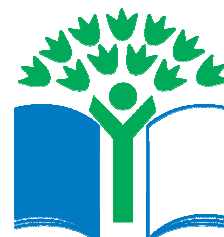


If you need to print this newsletter, please use both sides of recycled paper

**Special Edition:**

## **The 5<sup>th</sup> EkoSkola Parliamentary Session**



**EkoSkola**

July 2009

Issue 23



The 27<sup>th</sup> of May marked another special day for the students participating in the EkoSkola programme. Eighty students from 40 different schools were accompanied by 25 Members of Parliament for the fifth edition of the EkoSkola Parliament. This yearly event marks the apex of a whole year's work for the various EkoSkola Committees as it gives children the opportunity to meet and discuss environmental issues with their nation's policy makers.

For this year's session, children from EkoSkola were asked by MEPA to produce the Children's Version of the State of the Environment Report 2008. Children from various schools looked at and discussed the main issues highlighted in the report and presented their ideas, concerns and comments to the MPs present.



Nature Trust (Malta)  
PO Box 9  
Valletta VLT 1000  
<http://www.naturetrustmalta.org>



The session started with the reciting of the Opening Prayer by a student from Maria Regina College, St Venera B.J.L. The Hon. Speaker, Dr Louis Galea, then addressed the House and welcomed the students. He then proceeded to thank the students and the MPs for their interest in environmental issues and for finding the time to attend irrespective of their workload.

*"EkoSkola is proving to be an effective way of providing a healthy and holistic education that prepares children for their present and their future"*, he remarked. While thanking heads of schools and teachers for the support they give to the programme, he invited MPs to listen attentively to the different perspectives that the children will be expressing in their presentations. After Dr Paul Pace, the National EkoSkola Co-ordinator, explained the procedure that will be adopted during the session, students from De La Salle College, Junior Section read the EkoSkola Parliament Motion.



*The Hon Mr Speaker, Louis Galea and the National EkoSkola Co-ordinator, Dr Paul Pace*



*The Hon. Evarist Bartolo, Opposition spokesperson for Education and Media*

Students from St Benedict College, Safi Primary started the students' reply by reviewing the SOER Chapter on *Driving Forces for Environmental Change*. They were followed by the presentation by the students from the Gozo College, Nadur Primary about *Air*. Hon. Evarist Bartolo (Opposition spokesperson for Education and Media) then replied by pointing out that he is a great supporter of EkoSkola because the programme is doing a lot of benefit to all our communities and it *"provides a model of how an educational process should be"*. He pointed out that environmental problems are caused by personal selfishness. He suggested that we should

consider St Francis of Assisi's advice to treat the environment with care as our future depends on our good relationship with it.

Students from the Gozo College, Ghajnsielem Primary and St Ġorġ Preca College, Paola Primary A expressed their concerns about *Climate Change* and *Land* respectively. The Hon. Dolores Cristina (Minister of Education, Culture, Youth and Sports) referred to the motion presented by the children. She pointed out that the fact that suggestions made by the children were taken up and integrated in policies is a sign that MPs are giving due importance to what children say.



*The Hon. Dolores Cristina, Minister of Education, Culture, Youth & Sports*

*"The success of EkoSkola is evident and my wish is to see all our schools participating in it. During my visits to schools I could see the results of EkoSkola and the great input they give in promoting environmental protection, culture and healthy lifestyle"*. She concluded by urging the other MPs to own the environmental challenge.

The SOER chapter about *Fresh Waters* was discussed by students from St Francis School, Cospicua. Children from the Gozo College, Xewkija Primary then shared their ideas about



the *Coastal and Marine Environment*. The Hon. Owen Bonnici (Opposition spokesperson for Youth and Culture) told children that when he was their age, the world community was meeting for the Rio Summit that maintained that the creativity of children and youths is the solution of our environmental problems. At that time there was no EkoSkola, but nowadays you that now you have the chance to do something worthwhile. Past generations had their fights, for example for independence and for freedom; we are now being called by our country to take up the environmental revolution.



*The Hon. Owen Bonnici, Opposition spokesperson for Youth and Culture*



*The Hon. David Agius, Whip and Secretary of the Parliamentary Group*

Students from St Catherine's High School, Pembroke commented about *Resources and Waste*, followed by the presentation about *Biodiversity* by students from St Benedict College, B'Buġia Primary A. Then it was the turn of the Hon. David Agius (Whip and Secretary of the Parliamentary Group) to address the chair. After thanking all those who attended the session, he pointed out that environmental issues were not always present in the parliament's agenda. He explained that when MPs seem to be fighting over environmental issues they are really trying to seek the best solutions for our country. He concluded his address by thanking the media because,

through them, the children's message was reaching a wider audience.

After students from St Clare College, Gzira Boys' Secondary discussed *Environmental Health*, the Hon Leo Brincat (Opposition spokesperson for the Environment, Sustainable Development & Climate Change) started his address. He voiced his appreciation at the suggestions being tabled by the children. During his address he pointed out that Climate Change was becoming a threat to our water quality and quantity that will generate more energy needs. He said that "we should



*The Hon Leo Brincat, Opposition spokesperson for the Environment, Sustainable Development & Climate Change*



*The Hon. George Pullicino: Minister for Resources and Rural Affairs*

*conserve and protect our water reserves by making better use of sewage treated water and encouraging the conservation of rainwater, especially in homes".* Water will become a greater issue in the not so distant future.

