat seta' jħalli li xi waħda mill-Kmamar titkeċċa mill-bini tal-Palazz kontra r-rieda tagħha. Minbarra dan, huwa rrifjuta l-Mozzjoni billi deherlu illi Kastilja kienet l-unika binja 'fejn b'dinjità, u anke b'rispett lejn ir-rwol tal-leġiżlaturi ta' dan il-pajjiż, seta' jiġi kkunsidrat kwalunkwe tip ta' trasferiment'. Din, huwa qal, kienet l-opinjoni tal-Gvernatur u tal-Kap tal-Ministeru. Għaliex issa marru lura mill-pożizzjoni tagħhom, huwa staqsa. Anke mir-Rapport innifsu kien ċar li l-Berġa ta' Franza

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bl-iżvantaġġi li kellha ma kellhiex il-kwalitajiet li setgħet tagħmel dan il-post adegwat biex jilqa' lill-Membri tal-Assemblea Leġiżlattiva. F'dan l-istadju d-dibattitu sar aħrax u personali ħafna u sat-tmienja ta' filgħaxija l-ebda deċiżjoni ma kienet ittieħdet. Ċerti Membri reġgħu qajmu argumenti antiki, bħat-trasferiment lejn il-Bibljoteka Pubblika, filwaqt li oħrajn ressqu ideat ġodda. Pereżempju, kien hemm dawk li ssuġġerew li jinbena Parlament ġdid fuq jew minflok il-Main Guard, faċċata tal-Palazz tal-Gvernatur.

Id-dibattitu ssokta meta l-Kamra reġgħet iltaqgħet wara l-waqfa b'diskors twil tal-Prof. Carlo Mallia li argumenta li l-għażla tal-Berġa ta' Franza ma kinetx waħda feliċi. Ma kinetx tagħmel sens għall-membri li biex jivvutaw, kellhom jimxu lejn post ieħor, li fil-kuxjenza tagħhom diġà kienu jafu li ma kienx aħjar mill-post preżenti u li fl-aħħar mill-aħħar kien soluzzjoni temporanja biss għall-problemi tagħhom. Għaldaqstant huwa ddikjara li minkejja li hu kien membru tal-Kabinett, huwa kien se jivvota kontra l-Mozzjoni. Il-Prof. Galea li kien innominat biex ipoġġi fuq il-Kumitat Magħżul minħabba l-għarfien tekniku tiegħu u li kien fassal il-pjanijiet għat-tibdiliet minuri li l-Kumitat Magħżul kien qal li kienu meħtieġa fil-Berġa ta' Franza, fisser il-vantaġġi tat-trasferiment lejn dan il-bini iżda ammetta illi ma setax jassigura li l-iżvantaġġi kienu ser ikunu eliminati kollha kemm huma. Huwa għalaq id-diskors tiegħu billi stieden lill-kollegi Membri Parlamentari biex ma jinjorawx il-fatt li r-rinovazzjoni ta' dan il-bini kienet se tkun ta' benefiċċju għall-pajjiż anke jekk fil-ġejjieni kellhom jiddeċiedu li jagħżlu post differenti. De Giorgio argumenta favur il-bini ta' Parlament ġdid u deherlu illi ż-żona tal-Main Guard kienet tkun għażla eċċellenti billi kienet qiegħda tpoġġi ż-żewġ Palazzi tal-Gvern ta' Malta – il-Palazz tal-Gvernatur u l-Parlament il-Ġdid – faċċata ta' xulxin fil-qalb tal-belt kapitali. Għaldaqstant ippropona li l-Mozzjoni tkun emendata sabiex id-dibattitu seta' jiġi aġġornat sakemm jinstabu 'mezzi effiċjenti biex jiġu eliminati l-iżvantaġġi' imsemmija fil-Mozzjoni. Wara diskussjoni ulterjuri din l-emenda ġiet approvata u d-dibattitu fuq it-trasferiment tal-Parlament lejn post ġdid ġie aġġornat.

(Tmiem l-Ewwel Parti - Ikompli fil-ħarġa li jmiss)

i Ara Godfrey A. Pirotta (2006) *Malta's Parliament: An Official History, House of Representatives, Malta*, għal sfond sħiħ dwar dan l-avveniment.
ii F'okkażjonijiet differenti fejn seduta konġunta kienet meħtieġa, iż-żewġ Kmamar kellhom jużaw l-Armerija fil-Palazz għas-seduti tagħhom.
iii L-Ingliżi ma ħallewx li jintuża t-terminu Prim Ministru billi riedu jenfasizzaw li Malta ma kinetx kisbet l-istatus ta' Dominju Brittaniku u li fl-aħħar mill-aħħar baqgħet taħt il-kontroll tal-Uffiċċju Kolonjali. Minbarra dan, l-Uffiċċju tal-Kap tal-Ministeru kien jinsab fil-Berġa ta' Aragona fejn baqa' sal-1972 meta l-Berġa ta' Kastilja ngħatat lura lil Malta mill-forzi armati Brittaniċi taħt it-Trattat tal-1972 bejn iż-żewġ stati.
iv Dibattiti tal-Assemblea Leġiżlattiva, 17 Nov. 1922.
v Dibattiti tal-Assemblea Leġiżlattiva, 5 Jan. 1922.
vi Dibattiti tal-Assemblea Leġiżlattiva, 24 Nov. 1924.
vii Dibattiti tal-Assemblea Leġiżlattiva, 26 Frar. 1925.
viii Dibattiti tal-Assemblea Leġiżlattiva, 4 Mejju 1925.
ix UPM: Unione Politica Maltese; CP: Constitutional Party; LP: Labour Party; PDN: Partito Democratico Nazzionalista.
x Dibattiti tal-Assemblea Leġiżlattiva, 14 Mejju 1925.
xi Dibattiti tal-Assemblea Leġiżlattiva, 28 Mejju 1925.
xii Dibattiti tal-Assemblea Leġiżlattiva, 15 Ġun. 1925.
xiii Dibattiti tal-Assemblea Leġiżlattiva, 15 Diċ. 1925.
xiv Dibattiti tal-Assemblea Leġiżlattiva, 17 Frar 1926.
xv Dibattiti tal-Assemblea Leġiżlattiva, 23 Frar 1926.
xvi Dibattiti tal-Assemblea Leġiżlattiva, 16 Mar. 1926.
xvii Dibattiti tal-Assemblea Leġiżlattiva, 22 Mar. 1926.
xviii Dibattiti tal-Assemblea Leġiżlattiva, 25 Ott. 1926.
xix Ibid.
xx Dibattiti tal-Assemblea Leġiżlattiva, 8 Nov. 1926.
xxi Dibattiti tal-Assemblea Leġiżlattiva, 6 Diċ. 1926.
xxii Dibattiti tal-Assemblea Leġiżlattiva, 12 Diċ. 1926.

