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MALTA

MINISTRY
OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS
AND THE ENVIRONMENT

Address by
H.E. Ambassador Saviour F. Borg
Permanent Representative of Malta
to the United Nations Environment Programme
at the
Third Session of the Conference of the Parties
to the
United Nations Framework Convention
on Climate Change

Kyoto, December 1997

Mr. Chairman,

Excellencies,

Ladies and Gentlemen

It is indeed a great pleasure for me to participate at this Conference and to experience the excellent hospitality of the People and Government of Japan.

Although much smaller in size and miles apart, Malta like Japan has always been singled out for the warm, hospitable character of its people. This has been further accentuated ever since Malta has attained national sovereignty. Indeed, sovereignty for Malta did not only serve to give us frontiers where we could further develop our national identity but also gave the Maltese nation greater possibilities of free participation and active sharing in the involvement of a truly international community.

It was this belongingness which prompted Malta to take a number of initiatives, and be a catalyst amongst the global community

regarding the protection and equitable sharing of natural resources, found on the sea bed and ocean floor, and it's subsoil thereof, and the protection of climate from change, as a result of anthropogenic activities, to name two primary examples.

Malta's approach to these problems is a direct response to the multipolar world of today, afflicted as it is by the North-South debate which has also characterised the climate change issue ever since its inception.

As with all other global environmental issues, the essential key to the climate problem is the reconciliation of environmental concerns with developmental needs.

Malta acknowledges that all of us, developed and developing countries, rich and poor states, share a common interest in the pursuit of development which must be sustained, in an equitable and integrated manner.

Malta, however, also believes, as the preamble of the climate change convention declares, that all states have a common but differentiated responsibility to protect climate from change. We believe that those States which have been the main polluters and

are still the major polluters should bear the responsibility of their actions and take the necessary measures to resolving this problem.

We also believe that developing countries should not be penalized or their economic growth stultified because of the increased emissions of greenhouse gases by the developed world. Developing countries are already hampered in their socio-economic growth by the tragic situations they are facing as a result of famine, population increase, disease and extreme poverty.

It must be recalled that the consensus reached on the adoption of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change at the Rio Earth Summit in June 1992, was primarily based on the recognition that global warming is a common concern. At the same time it was accepted that the situation of the poorer countries and of those countries lacking the technological know-how, needed to be carefully addressed in any contemplated international action.

Malta therefore strongly feels that the continued acceptance and acknowledgement of this premise, should be the leading factor for the successful outcome of this Third Session of the Conference of the Parties to the Climate Change Convention.

Many of us consider this Kyoto Conference as the most important environmental conference since UNCED and a crucial turning point which will hopefully lead to the completion of the Berlin Mandate by the drawing up and the adoption of a protocol, a legally binding treaty aimed at mitigating greenhouse gas emissions for the period up to and beyond the year 2000. Malta would be disappointed if the outcome of this Third Conference of the Parties would lead to anything short of a legally binding instrument and definitely favours a provision which would permit parties to assume commitments voluntarily.

Malta as a small island state supports the position being taken by the Alliance of Small Island States (AOSIS), and that of the Group of 77 and China, in advocating a reduction by developed states of carbon dioxide, methane, nitrous oxide emissions by at least 7.5% of 1990 levels by 2005, by 15% by 2010 and by an additional 20% by 2020. In this same sentiment, we therefore view the proposal tabled by the European Union as a welcome and commendable suggestion.

Mr. Chairman,

Malta in fact is itself willing to go as far as possible in addressing energy management, on a national level. In part fulfilment of its commitments under the Climate Convention, the Government of Malta has introduced eco-taxes on the price of fossil fuels, and the revision of licence fees for motor vehicles according to the engine capacity. Other recently introduced measures include the introduction of incentives to use energy in off-peak hours and the removal of certain subsidies in energy consumption. Site specific emission and energy audits will be conducted in the very near future, hopefully commencing in 1998.

As a State which relies entirely on fossil fuels for the production of energy, it was by no means an easy and popular task to introduce such measures. However, the Maltese Government is eager to live up to Malta's international obligations and in this context will be taking measures to embark on an education campaign which will instill amongst the public at large, an awareness that polluters must pay and that consumption patterns must be reviewed. While the use of other sources of energy, have not as yet been tapped, plans are in place to introduce more awareness of energy conservation and promote and encourage more use of renewable energy sources such as solar energy for domestic use.

Malta has also concluded its greenhouse gas inventory according to its obligations under the Convention. It has not yet presented its national communication as we are still awaiting a reply to our request for technical assistance by the Global Environment Facility. In this respect, Malta would like to call for a more accessible GEF particularly for small island countries like Malta, in order to assist these countries in fulfilling their obligations under the Convention.

As a European country situated in the centre of the Mediterranean Sea, in the stage of transition from a developing to a developed state, Malta has worked assiduously to promote global partnership and co-operation. It is today appealing to this august Conference to ensure that this Third Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, be a guiding example for enhancing the North-South dialogue and an exercise in bridging the divisions inherent in the proposals, arguments and approaches put forward to reduce greenhouse gases emissions.

While expressing satisfaction at what has already been achieved during all these years, since Malta took the initiative to put forward the climate problem on the global agenda, we believe the moment has arrived to move on with the implementation of this

Convention, such that it addresses in an integrated manner the stabilisation of greenhouse gases levels.

It is not simply a duty to strive to protect climate from change. It is also important that our common concern be urgently and appropriately addressed in such a way as to ensure that the ecological balance is indeed preserved in the vital interest of both present and future generations.

Thank You