

15.12.04 A.m.

MALTA

□ **Panel 2: Impacts of climate change, adaptation measures and sustainable development**

Mr. Chairman I would like to thank the Republic of Argentina for hosting this meeting. Allow me to start my short intervention by stating that I feel proud that Malta put the global climate on the UN agenda 16 years ago. Eventually it was Argentina that led the negotiations which clinched the Kyoto Protocol nine years later. Our countries can look back with pride on the results of those initiatives, and thank all those whose energy and perseverance have accomplished so much.

My country has carried out a study on the impacts of climate change with the aim of adopting sensible adaptation measures. I would like to highlight at least three points outlined in this study.

1. That sensitivity of temperature to the enhanced greenhouse effect is 9% higher in the central Mediterranean region than the global.
2. That seagrass ecosystems need to be protected in view of their importance as a special habitat for many marine organisms and that their role in CO₂ uptake should be emphasized.
3. That long spells of drought and events of intense precipitation will lead to amongst others soil erosion and high damage to both crops and infrastructure.

There is no doubt that climate change will be a negative factor in the global economy of the 21st century. It will also have a negative influence on global security, due to increased water stress, food insecurity, climatic disasters and

migratory pressures. My country is already experiencing migratory pressures and these will no doubt continue to increase in the coming years leaving huge impacts and costs on the fragile economic activity of our islands.

Thus we need to do more to ensure that the costs of such impacts are widely recognized and factored into economic calculus. This will help to overcome the economic defensiveness that continues to be the main obstacle to action to mitigate climate change.

I agree with those who have said that “Vulnerability to climate impacts is closely associated with poverty. Poor people in the tropics and sub-tropics will be the primary victims of the economic practices that are destabilizing our climate.

Reducing poverty and promoting sustainable development are the best defences against climate impacts. And mitigation of climate change by limiting emissions is the only way to soften those impacts. That is why Malta, with its fellow members of the EU, considers it of utmost importance to launch an open-minded exploration of future options to advance towards the stabilization objective of the Convention, in harmony with sustainable development. Agreement on this process should be one of the main results of this COP.

Nevertheless, specific measures are needed to harden poor communities against climate shocks, to strengthen the resilience of their productive systems, to help their services to cope. Such measures respond to the

imperatives of sustainable development, adaptation to climate change and disaster management. They can mobilize these three communities in a common effort, which should be carried forward at the World Conference on Disaster Reduction in Kobe next month.