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It-Triq lejn Parlament Ġdid 1921-2015 - L-Ewwel Parti (Kont.)

Veduta tal-Berġa ta' Kastilja li mis-snin 20 kienet wieħed mis-siti potenzjali għall-binja tal-Parlament.

Is-Sala tal-Arazzi fil-Palazz tal-Gran Mastri li fiha ltaqgħet l-Assemblea Leġiżlattiva mill-1921 sal-1964 u l-Kamra tad-Deputati mill-1964 sal-1976.

The Road to a New Parliament House 1921-2015 - Part 1

Malta has a new Parliament House. Although its inauguration has not laid to rest the controversies that surrounded the project, it is fair to say that it has brought closure to a debate which has spanned almost 100 years. This article explores the debate as it happened in Parliament during this entire period. It will show that the debate began as early as 1921 when Britain conceded Malta its very first Responsible Government Constitution and that the issue was of importance from the start. Before 1921 Malta had no Parliament but a small Council of Government under the direct control of the Governor. Under the 1921 Constitution, Malta was to have a bi-cameral Parliament made of a Senate and a Legislative Assembly.[i] Consequently, the Tapestry Chamber, in which the Council of Government held its sittings, was rather small for the purpose. Hence the need to find more suitable premises.

The new Parliament, as noted, was to consist of two chambers: the Senate with 17 members of which only seven were directly elected by voters and a 32 member Legislative Assembly elected from eight electoral districts. Since only one adequate hall existed at the time, given this state of affairs both Chambers had to hold their sittings in the rather small Tapestry Chamber and sit on different days. There was a further complication: the 1921 Constitution also laid down the obligation, in certain circumstances, for the holding of joint sessions between Senate and Legislative Assembly thereby making the issue of space more acute. And on the occasion that the two Chambers were obliged to sit concurrently two different halls had to be used.[ii]

It was, therefore, not surprising that the issue should come up for a mention on the very first day that Malta's Parliament opened its doors to its Senators and Legislators. In fact it was the Governor himself who raised the issue when delivering Malta's first ever Speech from the Throne at a joint sitting of both chambers on the 3rd November 1921 in the Hall of St Michael and St George. Governor Plumer did not mince words: the issue of finding adequate space which would allow both Chambers to carry out their work properly, he told members, was a pressing one. The current chamber, he said, could only meet their requirements if the two Chambers managed to come to some mutual agreement about its use. He urged members to consider whether each House should have its own Chamber or indeed whether Senate and Assembly should meet in separate buildings reminding them, however, of the need to keep costs constantly in view. He also called upon members of both Houses to consider what kind of accommodation would be needed for Ministers to carry out their day-to-day responsibilities since it had already become apparent that all MPs were of the view that the existing facilities were inadequate. The Tapestry Chamber could not comfortably accommodate House members, representatives of the media and strangers given its small size and the facilities available for use in the Palace by Ministers had yet to be invented. One need only say that even the Head of Ministry lacked proper facilities for some time was to elapse before the Auberge D'Aragon could be transformed into an office.[iii] How little was the space available for the use of Malta's first Parliament can be grasped from Strickland's sarcastic remark, following the approval of a resolution by the Legislative Assembly to establish a Parliamentary library, that the only place available for such a library was on the Speaker's desk.[iv]

It was not long after, however, before the issue was raised again, this time by Giovanni Adami, a back-bench member of the Assembly. Adami asked the Head of Ministry whether he considered it a good idea for the government to try to acquire, for use as a Parliamentary House, one of the existing Auberges currently held by the British military authorities. This suggestion was noted but no concrete reply was forthcoming. It was, therefore, left to Gerald Strickland in another sitting to raise the matter more forcefully when he pointed out that lack of space to accommodate strangers was undermining the true role of the House. 'The heart and soul of responsible government,' he told the Legislative Assembly, 'is publicity. The electors should know what is being done; ….[they] are entitled to know what takes place in this House.'[v] He suggested, therefore, that in future Sittings should be held in the Hall of St Michael and St George and he pressed the Government to approach the authorities for permission to use this hall.

He was supported by Enrico Mizzi who argued, however, that the House should not give up its control over the Tapestry Chamber. Mizzi further argued that the public had a legitimate right to attend Parliamentary sittings and as the Palace was public property no single individual, meaning the Governor, had any privileged right over it. Mizzi's argument reflected a long-standing grievance over property held by the British services and which the Maltese side claimed belonged to the civilian government. Joseph Howard, as Head of Ministry, argued that what was required was a resolution of the House stating clearly which buildings members thought the government should acquire and promised that his Cabinet would do its best to acquire them.

This suggestion was taken up by Gerald Strickland during the Sitting of January 30, 1922 when he proposed that the House should make 'a humble address' to the Governor asking him to obtain the assent of the Imperial Authorities to make the Auberge de Castille available for use as a Parliament House. He argued for a 'humble address' because he believed the question of ownership was a sensitive and legally ambiguous one and he felt sure that if the matter was not approached with care and courtesy, it would inevitably fail. Britain had earlier agreed to send to Malta an arbitrator to examine and try to resolve Anglo-Maltese disagreements over public property and he feared that anything more than a 'humble address' may jeopardise these talks.

Enrico Mizzi, while supporting Strickland, successfully pushed through an amendment which called for the

appointment of a Committee made up of MPs to draft the proposed address. He wanted the Governor to support their case for Parliament to move to Castille which, he insisted, belonged to the civil government and should be under its control. This Committee eventually held two meetings and a Report outlining the address to be made to the Governor was placed on the Table of the House on February 14, 1922. It was discussed later in the same sitting when its various articles were examined. The main difficulty facing MPs was that they did not wish, by their address, to appear ready to surrender rights over buildings which they held to be for the use of the civil government. At the same time they wanted to demonstrate their readiness to be flexible and although they were adamant that the Auberge de Castille belonged to the civil authorities, they were prepared to come to some sort of arrangement with the military services for its use. In the meantime, Members of the Senate, while keeping in close contact with the proceedings in the Legislative Assembly, were also trying to see if they could find a more adequate place for their own Sittings and, in October 1921, had held an informal and private meeting at the Auberge de France to see if it could be adapted for their use. But even here matters did not really move forward.

