No. 0143

MEUSAC DISCUSSES THE PROGRAMME OF THE COMMISSION AND OF THE COUNCIL FOR 2009

The Core Group of the Malta-EU Steering and Action Committee (MEUSAC) met again on the 30th January 2009 under the chairmanship of the Hon. Dr. Chris Said, Parliamentary Secretary for Public Dialogue and Information.

Items on the Agenda

Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions - Commission Legislative and Work Programme 2009 - Acting now for a better Europe (COMM (2008) 712 final) and the *Piorities and Programme of the Czech Presidency* of the Council for January - June 2009.

The discussion was introduced by the Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs, the Hon. Dr. Tonio Borg who presented the programme and priorities of the EU institutions for 2009 from the perspective of the Maltese government. Dr. Borg spoke about the need to move ahead with the ratification of the Treaty of Lisbon in order to strengthen the EU institutions and to prepare the Union to face up to the challenges of the first quarter of the 21st century. The Deputy Prime Minister referred to the motto of the Czech presidency "Europe Without Barriers" and to the 3 main priorities of the presidency's programme: Economy, Energy and EU in the World.

Minister Borg emphasized the importance to keep issues relating to the Mediterranean in view of the emphasis being placed by the presidency on the Eastern partnership. He spoke at length on the need to intensify efforts for peace in the Middle East, also referring to the initiatives by the new US Administration. In the coming spring, a summit will take place between the EU Heads of State and Government and US President Barack Obama. Dr. Borg expressed support for the presidency's efforts in terms of the enlargement of the Union. He also spoke about the importance to build upon the EU's relations with countries such as China, Japan and India.

Referring to the Commission's Programme, the Deputy Prime Minister praised the Commission's emphasis, placing the European citizen as the main focus of the Union's activities. He also referred to efforts to strengthen cooperation between Member States in issues such as illegal immigration.

The Deputy Prime Minister also spoke about issues relating to better regulation of the EU Institutions, the financial crisis and energy.

Following the Minister's intervention, a presentation was delivered by Mr. Joe Fenech, Director EU Affairs within the Planning and Priorities Coordination Division (PPCD) of the Office of the Prime Minister. Mr. Fenech spoke in greater detail about the Commission's Programme. The four priorities of the Commission are Economic Growth and Jobs, Climate Change and a Sustainable Europe, Citizen issues, and Europe in the World. He also presented the Maltese Government's position on the Commission's programme.

Mr. Julian Micallef, Acting Head of Consultation, MEUSAC, presented the Priorities and Programme of the Czech Presidency of the EU Council. He described in detail how the presidency is pushing ahead with the removal of existing barriers both within the EU and also vis-à-vis the rest of the World.

Points were raised by a number of members relating to the need for a more concerted effort by the EU to address the Middle East conflict and in relation to the ratification of the Lisbon Treaty with particular reference to problems within the Czech government in relation to the Treaty.

Implementation of Directive 2002/49/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council of 25 June 2002 relating to the assessment and management of environmental noise.

This item was placed on the agenda at the request of the representative of *Alternattiva Demokratika*, Mr. Carmel Cacopardo.

Mr. Martin Seychell, Director, Environment Protection at the Malta Environment & Planning Authority (MEPA) introduced the discussion by outlining the main points of the Directive. The Directive deals with unwanted or harmful outdoor sound created by human activities, including noise emitted by means of transport, road traffic, rail traffic, air traffic, and from sites of industrial activity. Of particular relevance to Malta are the roads since Malta International Airport does not qualify as a major airport under the Directive. Member States are obliged to prepare noise maps - software models map designed for the global assessment of noise exposure in a given area due to different noise sources or for overall predictions for such an area. Following this, Member States have to determine acceptable levels and the necessary measures to be adopted. The Directive itself does not indicate specific levels to be adopted by Member States and this is left to each Member State to determine due to varying economic and social factors such as population densities and levels of pollution. The Directive also provides for a system of monitoring.

Malta is still in the initial stages of the implementation of the Directive due to lack of the necessary expertise. In view of this, MEPA has engaged foreign consultants to assist in the identification of the areas to be mapped, the creation of the noise map, public consultation, recommednations on the Action Plans, and drafting of the tenders for successive stages relating to purchase of equipment for the monitoring. Government would also require to determine whether specific legislation would be required on the basis of the noise maps.

