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# Press Release

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*The Deputy Speaker participates in the Conference of Speakers and Presiding Officers of the Commonwealth*

The Deputy Speaker, Ċensu Galea is currently attending the 23<sup>rd</sup> Conference of Speakers and Presiding Officers of the Commonwealth which is being held in Kota Kinabalu, Malaysia, between 10 and 13 January 2016.

This Conference is held on a bi-annual basis, and serves as an opportunity to “maintain, foster, and encourage impartiality and fairness on the part of Speakers and Presiding Officers of Parliaments, promote knowledge and understanding of parliamentary democracy in its various forms, and develop parliamentary institutions”.

The Conference is spread over three days, where various themes directly concerning the work of Speakers and Presiding Officers are discussed. The items on this year’s Conference include: The Challenges Facing the Independence of Speakers, the Role of Speakers in the Security of Parliaments and their Precincts, Parliamentary Privilege – Protecting the Effective Functioning of Democracies, and Orientation and Development for Parliamentarians.

Ċensu Galea participated in the second workshop, in which he was also a lead presenter. During this workshop the role of Speakers in the security of parliaments was discussed. In his remarks, Galea made reference to the migration to the new Parliament building in Malta and the challenges it brought about, as well as the modern security threats parliaments are facing, following a number of attacks suffered by Parliaments over the years. These incidents, together with other considerations, have led to a greater responsibility of the Speaker in relation to the security of the building and its precincts. (Speech in attachment)

During the Conference, Deputy Speaker Ċensu Galea also attended the Standing Committee Meeting, in which Malta holds the British Isles and Mediterranean Region seat, where the agenda for the Conference was discussed and a number of future meetings were confirmed. During this meeting a decision was taken that the Standing Committee Meeting scheduled for 2019 be hosted by Malta.

The Conference will come to an end with the election of the 2016 – 2018 Standing Committee members.