The Debate Intensifies

By the time the 1924 elections had come round little progress had been achieved. Consequently, the issue was once again to take prominence during Malta's second legislature. In fact, by November 1924 Gerald Strickland returned to the issue during a debate in the Legislative Assembly when he expressed the hope that the transfer to the Auberge de Castille would take place soon as the conditions in the Chamber were becoming really oppressive.[vi] The Speaker informed Strickland that, accompanied by the President of the Senate and other Ministers, he had paid a visit to Castille to investigate the adequacy of the premises as a Parliament House and was happy to report that the Great Hall was both longer and larger than their present chamber. This seemed to be encouraging news.

However, in December, an impatient Strickland once again raised the issue. The Head of Ministry replied that measurements had been taken and plans were being prepared to ascertain whether the Legislative Assembly, the Senate and a number of key government departments could be accommodated there and whether the War Department, which occupied Castille, could be accommodated in the Palace and possibly the Auberge de France. Nevertheless, by the end of February 1925, the matter had not been settled and Dr Magri, a backbencher, asked the Head of Ministry to lay on the Table of the House the correspondence that had gone on between the Government and the military authorities over the transfer.[vii] The Head of Ministry replied that it was not the moment for such a measure and took the opportunity to deny rumours that his Government intended giving up the Tapestry Chamber in exchange for the Auberge de Castille.

But Dr Magri raised another issue and this in respect to what he considered an affront to the House because of the practice, by the Governor, of using the Tapestry Chamber as a cloakroom during State Balls. The Head of Ministry sought to pour oil on frayed sensitivities by reminding the Member concerned of the support that the Governor was extending to the two Houses in trying to ensure their transfer to Castille.

But, in May 1925, the Head of Ministry himself raised the matter for the first time. He rose to move a Motion calling for the setting up of a Joint Select Committee of both Houses 'to consider and report on the advisability, or otherwise, of moving the Imperial Authorities to hand over to the Civil Government the Auberge de Castille for use principally as a Parliament Building' in exchange for other buildings.[viii] The Select Committee was to consist of ten members, five from each House. He had already informed the Senate as to how matters stood at the time and from his statement there and his reading of letters from the Governor on the subject it appeared likely that the military authorities would consent to a move as long as the signal station was allowed to remain on top of the building. Indeed, from the correspondence presented, but especially from the letters by the Governor, the impression conveyed to Members was that it was action from the Cabinet that was required to settle the matter.

Although the Head of Ministry's Motion received the support of both Houses, much of the debate that took place on it was conditioned by past fears; that in order to obtain the Auberge de Castille Members would have to surrender other property, including the Tapestry Chamber, in exchange for it. The Select Committee that emerged from this debate was to consist of Mr Speaker Salvatore Borg Olivier, the Head of Ministry, Dr Ugo Mifsud (UPM), Augustus Bartolo (CP), Col. Savona (LP), and Carmelo Mifsud Bonnici (PDN).[ix] The Senate, while it concurred in the appointment of a joint Select Committee, proposed an amendment which sought to preclude that any part of the Governor's Palace could be traded for Castille, thereby making negotiations with the British authorities virtually impossible.[x] To some degree this amendment was a personal embarrassment to the Head of Ministry because when presenting his Motion he had revealed that the proposal to exchange parts of the Palace for Castille had come from the Governor and he had described the Governor's role in the matter as very generous. This also brought the charge in newspapers that the Head of Ministry had acquiesced rather quickly in offering to give away Malta's historic public buildings to the British armed services.

Thus, in a later Sitting of the Legislative Assembly, the Head of Ministry declared that the matter concerned every Member of the two Houses rather than the Government, and that he would therefore be leaving it entirely in their hands. He, therefore, withdrew his membership of the Select Committee and refused to nominate a Minister to replace him on the Select Committee.[xi] The Senate's

amendment was, nonetheless, accepted by the Legislative Assembly as was the Head of Ministry's wish to be excluded from the Committee. His place was taken by Prof. Galea of the Constitutional Party. As its representatives on the Select Committee the Senate appointed its President, Max Debono, Marquis Paolo Apap Bologna, Count Alfredo Caruana Gatto, Antonio Cassar Torregiani, and Col. Alexander Mckean.[xii]

The Report of the Joint Select Committee, if one may indeed call it so, was brought before the Legislative Assembly on June 15, 1925. It merely repeated the resolution adopted by both Houses in May and its thrust was to place the ball firmly back in the Government's court. The Committee claimed that it could not proceed with its deliberations before it could be ascertained whether the military authorities were prepared to accept other premises other than those held by the civil government in the Palace in exchange for Castille. For this reason it suggested that the Government should once again approach the military services to sound out their views on this issue. The Head of Ministry promised that the Government would do its best to get the information required but he made it clear that it was his intention to present the Report to the Governor.

By December, however, it had become clear that the negotiations with the military services had broken down. This was attested by both Gerald Strickland and the Head of Ministry at the start of the Sitting of the 15th of that month. Strickland complained, a complaint upheld by the Speaker, that because of the noise coming from the lobby he had found it totally impossible to understand the minutes while they were being read. He then expressed his regret 'that the negotiations for the transfer to Castille' had fallen through. The Speaker sympathized completely to the extent that he described the existing facilities as a 'proper disgrace.' The Head of Ministry went even further and, in addition to stating that they lacked even 'the ordinary amenities of life,' he described how Ministers very often had to carry out important duties in the corridor and how on one occasion the Governor's butler had the goodness of lending him his own room so that he could deal with some urgent business that had come up.[xiii]

The Legislative Assembly discussed the issue again in February 1926, this time at the invitation of the Speaker.[xiv] As the Speaker has no power to initiate debate, before proceeding further he asked for and obtained permission from the House to leave his Chair. After the Clerk of the House had read out some items of correspondence between the Government and the military authorities, the Speaker then gave a blow by blow account of the difficulties facing the House in the execution of its business. He also outlined how the offer of Castille had come from the Governor and how it had been suggested that, in exchange for Castille, the military would take over other premises in the Palace. He reminded the House that a Joint Select Committee had been formed to deal with the issue but the amendment of the Senate to its terms of reference, excluding the cession of any part of the Palace to the military, had ultimately frustrated its work. A visit to Castille, he said, had convinced him that the building was not only big enough to provide the facilities required by Parliament but could also accommodate a number of government departments. It was his decided opinion, he told members, that while they should step back from their decision to withhold the Palace from the military, but without renouncing to the Tapestry Chamber, they should be prepared to negotiate the transfer to Castille. The Senate, he said, should be asked to withdraw its amendment to the terms of reference of the Select Committee and if that House insisted on its maintenance, then the Legislative Assembly should, if necessary, proceed with the matter on its own.

