

Ministerial Conference for ESD Action Plan in the Mediterranean

Cyprus, 8th – 9th December 2016

Address on behalf of the Hon. Evarist Bartolo Minister for Education and Employment - Malta

CONFERENCE

On behalf of Minister Evarist Bartolo I would like to convey Malta's satisfaction at the positive outcome envisaged by this Cyprus Conference and the steadfast progress being made across all Mediterranean countries in the field of Education for Sustainable Development.

We convene in the spirit of the RIO+20 fully cognizant of the need to further the process towards fulfilling the Sustainable Development Goals adopted in Brazil, and that includes Quality Education for all. More specifically, this embraces the target to ensure that by 2030 learners acquire the knowledge and skills needed to promote sustainable development, including, amongst others, through education for sustainable development.

The adoption of the *Mediterranean Strategy on Education for Sustainable Development* is one significant stride ahead in the direction towards the UN SDGs. It also falls into place within the ambit of the recent global political success of COP21 that brought about the historic *Paris Climate Agreement*.

With the essential ingredients of the path to low-carbon now clearly mapped it is now up to the global stakeholders in various fora, such as this Conference, to work together to produce concrete measures, not least in the form of Action Plans, meant to facilitate the transition to a safer and more sustainable world.

To procrastinate is not an option and the adoption, by this Conference, of the *Action Plan of the Mediterranean Strategy on ESD* beyond 2015 could not be more opportune.

It is laudable that this Conference is also an initiative to link the implementation of the respective national ESD strategies with water management issues. Water is a strategic resource to all Mediterranean countries especially in the south. The delimitations faced by Mediterranean countries in their efforts towards sustainable water management may initially be perceived as a threat; they however present a unique opportunity that should enable the evolution of holistic ESD strategies that facilitate sustainable development in its broadest sense.

Malta has been very active on both fronts, in education for sustainable development and the development of a robust water management policy framework.

We have recently adopted our own *National Strategy for Education for Sustainable Development*¹ in response to the endorsement of ESD as a cross-cutting theme in the *National Curriculum Framework 2012*². We are confident about the ownership of the national strategy by practically all stakeholders, from Government Ministries to NGOs, local councils and political parties and other organisations that have been consulted. Malta is now in the crucial phase of developing its Action Plan in accordance with the strategy and this Conference shall be instrumental to achieve this important goal.

On water, the further development of a national policy framework consistent with the EU Water Framework Directive is currently underway. Malta has already adopted its *Second Water Catchment Management Plan* that charts the way forward post-2015. This plan includes a mandate for the development of a long-term national water conservation campaign in conjunction with another specific campaign focusing on educational activities on water management in schools³.

Meanwhile, and this has not happened overnight, Maltese schools have developed a considerable *EkoSkola* programme through which various initiatives are underway to raise awareness about water management and conservation in Primary and Secondary schools⁴. These include placing water as a main theme in School Audits, the cleaning of old water wells and reservoirs, and also teachers adopting pedagogical strategies designed to incorporate water issues in their lessons. Some schools have also adopted an out-reach approach whereby they take an active role in the promotion of sustainable water management in the neighbouring community. An *EkoSkola* Parliamentary Session is held that serves as a high profile event enabling students to voice their opinions directly with policymakers on water issues⁵. Another positive experience is the *Catch the Drop* project that has been developed by educational entities in conjunction with HSBC Bank Malta⁶. An educational pack has also been developed by Nature Trust (Malta) meant to address water management issues within a Maltese context more directly as part of the *Alter Aqua* Programme⁷.

These initiatives do not happen in a vacuum. Malta has experienced a thorough strengthening of its national legal and regulatory frameworks on water, a vibrant effort in the coordination of research and development initiatives involving the University of Malta and MCAST on water related aspects and, very significantly, a tremendous success in terms of an

¹ *Nurturing a Sustainable Society – A National Strategy for Education for Sustainable Development in Malta*, available at http://socialdialogue.gov.mt/en/Public_Consultations/MEDE/Pages/Consultations/2016-MEDE-NSESD.aspx, last accessed 22nd October 2016.

² *A National Curriculum Framework for All 2012*, at <http://education.gov.mt/en/resources/Pages/Policy-Documentation.aspx>, last accessed 22nd October 2016.

³ *The 2nd Water Catchment Management Plan for the Malta Water Catchment District 2015 – 2021*, published by the Sustainable Energy and Water Conservation Unit (SEWCU) and the Environment and Resources Authority (ERA), available at <http://energywateragency.gov.mt/en/Pages/Water-Framework-Directive.aspx>, last accessed 22nd October 2016.

⁴ <http://www.ekoskola.org.mt/>, last accessed 22nd October 2016.

⁵ Personal communication with Prof Paul Pace of the University of Malta, 18th October 2016.

⁶ <http://ekoskola.org.mt/resource/catch-the-drop-campaign-mrra/>, last accessed 22nd October 2016.

⁷ <http://www.naturetrustmalta.org/>, last accessed 22nd October 2016.

effort in the metering of agricultural and commercial boreholes. A borehole metering rate of 80% and 97% respectively has so far been achieved⁸.

As key stakeholders in education our role is crucial. We perceive education for sustainable development as the conveyor belt that should enable policymakers in their efforts to re-shape the world economies towards a fairer, safer world at a time when climate change – itself a water issue – has now established itself as a most singular global threat.

With this in the background Malta welcomes the adoption of the Mediterranean Action Plan on ESD and is prepared to work in the direction of its mandate.

In this, Malta shall be relying on the dedication and commitment of all national stakeholders, from those directly involved as education professionals to a wide range of external entities such as NGOs whose contribution is deemed vital to the success of the national ESD strategy. This mindset has already been integrated within the build-up process that led to national strategy itself.

The Mediterranean Action Plan this Conference is endorsing should further strengthen Malta's ability and resolve to succeed with its ESD process at par with the efforts of our neighbours in the region. Not least in view of the salient water management issues that are emerging and that are expected to present bigger environmental and socio-economic challenges in the future.

We look forward to further collaboration.

Alan Pulis
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Obo Minister Evarist Bartolo
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⁸ Personal communication with Mr Manuel Sapiano from Energy and Projects at OPM, 2nd November 2016.