Following remarks that too much time was allowed to pass before adequate steps were taken, Mr. Seychell replied that there is a one year period for the process he described. He also referred to the time table for the Directive and that there were different stages for the implementation of the Directive. He also emphasised the expertise required which is not always so readily available.

Appreciation and Congratulations

At the beginning of the meeting, the chairperson, the Hon. Dr. Said, on behalf of all the members of the Core Group, expressed his satisfaction at the nomination of Dr. George Abela to be the next President of Malta. Dr. Abela was a member of the MEUSAC Core Group for two terms, firstly during the accession negotiations process and more recently as representative of the Labour Party. Whilst thanking Dr. Abela for his contribution towards MEUSAC, the chairperson requested the Head of MEUSAC to express the members' congratulations and best wishes to Dr. Abela.

Nominations

The chairperson also welcomed new members and substitute members of the Core Group. Following the merger between the Chamber of Commerce and Enterprise and the Federation of Industry, Mr. Kevin J. Borg and Eng. Ray Muscat are now representing the Malta Chamber of Commerce, Enterprise and Industry. The Hon. Dr. Luciano Busuttil has been nominated as the member representing the Labour Party. Mrs. Mary Ann Sant Fournier was nominated as a substitute member representing the Confederation of Malta Trade Unions (CMTU), Mr. George Micallef as substitute member representing the Malta Hotels & Restaurants Association and Dr. Joe Mifsud as substitute member representing the Labour Party.

Other matters

MEUSAC Head Dr. Vanni Xuereb and Mr. Julian Micallef, Acting Head responsible for Consultation within MEUSAC, updated the members about the setting up of the Sectoral Committees. Following the call for expression of interest issued in November 2008, twenty six civil society organisations expressed their interest to form part of the sectoral committees. Dr. Xuereb reminded the members about the invitation extended to organisations represented on the Core Group to nominate representatives on the sectoral committees. Furthermore, the election of three civil society organisations to represent the voluntary sector on the Core Group is expected to take place in the coming weeks. The MEUSAC Head also announced that five new members of staff should be joining MEUSAC in February and that they would provide the necessary backbone for the management, functioning and administration of the Sectoral Committees.

Present for the meeting of the Core Group were: Parliamentary Secretary Dr. Chris Said (*Chairperson*), Dr. Vanni Xuereb (Head MEUSAC), Dr. Godwin Grima (Principal Permanent Secretary), Mr. Richard Cachia Caruana (Permanent Representative to the EU), Mr. Julian Micallef (Acting Head of Consultation, MEUSAC and Secretary of the Core Group), Ms. Graziella Pullicino (Acting Head of the EU Secretariat - OPM), Mr. Sonny Portelli (Chairman MCESD), Dr. Gabriella Pace (Head of Information MEUSAC), Mr. Carmel Cacopardo (Alternattiva Demokratika), Mr. Arthur Rossi (Confederation of Malta Trade Unions), Mr. Joe Grech (Gozo Business Chamber), Eng. Ray Muscat (Malta Chamber of Commerce, Enterprise and Industry), Mr. Pierre Fava (Malta Emplyers' Association), Mr. George Micallef (Malta Hotel and Restaurants Association), Dr. Joe Mifsud (Partit Laburista), Dr. Paul Borg Olivier (Partit Nazzjonalista), as well as substitute members, the directors of the EU Affairs directorates in the various Ministries, MEPA officials and members of staff of MEUSAC.

The next meeting of the Core Group will take place on Friday, 27th February 2009.

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<u>IL-MEUSAC JIDDISKUTI L-PJAN TA' ĦIDMA TAL-KUMMISSJONI U TAL-KUNSILL GĦALL-2009</u>

Illum, 30 ta' Jannar 2009, iltaqa' l-*Core Group* tal-*Malta-EU Steering and Action Committee* (MEUSAC), taħt il-presidenza tas-Segretarju Parlamentari għall-Konsultazzjoni Pubblika u Informazzjoni, l-Onor. Chris Said.

Għad-diskussjoni fuq l-Aġenda tal-laqgħa tal-lum kien hemm:

Komunikazzjoni mill-Kummissjoni lill-Parlament Ewropew, lill-Kunsill, lill-Kumitat Ekonomiku u Soċjali Ewropew u lill-Kumitat tar-Reġjuni - Programm Leġiżlattiv u ta' Ħidma tal-Kummissjoni 2009 - Naġixxu issa għal Ewropa aħjar (KUMM (2008) 712 finali) kif ukoll *il-Programm u l-Prijoritajiet tal-Presidenza Ċeka* tal-Kunsill għal Jannar-Ġunju 2009.