The Speech by the Speaker, Salvatore Borg Olivier, gave rise to an impassioned debate among the Members of the House. Gerald Strickland held that the issue needed solution because it was, in his view, crucial to the future of self-government in Malta. 'If,' he told members, 'we are to have a popular government which will do good to the country and which will uplift the Maltese from their current condition, we should make this House not only possible but attractive to most people, to the representatives of the professions and to the various branches of thought and learning, not to mention the leisure classes who ought to take much more interest in politics than they do under present conditions.' The Head of Ministry concurred with most of what was said in the debate and promised that his Government would be ready to assist in every way. However, when Augustus Bartolo moved that a new Committee should be established free from any limitations as to the options that might be negotiated, the matter was brought to a halt by Enrico Mizzi's insistence that Bartolo's Motion should be given four days' notice. This opposition to the Motion, coming as it did from a Minister, soured the atmosphere and resulted in Professor Bartolo throwing the Order papers on the floor of the House.

When the Motion came up again for discussion four days later, its sponsor was Carmelo Mifsud Bonnici. After a very brief introduction he moved on to nominate the members who were to sit on the proposed Committee. These were the Speaker, Dr Ugo Mifsud, the Head of Ministry, Prof Bartolo, Col. Savona and the proponent. In the end two other members, Prokk f. Galea and Dr Adami, were added to the Committee. The Head of Ministry's view that the Senate should be asked for its concurrence was resisted but it was agreed that once the Committee had drafted its report the Senate would be consulted.[xv]

The Committee reported back in the middle of March.[xvi] In its Report the Committee reiterated the generally accepted view that the Auberge de Castille was the only building suitable for a House of Parliament but that the requirements of the military, if an exchange was to be effected, would require the surrender from civil control of the Auberge de France and the entire lower floor of the Palace, which the Committee was not, however, prepared to recommend. Thus, in the view

of the Committee, the proposed deal with the military authorities was inadvisable. However, they felt it their duty to stress the obvious and acknowledged the necessity of arriving at some satisfactory arrangement in order that Parliament and its members may be able to carry out their duties in a satisfactory manner. They therefore proposed the appointment of a Joint Select Committee (Legislative Assembly and Senate) to inquire into and report upon the 'best means of making provision for the Sittings of Parliament and the general conduct of its business.'

But a discussion of the Report, which the majority of the Members wanted to adopt immediately, was prevented by Lewis Mizzi who objected to a suspension of the rules. So it was not until March 22 that a Motion calling for the setting up of a Joint Select Committee could be moved and debated. The duty of moving the motion fell on the Head of Ministry who, while nominating the Speaker, Dr Adami, Prof. Galea, Prof. Bartolo, Dr Carmelo Mifsud Bonnici, Col. Savona and himself as members to represent the Legislative Assembly, he re-outlined the difficulties facing their work and appealed to members to support his Motion. The Motion was seconded by Bartolo who expressed the hope that every individual member of the House, 'who feels for the dignity of the new status' that Malta had attained, would help the Committee to achieve its aim.[xvii]

But there the matter rested for, by October 1926, the Committee had made little headway on its work. This became apparent during a debate on a money vote which was before the Legislative Assembly at the time. The Head of Ministry had just explained that a vote of £330 had been inserted in the estimates 'in order to give more comfort to members of this House.'[xviii] At this stage a member asked the Head of Ministry for information as to whether the Select Committee had come to some decision. The Head of Ministry replied that the Committee had as yet not reached any conclusion and in default of this he expressed his intention of proposing, at some future sitting, that a sum of money be voted in order that the Assembly may transfer to the Auberge de France. It was here that Prof. Bartolo intervened and challenged the Head of Ministry to explain what he meant. As a member of that Committee he wanted to inform the House that the Committee had never met. This statement gave rise to a heated exchange between the Members and the accusation that it was futile to appoint Select Committees when these were treated in such a way by the Government. The Government, as Bartolo pointed out, by stating that it was preparing to bring before the House a vote of expenditure of this sort had also indicated that it had come to a unilateral decision over the transfer of the House to the Auberge de France.[xix]

But the Select Committee, which was under the chairmanship of the President of the Senate, did hold a number of meetings although apparently, for reasons which are not clear, Prof. Bartolo was never notified. This was revealed two weeks later when Gerald Strickland clashed with the Head of Ministry during Question Time. Strickland had asked the Head of Ministry whether the Cabinet or the Head of Ministry had committed themselves to the transfer of Parliament without the consent of the House? In the exchange that followed the accusation that the Committee had not met was repeated and it was at this stage that the Speaker revealed that the Committee had indeed met and that it had conducted a number of inspections of possible sites which could be used as a Parliament House. Not surprisingly Bartolo was furious, but as it was Question Time, debate had to be curtailed.[xx]

The Report of the Committee, with Professor Bartolo's signature on it, was finally laid on the Table of the House by the Speaker on December 6, 1926. The Report of the Joint Committee, while reiterating the reasons why it was necessary to find more suitable premises, concluded that the only building capable of providing the required space and facilities, and which was not in the hands of the military, was the Auberge de France. The Committee was also of the view that the cost of transforming this building for the purpose of using it as a Parliament House was about £2,400. It also pointed to a number of drawbacks, such as the closeness of the Hall to other buildings, the noise from the streets, and the fact that the debates, 'especially if they are of a heated character, would be audible from the streets and from the buildings in the vicinity.'[xxi] Nonetheless, the Committee felt that the advantages tended to outweigh the disadvantages and recommended that the necessary steps should be taken to implement the Report. The Senate was to continue to use the Tapestry Chamber but the Legislative Assembly was to reserve the right to use that Chamber whenever it deemed it necessary or advisable. In this way the Joint Committee made it clear that the Maltese side of the diarchy was not prepared to surrender its foothold in the Palace. After the reading of the Report by the Clerk of the House, the Head of Ministry also laid on the Table a plan showing the proposed alterations and invited the members to find the time to inspect the premises as he intended to move the adoption of the Report the following week.

