



Press Release

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Maltese delegation takes part in the Interparliamentary Committee Meeting (ICM) on the UN Global Compacts and the role of parliaments

A delegation of the Maltese Parliament participated in the Interparliamentary Committee Meeting (ICM) on the UN Global Compacts and the role of parliaments which took place in Brussels on 27 February 2018. The event comprised a session on the global compact on refugees and a session on the global compact for safe, orderly and regular migration. The Maltese parliamentary delegation was composed of Government Member Stefan Zrinzo Azzopardi and Member of Parliament Simon Busuttil.

The ICM was organised by the Committee on Civil Liberties, Justice and Home Affairs of the European Parliament in association with the Committee of Foreign Affairs. It provided a discussion platform for representatives of the European Parliament and the national parliaments of the EU to discuss the content of the UN Global Compacts on refugees and migrants, and how parliaments can strengthen their role in this process which will lead to their adoption later this year. Furthermore, the ICM was intended to give a voice to the parliamentary perspective of the EU position and to support the work of the EEAS and of the member states in the final phase of the process leading to the adoption of the compacts. A number of UN agencies, the EEAS, the European Commission, the Council Presidency, and different stakeholders from the civil society also participated in the discussions.

MP Simon Busuttil intervened in the first session on the global compact on refugees. He welcomed the 'Zero drafts' which he described as balanced. The global compacts are an opportunity for the European Union to influence the debate on migration globally, which can change the ways states act and interact on migration. It is also an opportunity to involve and commit both countries of origin and countries of transit to find and develop solutions which will be implemented jointly. The global compacts will test the EU's ability to unite and to share responsibility, which is very important for frontier states such as Malta. The EU cannot afford to present a divided position on the international level. Asylum seeking tends to be a highly divisive subject, especially on the national level, however the global compacts can provide the EU with the opportunity to establish a common position and to speak with one voice.

Most parliamentarians who took the floor during the general debates however, expressed their general positions on asylum seeking and migration, rather than their views on the global compacts, which reflects the need for more in-depth discussions and negotiations between stakeholders targeting the global compacts. Today's ICM has clearly exposed the fact that member states' positions on the global compacts are not yet clear and well defined. Furthermore, the end of the second general debate

was characterised by interventions from parliamentarians hailing from member states that have a more hard-line approach to asylum seeking and migration, and which would certainly not favour approaches based on responsibility sharing. On the other hand, a number of parliamentarians, including MEPs, emphasised the importance of adopting a more human-centric approach, which respects the fundamental human right to seek asylum and the responsibility of states to uphold this right.

The outcome of today's meeting will contribute towards the development of the European Parliament's perspective on the negotiations, which will materialise in a plenary resolution to be adopted in March 2018.