

MALTA



Statement by

**The Hon. Dr. Lawrence Gonzi
Prime Minister**

**Sixty-third Session of the
United Nations General Assembly**

**High Level Event on the Millennium Development Goals
Round-Table III: Environmental Sustainability**

New York, 25th September 2008

(Please check against delivery)

PERMANENT MISSION OF MALTA TO THE UNITED NATIONS
249 EAST 35TH STREET, NEW YORK, N.Y. 10016 TEL. (212) 725-2345 FAX. (212) 779-7097
e-mail: malta-un.newyork@gov.mt

Over the years, Malta has consistently supported and upheld international initiatives that call for the sustainable development of the world's environment, also following on its 1988 initiative for the UN Resolution 43/53 on the "Conservation of climate as part of the Common Heritage of Mankind". This resolution, unanimously adopted by the General Assembly, strengthened the mandate of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change laying the foundations of the Climate Convention.

We are already witnessing the early impacts of climate change. Glaciers and permafrost are thawing, rainfall patterns are changing and weather extremes are more frequent. Mediterranean regions are experiencing hotter summers, less precipitation, more droughts, retreating forests and reduced agricultural productivity. In Europe significant low-lying coast is vulnerable to sea-level rise, and many plants and species are likely to become endangered by the end of the century. Small island states are also particularly vulnerable to climate change. Their limited size makes them more prone to natural hazards and external shocks, in particular to sea-level rise and threats to their restricted freshwater resources.

Malta believes that the Mediterranean region can be used as a testing ground for new technologies including the wider use of solar energy and off-shore wind farms. The countries of the region should share their experiences so that they could together intensify the quest for cleaner, sustainable energy and also make the best use of water resources. A Euro-Mediterranean University could be particularly useful to facilitate such collaboration in scientific research.

Malta is fully aware that the challenges of climate change and energy security are closely linked and it is Malta's aim to reduce its carbon centric energy production. Malta is actively evaluating all options to promote energy efficiency and the diversification of energy production from renewable sources. All these initiatives are being accompanied by a sustained education campaign to raise public awareness on these issues. The government has recently appointed a Climate Change Committee to present recommendations following consultations with various government agencies, non-governmental organisations and the constituted bodies. Malta also has the honour of having Michael Zammit Cutajar, former Executive Secretary of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, leading the *Ad Hoc* Working Group on Long-Term Cooperative Action as Vice-Chairman for 2008 and later as Chairman for 2009.

Earlier this year, a two-day conference on climate change diplomacy was co-organised by the DiploFoundation and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Malta. In an effort to help diplomats from small island states deal with the challenge, Malta is to start a training programme for diplomats from small island states on climate change issues. The course will be launched this autumn with the training of the first 20 officials from small island states. In 2009 Diplo plans to train 100 participants through this course. Such an initiative, is consistent with efforts to rally the world community behind the mutual objective of mitigating the adverse effects of climate change while further helping develop the on-going debate and negotiations dealing with the subject.

With this in mind, Malta looks forward to positive outcomes from the Poznan meeting this December with the aim of producing a comprehensive agreement on post-2012 issues in Copenhagen.