True to his word a week later the Head of Ministry presented a resolution in Parliament to this effect. But interestingly enough during Question Time, in reply to a question from Antonio Dalli as to whether the Committee had considered the use of the Public Library as suitable premises as a Parliament House, he placed on the Table a report from Hannibal Scicluna, Director of Libraries, dated December 11, 1926, explaining why it was inadvisable for the Government to proceed further with this idea.[xxii] The fact that the report featured the date of the previous day gave some members the impression that the Government had not yet settled on the Auberge de France as the most suitable place.

In moving the adoption of the Report the Head of Ministry placed a great deal of stress on the expediency of not giving up the Tapestry Chamber, going so far as to state that the Imperial Authorities had intimated that this Hall was included under reserved matters. The contention of

both Houses, however, he said, was to reject this assertion and to maintain that the Hall was intended as a place for Parliament to meet. That this point needed to be raised so forcefully gives the impression that once the British side of the diarchy had learnt of the intention of the Legislative Assembly to transfer to another building they intended to take control of the Hall. Nevertheless, the Head of Ministry recommended that Parliament should now act as advised in the Report of the Joint Committee. He concluded that the issue was not a political one but of interest to all Members of the House.

Although at the beginning of the Sitting Strickland had said that on this question there was no party line, he replied with a defiant speech. He accused the Government of incompetence and pooh-poohed the idea that any Secretary of State would allow that either House of Parliament should be evicted from the Palace building against its will. Furthermore, he rejected the Motion for, in his view, Castille was the only building 'where with dignity, or even common respect for the position of the legislators of this country, any transfer of any sort should be contemplated.' That, he said, was the opinion of the Governor and of the Head of Ministry. Why had both now retreated from that position, he asked? Even from the Report itself it was clear that the Auberge de France with its drawbacks did not possess those qualities which made it fit to house the Members of the Legislative Assembly. At this stage the debate became very personal and acrimonious and by eight in the evening no decision had been arrived at. Some Members retraced old arguments, such as the transfer to the Public Library, while others put forward new suggestions. For example there were those who suggested building a new Parliament House over or in place of the Main Guard, situated right across from the Governor's Palace.

The debate continued after the recess with a long speech from Prof. Carlo Mallia who argued that the choice of the Auberge de France was not a happy one. It did not make sense that for members to vote they would have to move to another site which in their conscience they knew was not better than the present one and which ultimately provided only a temporary solution to their problems. He declared, therefore, that despite his membership of the Cabinet, he would be voting against the Motion. Prof. Galea, who was nominated to sit on the Select Committee because of his technical knowledge and who had drawn up the plans for the minor alterations that the Select Committee had said were necessary at the Auberge de France, explained the advantages of moving to this building but admitted that he could not give his assurance that the drawbacks could be entirely eliminated. He concluded his speech by inviting his fellow MPs not to overlook the fact that the renovation of this building would be an asset to the country even if at some future time they decide to move to new premises. De Giorgio argued in favour of building a completely new Parliament House and thought the area of the Main Guard would be an excellent choice as it would place the two Palaces of the Government of Malta – the Governor's Palace and the new Parliament – across from each other and in the very heart of the capital city. He therefore proposed that the Motion should be amended so that the debate may be adjourned until 'efficient means be found for eliminating the drawbacks' mentioned in the motion. After further discussion this amendment was agreed to and the debate on the transfer of Parliament to a new site adjourned.

(End of part 1 - continues in the next issue)

See Godfrey A. Pirotta (2006) Malta's Parliament: An Official History, House of Representatives, Malta*, for a complete background to this event.*
[ii] *On several occasions when a joint sitting was required, the two Chambers had to make use of the Armoury in the Palace for their sitting.*
[iii] *The British disallowed the use of the term Prime Minister as they wanted to emphasise that Malta had not attained the status of a British Dominion and that it ultimately remained under the control of the Colonial Office. Furthermore, the Office of Head Ministry was established at the Auberge D'Aragon where it stayed until 1972 when the Auberge de Castille was returned to Malta by the British armed forces under the 1972 Treaty between the two states.*
[iv] *Debates of the Legislative Assembly, 17 Nov. 1922.*
[v] *Debates of the Legislative Assembly, 5 Jan. 1922.*
[vi] *Debates of the Legislative Assembly, 24 Nov. 1924.*
[vii] *Debates of the Legislative Assembly, 26 Feb. 1925.*
[viii] *Debates of the Legislative Assembly, 4 May 1925.*
[ix] *UPM: Unione Politica Maltese; CP: Constitutional Party; LP: Labour Party; PDN: Partito Democratico Nazzionalista.*
[x] *Debates of the Legislative Assembly, 14 May 1925.*
[xi] *Debates of the Legislative Assembly, 28 May 1925.*
[xii] *Debates of the Legislative Assembly, 15 June 1925.*

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The Main Guard building which was one of the potential sites considered for the relocation of Parliament.

The Grand Masters' Palace which has been the seat of Parliament until May 2015.

Attivitajiet internazzjonali

Laqgħa tal-Assoċjazzjoni ta' Eks Membri Parlamentari mill-Ewropa u dawk mill-Istati Membri tal-Kunsill tal-Ewropa

Bejn it-18 u l-20 ta' Marzu, is-Sur Lino Debono u Dr Emanuel Borda pparteċipaw fil-laqgħa tal-Assoċjazzjoni ta' EksMembri Parlamentari mill-Ewropa u dawk mill-Istati Membri tal-Kunsill tal-Ewropa li nżammet f'Pariġi. Id-delegazzjoni Maltija ressqet riżoluzzjoni li tikkundanna l-attakki terroristiċi li seħħew fi Brussell, Kopenħagen, Pariġi u Tuneż u għamlet referenza għad-Dikjarazzjoni ta' Malta (Appoġġ għal Proċessi ta' Tranżizzjoni Demokratika fin-Nofsinhar tal-Mediterran u fil-Lvant Nofsani), li ġiet approvata unanimament mill-Assoċjazzjoni u li sussegwentement ġiet sottomessa lill-Parlament Ewropew u lill-Kunsill tal-Ewropa.