Id-diskussjoni bdiet b'intervent tal-Viċi Prim Ministru u Ministru tal-Affarjiet Barranin, l-Onor. Dott. Tonio Borg li ppreżenta l-Programmi tal-Kummissjoni u tal-Kunsill għall-2009 filwaqt li fisser il-prijoritajiet tal-Gvern Malti fl-UE fix-xhur li ġejjin. Il-Ministru Borg tkellem dwar il-bżonn li jiġi ratifikat it-Trattat ta' Liżbona biex l-UE tkun tista' issaħħaħ l-istituzzjonijiet tagħha u tilqa' għall-isfidi tal-ewwel kwart tas-Seklu 21. Il-Viċi Prim Ministru rrefera wkoll għall-motto tal-Presidenza Ċeka "L-Ewropa mingħajr Barrieri" u għat-tliet prijoritajiet ewlenin tal-programm ta' din il-presidenza: l-Ekonomija, l-Enerġija, u l-Ewropa fid-Dinja.

Il-Ministru tal-Affarjiet Barranin tkellem ukoll dwar l-importanza li materji li jinteressaw lir-reġjun tal-Mediterran jibqgħu jingħataw l-importanza meħtieġa fid-dawl tal-enfasi li l-Presidenza Ċeka qed tagħti lill-Ewropa tal-Lvant. Tkellem fit-tul dwar il-bżonn li jissaħħu l-isforzi għall-paċi fil-Lvant Nofsani filwaqt li semma' l-opportunità ġdida li tista' toħloq l-inizjattiva tal-Amministrazzjoni ġdida fl-Istati Uniti għal dan ir-reġjun. Fir-Rebbiegħa li ġejja, ser issir laqgħa għolja bejn il-kapijiet tal-Istat u tal-Gvernijiet tal-pajjiżi membri tal-UE u l-President Barack Obama. Dott. Borg esprima l-appoġġ tal-Gvern Malti għall-isforzi tal-Presidenza Ċeka għat-tkabbir tal-Unjoni. Tkellem ukoll dwar l-importanza li jissaħħu r-relazzjonijiet tal-UE ma' pajjiżi bħaċ-Ċina, il-Ġappun u l-Indja.

Filwaqt li rrefera għall-Programm tal-Kummissjoni, il-Viċi Prim Ministru faħħar l-għażla tal-Kummissjoni biex iċ-ċittadin Ewropew ikun fiċ-ċentru tal-

attenzjoni fil-ħidma tal-istituzzjonijiet Ewropej. Irrefera wholl għall-isforzi tal-Kummissjoni biex tissaħħaħ il-kooperazzjoni bejn il-pajjiżi membri tal-UE f'oqsma bħall-immigrazzjoni illegali.

Il-Viċi Prim Ministru tkellem ukoll dwar materji bħal regolamentazzjoni aħjar tal-istituzzjonijiet Ewropej, il-kriżi finanzjarja u l-enerġija.

Wara l-interevent tal-Ministru Borg, saret preżentazzjoni mis-Sur Joe Fenech, Direttur tad-Direttorat għall-Affarjiet tal-UE fil-*Planning and Priorities Coordination Division* (PPCD) fl-Uffiċċju tal-Prim Ministru. Hu tkellem f'iktar dettall dwar il-Programm tal-Kummissjoni u l-erba' prijoritajiet tiegħu: it-tkabbir tal-ekonomija u l-impjiegi, il-bidla fil-klima u Ewropa sostenibbli, Ewropa qrib iċ-ċittadin, u l-Ewropa bħala Sieħeb Dinji. Hu fisser ukoll il-pożizzjoni tal-Gvern Malti dwar il-Programm tal-Kummissjoni.

Is-Sur Julian Micallef, Aġent Kap responsabbli mill-Konsultazzjoni fil-MEUSAC fisser il-Prijoritajiet u l-Programm tal-Presidenza Ċeka tal-Kunsill (Jannar - Ġunju 2009). Hu tkellem dwar kif il-presidenza qed taħdem biex jiġu eliminati barrieri interni fl-UE kif ukoll mal-pajjiżi l-oħra tad-dinja.