*Policy Responses* was the last theme treated by students from St Benedict College, Mqabba Primary. The Hon. George Pullicino: Minister for Resources and Rural Affairs responded by pointing out that his wish was to see more cooperation on environmental issues - as a nation and the MPs. He urged the other MPs to be courageous to opt

for changes that improve our quality of life. *"We need to move from words to action. Parliament is already adopting your suggestions. We need less talk and more work. The bigger difficulty is the change of mentality and EkoSkola is doing this".*



The Hon Mr Speaker then proposed the Motion for the approval of the House of Representatives. The Motion was unanimously adopted by all those present.



## **Motion about EkoSkola presented to the House of Representatives**

Mr Speaker,

On behalf of my friends, I would like to start off by thanking you for granting us permission to speak during this Parliament session. The EkoSkola programme is spread in forty four countries and involves more than six million school children. EkoSkola has been functioning in Maltese schools for these last seven years during which the number of participating schools has increased from six to ninety five. This means that 60% of our schools are involved in the programme. Eight of these schools were awarded the Green Flag and are actively improving the quality of life in our schools.

This is our fifth time at parliament and we feel proud that we have always offered valid ideas every time we have been here. For example, the suggestions we made to tax junk mail and to treat climate change as a national issue. This year we will discuss the state of the environment of our country. MEPA is currently preparing the State of the Environment Report 2008 and asked our opinion about it. For these last few weeks we have considered in the detail the different aspects of our environment mentioned in the report. We tried to explore how the issues raised are affecting our lives. With all due respect, today we wanted to share with you our thoughts with the hope that you will listen to what we have to say.

We are coming here annually because we feel that it is our duty to make a contribution to our environment. We are already doing a lot of work in our schools, homes and localities. We do not want you to think that we are attending parliament to play a game of "let's pretend". We wanted you to be here so that you can hear our concerns about our future.

Through our decisions we are improving the quality of life in our schools. Similarly through your decisions you can improve our country. However, keep in mind that bad decisions can have harmful effects. Therefore, we implore you to refrain from fighting over environmental issues. The more you work together about these issues, the more we stand to gain. An improved quality of life does not necessarily imply complicated initiatives. Some of the suggestions that we shall be proposing today only need a little effort – an effort that we are already making in our schools. We invite you to follow our example.



### **The schools participating in the parliamentary session were:**

- Convent of the Sacred Heart, Junior Sch, St. Julian's
- De La Salle College, Junior Section
- Gozo College, Ghajnsielem Primary
- Gozo College, Nadur Primary
- Gozo College, Ninu Cremona BJL
- Gozo College, Xewkija Primary
- Gozo College, Zebbug Primary
- Maria Regina College, St Venera BJL
- St Benedict College, Birzebbuga Primary A
- St Benedict College, Birzebbuga Primary B
- St Benedict College, Gudja Primary
- St Benedict College, Kirkop BSS
- St Benedict College, Mqabba Primary
- St Benedict College, Qrendi Primary
- St Benedict College, Safi Primary
- St Benedict College, St Lucia GJL
- St Benedict College, Tarxien GSS
- St Catherine's High School, Pembroke
- St Clare College, Gzira BSS
- St Claire College, Pembroke GJL
- St Claire College, San Gwann Primary B
- St Edward's College
- St Francis School, B'Kara
- St Francis School, Cospicua
- St Francis Secondary School, Sliema
- St Gorg Preca College, Hamrun BJL
- St Gorg Preca College, Hamrun Primary
- St Gorg Preca College, Paola Primary A
- St Gorg Preca College, Paola Primary B
- St Ignatius College, Zebbug Primary
- St Ignatius College, Luqa Primary
- St Ignatius College, Siggiewi Primary
- St Joseph, Mater Boni Consilii, Paola
- St Joseph School, Sliema (Secondary Section)
- St Margaret College, Cospicua GSS
- St Margaret College, Kalkara Primary
- St Margaret College, Xghajra Primary
- St Michael School, St Venera
- St Nicholas College, Mtarfa Primary
- St Thomas More College Zejtun Primary A

Once again the event proved to be a great experience for all those who attended. The EkoSkola Steering Committee would like to thank all those who made this experience possible: the Office of Mr Speaker for granting us permission to use the premises, MEPA for giving us the opportunity to produce the Children's version of SOER, and the *Flick the Switch* project (co-financed by the European Commission under the Intelligent Energy Programme) who facilitated the filming of this year's session (Projects in Motion is the Maltese partner in this project).

We are currently working on the compilation of the student's contributions. They will be eventually uploaded on our website and a copy given to each MP.

---

*If you would like to contribute to this newsletter please contact Dr Paul Pace, National EkoSkola Co-ordinator, on [paul.i.pace@um.edu.mt](mailto:paul.i.pace@um.edu.mt)*

*Visit our website on [www.ekoskolamalta.com](http://www.ekoskolamalta.com)*