Konferenza Interparlamentari għall-Politika Estera u ta' Sigurtà Komuni u l-Politika ta' Sigurtà u ta' Difiża Komuni

Id-delegazzjoni Maltija, magħmula mill-Onor. Luciano Busuttil u l-Onor. Francis Zammit Dimech, attendiet għall-Konferenza Interparlamentari għall-Politika Estera u ta' Sigurtà Komuni u l-Politika ta' Sigurtà u ta' Difiża Komuni bejn l-4 u s-6 ta' Marzu, li nżammet ġewwa Riga, il-Latvja. Il-Konferenza indirizzat kwistjonijiet ta' sigurtà fl-Unjoni Ewropea u tat importanza partikolari lis-sitwazzjoni ta' kunflitt fl-Ewropa tal-Lvant kif ukoll lill-kriżi fl-Afrika, peress li problemi bħat-terroriżmu, l-estremiżmu u t-traffikar tal-bnedmin huwa ta' theddida diretta għall-Istati Membri tal-UE. Numru ta' kelliema semmew ir-relazzjoni ta' ħidma bejn l-UE u n-NATO filwaqt li oħrajn indirizzaw il-bżonn ta' iktar kooperazzjoni. L-Onor. Luciano Busuttil semma l-kwistjoni tal-immigrazzjoni illegali u l-problemi li hemm fil-Libja, filwaqt li enfasizza li l-UE għandha obbligu morali li tintervjeni f'dawn is-sitwazzjonijiet.

Konferenza Parlamentari Globali

Fit-12 u t-13 ta' April, l-Ispeaker Anġlu Farrugia pparteċipa fil-Konferenza Parlamentari Globali li nżammet Washington. Il-konferenza pprovdiet pjattaforma sabiex Parlamentari jkollhom ċans jitkellmu ma' uffiċjali għolja mill-Grupp tal-Bank Dinji u l-Fond Monetarju Internazzjonali, filwaqt li tenfasizza r-rwol tagħhom fit-titjib ta' oqsma ewlenin tal-iżvilupp domestiku u tindirizza kif dawn iż-żewġ istituzzjonijiet jistgħu joffru l-appoġġ tagħhom f'dan ix-xogħol. Is-suġġetti ewlenin li ġew diskussi f'din il-Konferenza kienu jinkludu l-finanzjament tal-iżvilupp, it-titjib tas-sistemi tas-saħħa, l-ugwaljanza bejn is-sessi, il-qgħad, is-sostenibbiltà ambjentali u l-governanza tajba. L-Ispeaker Anġlu Farrugia ppreseda sessjoni dwar l-isfidi globali u reġjonali kurrenti, il-qgħad u l-inugwaljanza, li fiha huwa għamel diskors tal-ftuħ flimkien ma' kelliema oħra. Fid-diskors tiegħu, huwa għamel referenza għal numru ta' soluzzjonijiet prattiċi li jistgħu jindirizzaw il-qgħad u l-inugwaljanza, inkluż il-ġlieda kontinwa kontra l-korruzzjoni, il-kontroll tal-burokrazija u l-ħarsien tad-drittijiet tal-bniedem.

Meeting of the Association of Former European Parliamentarians and those of the Member States of the Council of Europe

Between 18 and 20 March, Mr Lino Debono and Dr Emanuel Borda participated in the meeting of the Association of Former European Parliamentarians and those of the Member States of the Council of Europe. The Maltese delegation tabled a Resolution denouncing the terrorist attacks that took place in Brussels, Copenhagen, Paris and Tunis and made reference to the Declaration of Malta (Support of Democratic Transition Processes in the Southern Mediterranean and in the Middle East), which was approved unanimously by the Association of Former Members of Parliament of the Member States of the Council of Europe and which was subsequently submitted to the European Parliament and the Council of Europe

Interparliamentary Conference for the Common Foreign and Security Policy and the Common Security and Defence Policy

The Maltese delegation, made up of the Hon. Luciano Busuttil and the Hon. Francis Zammit Dimech, attended the Interparliamentary Conference for the Common Foreign and Security Policy and the Common Security and Defence Policy between 4 and 6 March. The Conference addressed the security issues in the EU, giving particular importance to the situation of conflict in Eastern Europe as well as the crisis in North Africa, since problems like terrorism, extremism and human trafficking pose a direct threat to all EU Member States. A number of speakers mentioned the working relationship between the EU and NATO while others addressed the need for better cooperation. Hon. Luciano Busuttil mentioned the issue of illegal immigration and the problems in Libya, while stressing that the EU has a moral obligation to intervene in these situations.

Global Parliamentary Conference

Speaker Anġlu Farrugia participated in the Global Parliamentary Conference on 12 and 13 April held in Washington. The Conference provided Parliamentarians with a platform to engage with high level officials from the World Bank Group and the IMF whilst highlighting their role in improving key areas of domestic development and addressing how the two institutions could offer their support in this task. Key topics covered in this conference included financing for development, improving health systems, gender equality, unemployment, environmental sustainability and good governance. Hon. Farrugia chaired a session on current global and regional challenges, unemployment and inequality, in which he also presented a keynote address, jointly with other speakers. In his address, he made reference to a number of practical solutions that could be used to address unemployment and inequality, including the continuous fight against corruption, the control of bureaucracy and the protection of human rights.

Attivitajiet internazzjonali (Kont.)

Konferenza tal-Presidenti tal-Parlamenti tal-Unjoni Ewropea

Fl-20 u l-21 ta' April, l-Ispeaker Anġlu Farrugia attenda l-Konferenza tal-Presidenti tal-Parlamenti tal-Unjoni Ewropea (EUSC), li nżammet f'Ruma. Din il-Konferenza tlaqqa' flimkien Speakers jew Presidenti tal-Kmamar tal-Parlamenti tal-UE kif ukoll ta' numru ta' Parlamenti osservaturi. Qabel il-ftuħ uffiċjali tal-Konferenza, l-Onor. Farrugia, flimkien mal-Presidenti tal-Parlament Olandiż u dak Slovakk, iffirma dikjarazzjoni ta' koperazzjoni bejn it-tliet parlamenti bi tħejjija għall-Presidenza tal-Kunsill tal-Unjoni Ewropea ta' dawn it-tliet Stati Membri. Matul is-sessjoni li ttrattat il-Kontinent tad-Drittijiet Fundamentali, l-Onor. Farrugia tkellem dwar l-imwiet li qed iseħħu fil-Mediterran u ddeskrivihom bħala ġenoċidju tal-massa. Huwa rringrazzja lill-awtoritajiet Taljani u dawk Maltin għall-mod ta' kif qed jindirizzaw din il-problema waħedhom u saħaq li l-UE għandha tiddeċiedi jekk tridx drittijiet tal-bniedem tal-ewwel klassi għaċ-ċittadini Ewropej biss jew għal kull min jasal fuq il-kontinent. Il-Presidenza Taljana tal-EUSC ipproponiet dikjarazzjoni dwar it-tisħiħ ta' operazzjonijiet ta' salvataġġ fil-Mediterran. L-Ispeaker Anġlu Farrugia enfasizza li t-Trattati ma jagħtux mandat lill-FRONTEX biex twettaq operazzjonijiet ta' salvataġġ, għalkemm il-bastimenti kollha – inklużi bastimenti tal-FRONTEX – għandhom obbligu li jipprovdu l-għajnuna li jirriżulta mil-liġi marittima internazzjonali. Huwa ppropona emenda għad-dikjarazzjoni sabiex din tirrifletti l-mandat attwali tal-FRONTEX – il-kontroll tal-fruntieri – filwaqt li ppropona li għandu jkollha finanzjament u riżorsi addizzjonali biex dan il-mandat ikun jista' jiġi mwettaq. Dawn l-emendi ġew aċċettati unanimament.

