



Malta-EU Steering & Action Committee

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PRESS RELEASE

Managing Climate Change: Global, EU and Maltese perspectives

The challenges being faced by Europe and globally regarding climate change, the climate deal which is hoped to be reached in Copenhagen in December this year, and the impact of the developed world on climate change as well as the national strategy to address these issues were discussed at a Seminar organised by the Malta EU-Steering and Action Committee and the Ambassador of Sweden to Malta on 9 September.

In his opening statement Dr Vanni Xuereb, Head of MEUSAC, said that the issue of climate change has been high on MEUSAC's agenda and has been tackled through MEUSAC's consultation mechanisms both at Core Group level as well as at Sectoral Committee level with civil society organisations. Being one of the main priorities of the Swedish Presidency, MEUSAC has been working closely with the Swedish Embassy throughout these last months, Dr Xuereb stated.

The Swedish Ambassador to Malta, Ms Ula Gudmundson stated that climate change and its effects is the greatest challenge for the Presidency. Ms Gudmundson mentioned the EU targets set to reduce Carbon Dioxide (CO₂) emissions by 2020 and the willingness to take on a 30% target if an international agreement is reached in Copenhagen, as well as the recognition that atmospheric green-house gas levels must be stabilised to a level needed to stay below the EU temperature target of 2°C. Ambassador Gudmundson stated that Malta has an important role to play in this context. No country is immune to climate change, Ms Gudmundson said. Malta in particular is vulnerable to the rise in sea level and changes in the terrestrial and marine ecosystems. The Swedish Ambassador to Malta stated that it is encouraging to see the importance that climate change is being given by Malta

In his inaugural address, the Minister for Resources and Rural Affairs, the Hon. George Pullicino, stated that awareness of the issue of climate change has increased and discussions have gained momentum in the past months. Government has assessed objectives and capabilities, and is aware that Malta is highly susceptible to climate change due its dense population and limited resources. Minister Pullicino stated that this has led Malta to support the EU climate change package and, in December 2008, Malta had already declared its



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intention to join Annex 1¹ of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC). He stated that Malta never shunned its responsibilities and that Government is aware that this will require drastic and holistic action as well as concrete measures that are highly challenging for our country. In fact, Government embarked on projects such as the National Strategy on Greenhouse gases which was recently finalised and which will be presented to Parliament shortly as well. Minister Pullicino also mentioned the recently appointed Committee tasked with the drafting of a National Strategy on Adaptation for Climate Change which will draft a strategy tailored to address Malta's adaptation concerns.

Minister Pullicino reiterated that Governments will gather in Copenhagen to forge an agreement on climate change that will reshape the lives of human beings for generations to come. Malta, he said, will not agree to short sighted agreements. Any future agreement must be designed to ensure that adaptation measures are met.

Mr Michael Zammit Cutajar, the Maltese Ambassador on Climate Change, gave an overview of the state of play of global negotiations. He also outlined the scientific, economic and political implications of climate change. Ambassador Zammit Cutajar identified a global transition to low emission production and consumption of energy as one of the major challenges, suggesting that energy saving initiatives and better efficiency options of energy production could be major contributors to mitigate climate change.

Mr Zammit Cutajar said that the Copenhagen deal is about moving away from burden-sharing to a shared vision of cooperation against a common threat, shared opportunities and fair outcomes in view of the fact that while, for instance, the EU is committing itself to reduce emissions by 30%, the Russian Federation has not committed itself to reducing emissions, while Japan and the USA have not increased the rate at which emissions will be reduced. Ambassador Zammit Cutajar gave a brief overview of the two tracks leading into the Copenhagen Protocol: the Kyoto track and the Convention track which includes the USA and the less developed countries. Mr Zammit Cutajar reiterated that another challenge being faced at Copenhagen will be that of mitigating tracks to reach a fair deal.

¹ The Annex I parties are those industrialized countries listed in this annex to the Convention which were committed to return their greenhouse-gas emissions to 1990 levels by the year 2000 as per Article 4.2 (a) and (b). They have also accepted emissions targets for the period 2008-12 as per Article 3 and Annex B of the Kyoto Protocol.



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Dr Johan Schaar, Director of the International Commission for Climate Change and Development set up by the Swedish Prime Minister in 2007, presented the Commission's Report "Closing the Gaps". Climate change, stated Dr Schaar, seriously affects the under-developed countries and communities. The Commission was thus tasked with analysing what is needed to strengthen their abilities to adapt to climate change impacts. In fact, the Commission studied climate change impacts in vulnerable environments in different parts of the world, such as in Cambodia, Mali and Bolivia. The poorer the community, the more important it is to build up people's adaptive capacity and resilience. Various measures are suggested in the Report to adapt to climate change: in more affluent societies, adaptation will emphasise technical measures. Institutions have a crucial role to play everywhere while financial resources for adaptation to climate change will be in the region of several tens of billion dollars.

Mr David Spiteri Gingell, Chairperson of the National Climate Change Committee, outlined the Climate Change Strategy for Malta which includes the active involvement of civil society, establishing an institutional framework for climate change and building on the appropriate human resources, integrating climate change in policy design and the identification of abatement measures such as energy saving lamps in the domestic sector; energy performance in buildings i.e. the heating and cooling installations, lighting installations, the position and orientation of the building; the promotion of energy efficient domestic appliances and better efficiency measures in street lighting.

Other interventions were made by the Hon. Mr Jesmond Mugliett, Head of the Maltese Delegation to the Parliamentary Assembly of the Mediterranean, and the Hon. Leo Brincat, Main Opposition Spokesperson for the Environment, Sustainable Development and Climate Change. When the discussion was opened to the floor, issues were raised that included Clean Development Mechanism projects, the relocation of industry and how this will be tackled in Copenhagen, and the Mediterranean Solar Plan.

The Seminar was brought to a conclusion by the Parliamentary Secretary for Public Dialogue and Information, the Hon. Dr. Chris Said, who mentioned the initiatives undertaken by the Government to help adapt to the impact of climate change. These include the Energy Proposal for Malta, the National Energy Efficiency Action Plan, the revised Solid Waste Management Strategy and the draft national strategy for policy and abatement measures to the reduction of Greenhouse Gas Emissions. Dr Said stated that such initiatives boost our



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economy and ensure a more stable supply of energy. Government, he said, is set to transform the challenge to reach reduced emission targets into an opportunity to create new green jobs.

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