Il-membri qajjmu numru ta' punti dwar il-bżonn ta' sforzi akbar mill-UE għall-paċi fil-Lvant Nofsani kif ukoll ir-ratifika tat-Trattat ta' Liżbona fid-dawl tal-problemi interni fi ħdan il-gvern tar-Repubblika Ċeka.

L-implimentazzjoni tad-Direttiva 2002/49/KE tal-Parlament Ewropew u tal-Kunsill tal-25 ta' Ġunju 2002 li tirrigwardja l-istudju u l-amministrazzjoni tal-ħsejjes ambjentali.

Din il-materja tressqet fuq talba tar-rappreżentant tal-Alternattiva Demokratika, il-Perit Carmel Cacopardo.

Is-Sur Martin Seychell, Direttur, l-Awtorita' ta' Malta dwar l-Ambjent u l-Ippjanar (MEPA) introduċa l-materja billi semma l-punti ewlenin tad-Direttiva. Id-Direttiva tapplika għal ħsejjes ambjentali, jiġifieri il-ħsejjes mhux mitluba jew ta' ħsara fl-apert maħluqa mill-attivitajiet umani, inklużi l-ħsejjes emissi minn mezzi tat-trasport, traffiku fit-triq, traffiku tal-ferroviji, traffiku tal-ajru, u minn siti tal-attivita industrijali. Ta' rilevenza għal Malta huma t-toroq peress li l-Ajruport Internazzjonali ta' Malta ma jikkwalifikax bħala ajruport maġġuri skond id-Direttiva. Il-pajjiżi membri huma obbligati li jħejju "mappa strateġika tal-ħsejjes", jiġifieri, mappa ddisinjata għal studju globali tal-esposizzjoni tal-ħsejjes f'żona partikolari lejn sorsi differenti tal-ħoss jew għal tbassir globali għal żona bħal dik. Wara dan, il-pajjiżi jridu jistabbilixxu livelli aċċettabli u miżuri neċessarji għall-implimentazzjoni. Id-Direttiva fiha nfisha ma

tistabbilixxix il-livelli li l-pajjiżi għandhom jaddottaw peress li dawn jiġu deċiżi minn kull pajjiż rispettivament biex jirriflettu l-varjazzjonijiet ta' natura ekonomika u soċjali bejn pajjiż u ieħor bħad-densità tal-popolazzjoni u l-livelli tat-tniġġiż. Id-Direttiva taħseb ukoll għal sistema ta' rappurtaġġ.

Malta hi fl-ewwel stadji fl-implimentazzjoni ta' din id-Direttiva minħabba problemi ta' nuqqas ta' esperti f'dan il-qasam. Minħabba dan, il-MEPA qabbdet konsulenti barranin biex jassistu fl-identifikazzjoni taż-żoni li jridu jiġu mmapjati, fit-tfassil tal-mappa strateġika tal-ħsejjes, fil-konsultazzjoni pubblika, fir-rakkomandazzjonijiet għall-pjanijiet ta' azzjoni, u f'dak li għandu x'jaqsam mal-istadji li jkun imiss fl-implimentazzjoni tad-Direttiva bħax-xiri tal-apparat għal *monitoring*. Il-Gvern ikun irid jara ukoll jekk tkun meħtieġa leġiżlazzjoni speċifika minħabba l-mappa strateġika tal-ħsejjes.

Wara li saru rimarki dwar id-dewmien li kien hemm sakemm ittieħdet azzjoni mill-MEPA, is-Sur Seychell fisser li dan kollu jrid isir fuq perjodu ta' sena. Fisser kif id-Direttiva fiha nnfisha tagħti *timetable* u li d-Direttiva ma tridx tiġi implimentata kollha fl-istess waqt. Hu enfasizza wkoll li mhuwiex faċli ssib l-esperti li hemm bżonn.

Ħajr u Awguri

Fil-bidu tal-laqgħa, iċ-*chairperson* l-Onor. Dott. Said, esprima l-ferħ tal-membri tal-*Core Group* għan-nomina ta' Dott. Ġorġ Abela, li kien għal darbtejn membru tal-*Core Group*, bħala President ta' Malta. Dott. Abela kien membru tal-*Core Group* fi żmien in-negozjati għas-sħubija ta' Malta fl-UE, u reċentement bħala rappreżentant tal-Partit Laburista. Filwaqt li radd ħajr lil Dott. Abela għas-sehem tiegħu fil-MEUSAC, iċ-*chairperson* talab lill-Kap tal-MEUSAC biex iwassal l-awguri tal-membri tal-*Core Group* lil Dott. Abela.