Forum Parlamentari ta' Vjenna dwar l-Intelliġenza u s-Sigurtà

L-Ispeaker Anġlu Farrugia, l-Onor. Godfrey Farrugia u l-Onor. Chris Said ħadu sehem fil-Forum Parlamentari ta' Vjenna dwar l-Intelliġenza u s-Sigurtà fis-6 u s-7 ta' Mejju. Il-Forum ta ħarsa ġenerali lejn it-theddid attwali u futuri għall-interess nazzjonali, inkluż l-ispjunaġġ ekonomiku, il-bilanċ li għandu jkun hemm bejn id-drittijiet fundamentali għall-privatezza u l-libertajiet ċivili, kif ukoll l-aħjar prattiċi dwar ir-rwol li jista' jkollhom il-parlamenti sabiex jiġi żgurat mekkaniżmu responsabbli. Matul id-dibattitu, l-Onor. Farrugia wera l-appoġġ tiegħu għar-rwol ta' Malta fil-kriżi tal-immigranti li seħħet fil-Mediterran, kif ukoll għall-bżonn li tiġi armonizzata l-informazzjoni fl-UE. Huwa semma kif il-gwadann mit-traffikar tal-bnedmin seta' rriżulta f'ħasil ta' flus, finanzjament ta' Islamisti radikali, kif ukoll depożiti fil-banek. Huwa ddiskuta l-possibbiltà illi banek Ewropej u Amerikani jkunu qed jikkollaboraw mat-traffikanti b'mod illeċitu u enfasizza l-ħtieġa ta' koperazzjoni bejn l-UE u l-Amerika sabiex jinkiser iċ-ċiklu ta' traffikar tal-bnedmin fuq ix-xtut Libjani. L-Onor. Godfrey Farrugia enfasizza l-ħtieġa li tissaħħaħ is-sigurtà ċibernetika, il-bżonn li jinqasam il-piż u l-importanza li l-militar ikun taħt il-kontroll tal-parlamenti nazzjonali. L-Onor. Said wera l-interess tiegħu fit-twaqqif ta' kummissjoni parlamentari maħsuba biex tiżgura rwol responsabbli fir-rigward tas-sorveljanza ta' ġbir ta' informazzjoni.

International Activities (Cont.)

Vienna Parliamentary Forum on Intelligence-Security

Speaker Anġlu Farrugia, Hon. Godfrey Farrugia and Hon. Chris Said attended the Vienna Parliamentary Forum on Intelligence-Security on 6 and 7 May. The Forum gave an overview of current and future threats to national interest, including economic espionage, checks and balances that should exist between fundamental rights to privacy and civil liberties, as well as best practices on how parliaments may have a role to ensure an accountable mechanism. During the debate, Hon. Farrugia supported Malta's role in the migrant crisis taking place in the Mediterranean and the need to harmonise intelligence at EU level. He mentioned that the money gained through human trafficking could have been laundered, used to fund radical Islamists and also deposited in banks. He discussed the possibility of European and American banks collaborating illicitly with human traffickers and stressed the need for cooperation between the EU and the USA in order to break the cycle of human trafficking on the Libyan shores. Hon. Godfrey Farrugia highlighted the need to strengthen cyber security, the need for burden sharing and the importance of having the military under the control of national parliaments. Hon. Said showed his interest in the setting up of a parliamentary commission intended to ensure an accountable role with regard to oversight of intelligence gathering.

Conference of the Speakers of European Union Parliaments

On 20 and 21 April 2015, Speaker Anġlu Farrugia attended the Conference of the Speakers of European Union Parliaments (EUSC) which was held in Rome. This Conference brings together Speakers or Presidents of the Chambers of EU Parliaments as well as a number of observer Parliaments. Before the official opening of the Conference, Hon. Farrugia, together with the Speakers of the Dutch and the Slovak Parliaments, signed a declaration of cooperation between the three parliaments in preparation for the Presidencies of these three Member States. During the session dealing with the Continent of Fundamental Rights, the Hon. Farrugia highlighted the mass genocide that is happening in the Mediterranean. He thanked the Italian and Maltese authorities for trying to address this problem alone and stressed that the EU had to decide whether they want first class human rights for European citizens only or for everybody that comes to the continent. A declaration on strengthening rescue operations in the Mediterranean was proposed by the Italian Presidency of the EUSC. Speaker Anġlu Farrugia emphasised that the Treaties do not mandate FRONTEX to carry out rescue operations, although all vessels – including FRONTEX vessels – have an obligation arising from international maritime law to provide assistance. He proposed an amendment to the declaration to reflect the actual border-patrol remit of FRONTEX, while proposing additional funding and resources to carry out this mandate, which amendments were accepted unanimously.

Attivitajiet internazzjonali (Kont.)

