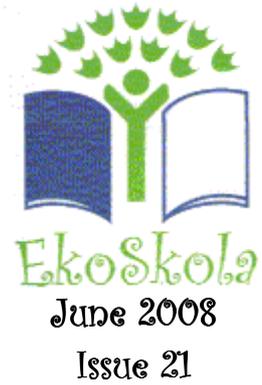


Special Edition:

The 4th EkoSkola Parliamentary Session



One of the long awaited annual appointments of the EkoSkola programme is the EkoSkola Parliament Session that is organised as part of Environment Week. During this event students have the opportunity to meet local Members of Parliament and discuss specific local environmental issues.

This year's EkoSkola Parliament session was held on 3rd June 2008. One hundred and thirty students from twenty different schools participated in this activity together with seventeen MPs. During the session, students made interventions about research that they conducted on climate



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

change and raised questions about certain environmental issues. As in previous years, this session proved to be an unforgettable experience for students, teachers and MPs alike.

The session kicked off when students from St Joseph Junior School, Sliema said the Opening Prayer. The Hon. Speaker, Dr Louis Galea, then addressed the House. After welcoming all the attendees, he pointed out that if we want to

appreciate and preserve our heritage we need to learn how to collaborate with children. Mr Speaker said that the EkoSkola programme is bearing fruit and the programme's spread of concerns is ensuring that children participating in it get a holistic education. *"Adults have a lot to learn from these children particularly in issues concerning sustainable development"*.

After Dr Paul Pace, the National EkoSkola Co-ordinator, explained the procedure that will be adopted during the session, students from Gozo College, Patri Matthew Sultana, Xaghra Primary School and St Benedict College, Ghaxaq Primary School read the Motion about EkoSkola.

The Hon. Dolores Cristina, Minister of Education, Culture, Youth & Sports started off the series of reactions to the Motion. She remarked that looking at all these children and reading the high level of enthusiasm in their eyes, one is led to believe that flowers are blooming in the House of Representatives. She was immediately struck by the positive attitude of the students whom she considers as the ambassadors of the environment. She said that whenever she visits schools and gets to meet parents, a common remark made is that these children are putting words into action by the changes in lifestyles that they are implementing. Towards the end of her intervention she appealed to the MPs' responsibility to take action: *"These children are teaching us ... they are giving us a blue print for action. It is up to us to respond to their challenges"*.



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

Students from St Edwards College made the first intervention about Climate Change. After highlighting that the One-Hour Switch Off carried out in schools during Schuman Day saved about 528kg of CO₂ emissions from our atmosphere, they continued to show how much energy could be saved if streets are lit responsibly. During their intervention they presented the results of a survey that they conducted about street lights and concluded that in the two areas surveyed a total of about 46kW are lost every night.



The Hon. Carmelo Abela, Opposition spokesperson for Education

The Hon. Carmelo Abela, Opposition spokesperson for Education, responded by remarking that EkoSkola is proving to be a success story. He congratulated the students for the way they are learning about the environment and for the way they are teaching all those who come in contact with them. He pointed out that the Motion presented is structured around four

major points: democracy; the need to raise a national consciousness; that the children are already doing their part; and that *"it is our duty to consider what these citizens are telling us seriously and act accordingly"*.

Students from Maria Regina College, Lily of the Valley, Girls Secondary, Mosta responded by citing results of their research about ways of reducing greenhouse gases. They organised their presentation in two major parts: the first focusing on alternative sources of energy and the second on transport. In their intervention they not only highlighted the extent of the problems that need to be addressed, but also presented tangible actions that can be taken to reduce Climate Change.

The Hon. Roderick Galdes, Opposition spokesperson for the Environment, remarked that EkoSkola is definitely one of the few things that both sides of the House agree upon without any reserve. This is an acknowledgement to the great work being done in schools through this programme. The world is sick and



The Hon. Roderick Galdes, Opposition spokesperson for the Environment

is in serious need of being cured. He pointed out that irrespective of our small size, Malta has always done its best with respect to the environment. He finished off by *"thanking you for teaching and showing us how to cure the Earth"*.

Students from St Michael School, Santa Venera explored the link between water consumption and increased emissions. They started off by highlighting the dimension and seriousness of the problem. Then they pointed out that a strategy aimed at making the best use of our water resources should be aimed at conserving water and ensuring that its quality is not threatened. Most of their intervention centred on specific and practical actions that could be taken to improve the situation.



*The Hon Dr Joe Cassar,
Parliamentary Secretary
for Health*

Next was the turn of the Hon Dr Joe Cassar, Parliamentary Secretary for Health to address the House. He said that EkoSkola is working towards achieving a good quality of life. He feels that any environmental discourse would be incomplete if it does not consider the impact of environmental damage on our physical and psychological health. The issues raised by the issue of Climate Change are issues concerning the quality of life of humankind on this planet. *"It is no wonder,"* he concluded *"that these children are concerned about this issue. I feel that as MPs we have a duty to listen to their plight"*.

The session continued with an intervention from St Joan Antide School Gudja. During their intervention the students revisited the suggestions made in the memorandum distributed to the political parties prior to elections. The memorandum contained simple actions that could be adopted to reduce waste ... actions that students themselves have been doing day-in-day-out in their schools. Students expressed their dismay that only a handful of candidates made efforts to respond to the suggestions made.

The Hon. Leo Brincat, Opposition spokesperson for Foreign Affairs & Technology started off by admitting that the whole event was a learning experience for him. He referred to the students as *"the best consultants"* because their vision is not yet tainted as is the case with adults. There is an urgent need for countries to get together to reduce the level of emissions.



