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# Press Release

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## **PRESS RELEASE BY THE OFFICE OF THE SPEAKER**

*Speaker Anġlu Farrugia delivers his keynote speech at the 'Europe of the Carpathians' conference organised by the Sejm of the Republic of Poland in Krynica, Poland*

Your Excellency Marek Kuchciński, Marshal of the Sejm of the Republic of Poland,  
Your Excellency Stanislaw Karczewski, Marshal of the Senate of the Republic of Poland,  
Excellencies,  
Distinguished guests,

It is indeed a great honour for me to be here today and to participate in this conference. I wish to wholeheartedly thank the Marshal of the Sejm and the Marshal of the Senate for the very warm welcome and their hospitality. They should also be praised for taking the lead to further promote relations between national parliaments.

As a Mediterranean nation, Malta follows closely maritime issues, that encompass energy, the environment, climate change, disaster management and trade, although its main function of enabling dialogue can be easily applied to other areas of interest. Dialogue is vital in dealing with economic, political, environmental and social challenges. The three seas that are the subject of today's session and the Mediterranean are rich in history and culture and these form and shape our behaviour nowadays. Our respective regions need to adapt to new challenges, from climate change and its increasingly severe consequences on our weather to changes in our economy as IT and artificial intelligence are changing our work and social patterns at an increasingly fast rate.

Malta has always historically encouraged dialogue between different countries and civilisations and has worked relentlessly to stabilise relations in the region. It is more than 40 years ago that upon Malta's insistence a chapter on the Mediterranean was included in the final declaration of the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe. In my address here today, I would like to reflect on the structure and the work of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Mediterranean – known more commonly by its acronym PAM – which has its Secretariat in Malta since 2009. Over the past years the PAM has been instrumental in bringing to the fore particular areas for dialogue through parliamentary representatives from its Member States.

The Parliamentary Assembly of the Mediterranean is structured in such a way as to comprise a number of committees discussing a number of different themes. The main organs of the PAM consist of the Assembly, the Bureau, three Standing Committees, ad hoc committees, Special Task Forces and the Secretariat. The three Standing Committees are very important interparliamentary tools as they draw up opinions and recommendations on political, economic, environmental, cultural and social issues. Although these opinions and recommendations are not binding on the parliaments of

the PAM, they signal a political will to act and push for action. The three Standing Committees are the following:

- The First Standing Committee on Political and Security-Related Cooperation
- The Second Standing Committee on Economic, Social and Environmental Cooperation
- The Third Standing Committee on Dialogue among Civilisations and Human Rights.

The setting up of these committees was followed by the setting up of a number of working groups under the form of ad hoc Committees and Special Task Forces, which include:

- A Working Group on Terrorism and Organized crime;
- A Panel on Trade and Investment in the Mediterranean;
- A Working Group on Human Rights and;
- Working group on the Environment

A regional parliamentary assembly benefits from the setting up of specialised committees as it is an effective means of bringing together Members of Parliament with an interest to focus on the specific issues that the region is facing. It is pertinent to focus on specific economic challenges and particular situations that some of the countries present here are facing with regard to their territory.

As mentioned earlier, the Parliamentary Assembly of the Mediterranean has also set up an ad hoc committee on energy and related issues. I am sure that through first-hand experience all of us not only recognise the importance of a secure energy supply to our economies, but we are increasingly understanding how closely it is related to climate change and the environment. The impact of the environment on the citizens' well-being is well-documented, and therefore it is essential for parliamentary assemblies to discuss these areas if Members of Parliament aim to make their mandate meaningful for their electors.

The Parliamentary Assembly of the Mediterranean has also set up a task force on small and medium sized enterprises and maritime trade. The role of small and medium enterprises in our economies cannot be underestimated. These enterprises are at the forefront of innovation and creativity that help to propel our economies forward and to boost both employment as well as research and innovation. This area is also particularly relevant to ensure innovation and development in the energy sector. This is essential for both the Mediterranean and for Central and Eastern Europe which face their own energy challenges. Through innovation and the right legislative framework, the private sector should be encouraged to take positive actions to transform these challenges into economic opportunities. In the Mediterranean area our approach to renewable energy, thanks to the abundant sun which shines brightly almost all year round, solar energy is of particular importance.

Unfortunately, organized crime and terrorism have become an everyday threat in our countries and we cannot afford not to recognise that this has to be contended with. These delicate and sensitive subjects are also discussed in the Parliamentary Assembly of the Mediterranean and fall within the remit of a Working Group on Terrorism and organised crime.

Esteemed colleagues,

With the benefit of having served in Parliament for a number of years, both as a Member of Parliament and as Speaker, I view the role of a regional assembly as an essential forum for the discussion and exchange of ideas and a meeting of cultures that is so essential in our times. However, our work should not stop at the dialogue as otherwise we will be relegated to 'another talking shop'. These

inter-parliamentary exchanges should translate into investment in our infrastructure, particularly in our energy infrastructure. Some of our economies are enjoying a good period of economic growth, however this necessitates long-term investment to be sustained.

Of course, our membership of the EU or its close proximity, means that our actions require further coordination within or with the bloc. Regional assemblies facilitate this coordination when they can speak with one voice. The Parliamentary Assembly of the Mediterranean has helped increase contacts between the European Union and the Mediterranean and this is important to also increase economic contacts and to deepen economic ties. In the EU there has been growing realisation of the economic potential of neighbouring countries to help improve economic ties. Malta has always historically encouraged dialogue between different countries and civilisations.

Esteemed colleagues,

To conclude, as Speaker of the Maltese House of Representatives I am very pleased to see that Central and Eastern European Parliaments are working to establish an inter-parliamentary Assembly. It is my strong belief that such assemblies help our respective national assemblies to participate in a stronger dialogue on the major issues that concern our countries. Let us take forward this dialogue in our common pursuit of peace and prosperity for all.