It-Tieni Sessjoni tal-Assemblea Parlamentari tal-Kunsill tal-Ewropa

Delegazzjoni Maltija magħmula mill-Onor. Joe Debono Grech, l-Onor. Beppe Fenech Adami, l-Onor. Deborah Schembri u l-Onor. Charlò Bonnici pparteċipat fit-Tieni Sessjoni tal-Assemblea Parlamentari tal-Kunsill tal-Ewropa, li nżammet ġewwa Strażburgu bejn l-20 u l-24 ta' April. Id-delegati ħadu sehem fis-sessjoni plenarja li ttrattat l-azzjonijiet tal-Istat Islamiku, is-sitwazzjoni fl-Ukrajna, ir-rispett tad-drittijiet tal-bniedem u l-liġi internazzjonali, kif ukoll is-sorveljanza tal-massa. Id-delegati Maltin attendew ukoll għal-laqgħat tal-gruppi politiċi u pparteċipaw f'numru ta' kumitati. Matul il-laqgħa tal-kumitat dwar l-ugwaljanza u nondiskriminazzjoni, l-Onor. Schembri, li kienet rapporteur, iddiskutiet ir-rapport tagħha dwar "Diskriminazzjoni kontra nies transġeneri fl-Ewropa". Ġew proposti numru ta' emendi għal dan ir-rapport, madankollu dawn m'għaddewx u r-rapport ġie addottat mill-Assemblea kif propost. Fit-22 ta' April, fuq stedina tal-President tal-Assemblea, l-Onor. Helena Dalli, Ministru għad-Djalogu Soċjali, Affarijiet tal-Konsumatur u Libertajiet Ċivili, għamlet stqarrija dwar kwistjonijiet relatati ma' persuni transġeneri, u semmiet b'mod partikolari l-Att dwar l-Identità tal-Ġeneru, l-Espressjoni tal-Ġeneru u l-Karatteristiċi tas-Sess, li kien għadu kif ġie approvat mill-Parlament. Id-delegazzjoni Maltija ltaqgħet ukoll mar-Rappreżentant Permanenti għall-Kunsill tal-Ewropa, Dr Joseph Filletti, u d-Deputat Rappreżentant Permanenti għall-Kunsill tal-Ewropa, is-Sinjura Tania Carabott.

Laqgħa Interparlamentari dwar ir-Reviżjoni tal-Politika Ewropea tal-Viċinat

Fil-5 ta' Mejju l-Onor. Joseph Sammut u l-Onor. Tonio Fenech ħadu sehem f'Laqgħa Interparlamentari organizzata mill-Kumitat tal-Affarijiet Barranin tal-Parlament Ewropew (AFET) u s-Sottokumitat tiegħu dwar is-Sigurtà u d-Difiża (SEDE) fil-bini tal-Parlament Ewropew fi Brussell dwar ir-Reviżjoni tal-Politika Ewropea tal-Viċinat – Ħarsa lejn il-Kunsill Ewropew fuq id-Difiża ta' Ġunju 2015. Matul din il-laqgħa l-Onor. Fenech argumenta li fir-relazzjoni tagħha mal-pajjiżi tan-Nofsinhar u tal-Lvant Nofsani, l-Unjoni Ewropea mhux qed tapprezza d-differenza li hemm fil-kultura u l-valuri. Huwa enfasizza li l-UE għandha tirrispetta dawn id-differenzi kulturali sabiex il-pajjiżi Għarab ma jqisux l-isforzi Ewropej bħala theddida għall-kultura u t-twemmin tagħhom. L-Onor. Fenech qal li hemm bżonn isir sforz diplomatiku akbar sabiex jinħoloq gvern nazzjonali fil-Libja. Huwa enfasizza l-fatt li l-ISIS diġà qed tokkupa partijiet mil-Libja u li jeħtieġ li l-UE tittratta din is-sitwazzjoni b'urġenza.

Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe, Second Part Session

A Maltese delegation made up of Hon. Joe Debono Grech, Hon. Beppe Fenech Adami, Hon. Deborah Schembri and Hon. Charlò Bonnici attended the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe, Second Part Session between 20 and 24 April. The delegates attended the plenary session which dealt with issues such as the actions of the Islamic State, the situation in Ukraine, the upholding of human rights and international law, as well as mass surveillance. Each delegate also attended meetings of their political grouping and participated in a number of Committees. During the committee on equality and non-discrimination, Hon. Schembri, who was a rapporteur, debated her report on "Discrimination against transgender people in Europe". A number of amendments to this report were put forward, however these were rejected and the report was adopted by the Assembly. On 22 April, Hon. Helena Dalli, Minister for Social Dialogue, Consumer Affairs and Civil Liberties, at the invitation of the President of the Assembly, made a statement on transgender issues, and gave particular mention to the Gender Identity, Gender Expression and Sex Characteristics Act, which was recently enacted by the Maltese Parliament. The visit included a meeting between the Maltese delegation, the Permanent Representative to the Council of Europe, Dr Joseph Filletti, and Deputy Permanent Representative to the Council of Europe, Ms Tania Carabott.

Interparliamentary Committee Meeting on the Review of the European Neighbourhood Policy

On 5 May Hon. Joseph Sammut and Hon. Tonio Fenech took part in an Interparliamentary Committee Meeting organised by the European Parliament's Committee on Foreign Affairs (AFET) and its Subcommittee on Security and Defence (SEDE) in the European Parliament's premises in Brussels on the Review of the European Neighbourhood Policy - Outlook at the June 2015 European Council on Defence. During this meeting Hon. Fenech pointed out that the European Union was not appreciating the difference in culture and values when dealing with Southern and Middle East countries. He emphasized that the EU must respect these cultural differences in order for Arab countries not to see European efforts as a threat to their culture and beliefs. Hon. Fenech said that more diplomatic effort is needed to try and establish a national government in Libya. He stressed the fact that ISIS are already occupying parts of Libya and that the EU needs to treat this situation with urgency.

Ħidma Parlamentari		Parliamentary Work
April 2013 – Ġunju 2015		April 2013 – June 2015
Seduti fil-Plenarja	282	Plenary Sittings
Laqgħat tal-Kumitati Permanenti	287	Meetings of Standing Committees
Stqarrijiet Ministerjali	41	Ministerial Statements
Mozzjonijiet	254	Motions
Mozzjonijiet Privati	26	Private Members' Motions
Mozzjonijiet għall-Ewwel Qari ta' Abbozzi ta' Liġi	109	Motions for First Reading of Bills
Liġijiet mgħoddija mill-Parlament	79	Acts enacted by Parliament
Liġijiet approvati b'votazzjoni	12	Acts approved upon division
Mistoqsijiet Parlamentari	17,887	Parliamentary Questions
Dokumenti mqiegħda fuq il-Mejda tal-Kamra	5,275	Documents laid on the Table of the House
Diskorsi tal-Aġġornament	206	Adjournment Speeches
Deċiżjonijiet tas-Sedja	47	Rulings by the Chair
Membri Parlamentari li siefru fuq xogħol parlamentari	313	Members of Parliament on parliamentary duties abroad
Delegazzjonijiet parlamentari barra minn Malta	161	Parliamentary delegations abroad
Delegazzjonijiet immexxija mill-Ispeaker/Deputy Speaker	40	Delegations led by the Speaker/ Deputy Speaker