Nomini

Iċ-ċhairperson ta merħba lil membri u sostituti ġodda tal-Core Group. Wara l-amalgamazzjoni tal-Kamra tal-Kummerċ u l-Intrapriża u l-Federazzjoni tal-Industrja f'entità waħda, il-*Malta Chamber of Commerce, Enterprise and Industry*, is-Sur Kevin J. Borg u l-Inġ. Ray Muscat issa huma membri f'isem din l-organizzazzjoni. L-Onor. Dott. Luciano Busuttil inħatar membru f'isem il-Partit Laburista. Is-Sinjura Mary Ann Sant Fournier inħatret membru sostitut f'isem il-Konfederazzjoni tat-Trade Unions Maltin (CMTU), is-Sur George Micallef inħatar membru sostitut f'isem il-*Malta Hotels & Restaurants Association* u Dott. Joe Mifsud bħala membru sostitut f'isem il-Partit Laburista.

Affarijiet oħra

Il-Kap tal-MEUSAC Dott. Vanni Xuereb u l-Aġent Kap responsabbli mill-Konsultazzjoni fil-MEUSAC, is-Sur Julian Micallef taw tagħrif lill-membri dwar it-twaqqif tal-Kumitati Settorjali. Wara s-sejħa li kienet saret f'Novembru li għadda, sitta u għoxrin organizzazzjoni tas-soċjetà ċivili esprimew l-interess tagħhom li jkunu rappreżentati fil-kumitati. Dott. Xuereb fakkar lill-membri dwar is-sejħa li saret lill-organizzazzjonijiet rappreżentati fil-*Core Group* biex huma wkoll jinnominaw membri f'dawn il-kumitati. Hu ttamat li fil-ġimgħat li ġejjin issir ukoll l-għażla ta' tlett organizzazzjonijiet tas-soċjetà ċivili li ser jirrappreżentaw lis-settur fuq il-*Core Group*. Il-Kap tal-MEUSAC ħabbar li fi Frar ser jingħaqdu ħames persuni mal-*istaff* tal-MEUSAC li x-xogħol ewlieni tagħhom ser ikun dak li jipprovdu l-qafas neċessarju biex il-ħidma tal-Kumitati Settorjali tkun effikaċi.

Preżenti għal-laqgħa tal-*Core Group* kien hemm: is-Segretarju Parlamentari Dott. Chris Said (*Chairperson*), Dott. Vanni Xuereb (Kap tal-MEUSAC), Dott. Godwin Grima (Segretarju Permanenti Ewlieni), is-Sur Richard Cachia Caruana (Rappreżentant Permanenti għall-UE), is-Sur Julian Micallef (Aġent Kap Konsultazzjoni tal-MEUSAC u Segretarju tal-*Core Group*), is-Sinjorina Graziella Pullicino (Aġent Kap tas-Segretarjat UE fl-Uffiċċju tal-Prim Ministru), is-Sur Sonny Portelli (*Chairman* MCESD), Dott. Gabriella Pace (Kap tal-Informazzjoni fil-MEUSAC), is-Sur Carmel Cacopardo (Alternattiva Demokratika), is-Sur Arthur Rossi (*Confederation of Malta Trade Unions*), is-Sur Joe Grech (*Gozo Business Chamber*), l-Inġ. Ray Muscat (*Malta Chamber of Commerce, Enterprise and Industry*), is-Sur Pierre Fava (*Malta Employers' Association*), is-Sur George Micallef (*Malta Hotels and Restaurants Association*), Dott. Joe Mifsud (Partit Laburista), Dott. Paul Borg Olivier (Partit Nazzjonalista), kif ukoll membri sostituti, id-diretturi tad-direttorati għall-Affarjiet tal-UE fid-diversi Ministeri, uffiċjali tal-MEPA, u membri tal-i*staff* tal-MEUSAC.

Il-laqgħa li jmiss tal-Core Group ser issir il-Ġimgħa 27 ta' Frar 2009.

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