*The Hon. Leo Brincat,
Opposition spokesperson
for Foreign Affairs &
Technology*

Students from St Benedict College, Kirkop Primary School raised the issue about the environmental impact that plastic soft drink bottles are causing. They pointed out that the most sensible strategy would be that of REDUCING waste not recycling it. They also expressed their intention of presenting a petition about the issue to the European Parliament.



*The Hon. George Pullicino,
Minister for Resources &
Rural Affairs*

What followed was a series of interventions presented by students from four different schools: St Thomas More College, Fgura Primary School B; St Ignatius College, Zebbug Primary School B; St Joseph Junior School, Sliema and St Benedict College, Ghaxaq Primary School. These interventions focused on various issues related to Climate Change as well as other topical environmental issues.

The Hon. George Pullicino, Minister for Resources & Rural Affairs, concluded the session reserved for interventions. He expressed his pleasure that whenever he is asked to visit an EkoSkola school. He said that the principle value that the project is developing is democracy. He said that making decisions is not always a simple task. At times the consequences of our decisions may be tough and may even antagonise certain people ... but we are committed towards

reducing waste, investing in alternative energy sources and reducing greenhouse gas emissions. He finished his address by stressing that *"EkoSkola schools are showing that environmental action is a national concern, away from political party politics. We should follow their example"*.



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.

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 ... particularly the Office of Mr Speaker and Mr Oliver Lautier from the Ministry for Resources & Rural Affairs.

Motion about EkoSkola presented to the House of Representatives

The EkoSkola programme is an international environmental education programme. About five and a half million boys and girls in more than 21 thousand schools in 44 different countries participate in this programme. In the EkoSkola programme, we have the opportunity to improve the quality of life of our school and our community by participating fully in the decisions, planning and implementation of environmental activities. Nature Trust (Malta) introduced this programme in Malta in 2002 with the full collaboration of the government. Since then the programme has never looked back and the number of schools increased from 6 to 76. Moreover, four schools received the Green Flag – a world renowned certificate that testifies the school's commitment towards environmental concern.

Honourable Members of Parliament, we have been meeting you for these last four years. We would like to thank Mr Speaker and both sides of the House for welcoming us again and for listening to what we have to tell you. We would also like to thank you for supporting the EkoSkola programme fully. As we did last year, we would like to talk to you about our country's environmental situation. Besides continuing our discussion about certain issues that we raised last year, this year we would like to talk about Climate Change. During this year, most of the work in schools was aimed at developing a consciousness about the problem and the need to do something about it. To prepare ourselves better, students from the Junior College came to our schools and delivered a presentation on Climate Change as part of their Systems of Knowledge project.

Much has been said about this subject. The media remind us regularly of the disasters that will befall us if the amount of greenhouse gases in the atmosphere (especially Carbon Dioxide) continues to increase. We also know what led and what is still leading to the worsening of the problem; as well as what needs to be done to reduce it. We have done our part by organising various initiatives to reduce emissions – both in our schools as well as in our homes. But there still much more that needs to be done. This is why we felt the need to meet and discuss with you about this problem. We understand that there are several things on which you do not agree with each other. But we would really like you to make an effort and agree about this issue so that we can resolve it together.

Our country has already taken several initiatives to alleviate the problem, for example: the planting of thousands of trees that reduce Carbon Dioxide from the air. But we think that there is still much more that needs to be done. During this parliamentary session we will try to suggest things that can be done to alleviate the problem. Albert Einstein once said that "today's problems cannot be resolved using the same thinking that created them". In other words, we cannot find a solution to our environmental problems if we continue to think and act in the same way that we have been doing till now. Honourable Members of Parliament we would like to remind you that our future depends on what you decide in this House. We would like you to support our efforts to improve the environment and thus ensure a better future.



Approval of the EkoSkola Motion of the 3rd June 2008 EkoSkola Parliament Session

The schools participating in the parliamentary session were:

- Gozo College, Xewkija Primary
- Gozo College, Patri Mattew Sultana, Xaghra Primary School
- Maria Regina College, Lily of the Valley, Girls Secondary, Mosta
- Sir Adrian Dingli Girls' Junior Lyceum – Pembroke
- St Benedict College, Birzebbuga Primary School B
- St Benedict College, Boys Secondary School
- St Benedict College, Ghaxaq Primary School
- St Benedict College, Kirkop Primary School
- St Benedict College, Margaret Mortimer GJL
- St Benedict College, Zurrieq Primary School A
- St Bernadette, San Gwann Primary School B
- St Edward's College
- St Gorg Preca College, Guzeppi Agius, Paola Primary A
- St Ignatius College, Siggiewi Primary School
- St Ignatius College, Zebbug Primary School B
- St Joan Antide School Gudja
- St Joseph Junior School, Sliema
- St Joseph School, Blata I-Bajda
- St Michael School, Santa Venera
- St Thomas More College, Fgura Primary School B

Ehh ... one last thing please!

Just after the parliamentary session ended and before all the MPs went along with their business, EkoSkola Committee members of St. Bernadette San Gwann Primary B approached the Minister for Resources & Rural Affairs, Hon. George Pullicino, and



presented him with a letter that they had composed earlier ... and could not present it during the session for logistical reasons. In their letter they expressed their concern about Climate Change and their wish that MPs would take more responsibility towards reducing the environmental impact that is increasing this problem. They remarked that were surprised that no solar panels were fitted on the buildings of the Mater Dei hospital. They invited the parliament to seriously study the adoption of alternative energy sources and the sponsoring of schools wanting to

implement energy conservation policies. The minister readily accepted the letter and promised to read and take action about it.

If you would like to contribute to this newsletter please contact Dr Paul Pace, National EkoSkola Co-ordinator, on paul.j.pace@um.edu.mt

Visit our website on www.ekoskolamalta.com