

SUMMIT ON CLIMATE CHANGE

Statement by Dr. Lawrence Gonzi

Prime Minister of Malta

The challenges posed by climate change are among the most urgent and important to have ever faced humankind.

Back in 1988, Malta was the first country to formally table the issue of climate change as a political agenda to the United Nations General Assembly, and has since sought to ensure that climate change remained a matter of high-level attention for the international community. Political awareness of the climatic challenge has risen steadily in the past 20 years, and today, as a small but proud member of the European Union, Malta's commitment to this cause remains as strong as ever.

Climate change is now a global strategic issue, affecting our physical, geographical and economic security. Its effects are felt most by the poorer and more vulnerable people and nations who are least able to cope.

Like other small islands, Malta faces the prospect of severe adverse impacts as a result of climate change. Situated as it is in the Mediterranean Basin, Malta is likely to have to cope with grave problems including extreme weather conditions, diminished rainfall, and rising sea water levels. Malta is taking action to respond to such adverse impacts and is currently finalizing a "National Strategy for Policy and Abatement Measures Relating to the Reduction of Greenhouse Gases" which will consist of mitigation measures, including the implementation of renewable energy sources, electricity efficiency and conservation. Malta is also in the process of formulating an Adaptation Strategy focusing on areas expected to be affected by climate change, including health and socio-economic policy, water and flooding, biodiversity and agriculture.

Malta therefore shares a common interest in promoting an urgent and ambitious international effort within the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change to restrict and reverse the accumulation of greenhouse gases that are causing climate change. Only in this way can global warming be limited to 2°C, keeping climatic impacts within manageable limits this century, and enabling all of us to pursue our sustainable development objectives.

The outcome of the ongoing United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change negotiating process must signal a turning point away from business as usual: It is the duty of ***all*** countries to contribute their fair share in this concerted effort, which must be global if it is to succeed.

Developed countries should undertake to adopt ambitious emission reductions in the next 10 to 15 years and to provide financial and technological support for action by developing countries to curb the growth in *their* emissions in the decades beyond. Developing countries, for their part, should embrace the opportunity to integrate resource efficiency in their pursuit of prosperity and sustainable development.

Even in a “2-degree world”, however, greater efforts will be needed to adapt to climate change. Increased adaptation funding for vulnerable developing countries should form part of the Copenhagen outcome and the negotiation process must ensure that this issue is addressed effectively.

The battle against climate change is one of common concern for all mankind and success may only be achieved through common action. We must ensure that this war is not waged at the expense of the poor and more vulnerable, but that it is fought on two fronts - against climate change and against poverty – and towards providing access to sustainable energy and development opportunities to all.