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Special Edition:

The 6th EkoSkola Parliamentary Session



EkoSkola

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Issue 27



The 27th of May marked another special day for the students participating in the EkoSkola programme. Sixty students from 30 different schools were accompanied by 10 Members of Parliament for the sixth edition of the EkoSkola Parliament. This special event in the EkoSkola's calendar provides students with the opportunity to discuss environmental concerns with their nation's policy makers. The theme for this year's session was Climate Change which was also the follow up of a whole year of school activities related to the HSBC Eco-Schools Climate Initiative.



Students from St. Joseph, Mater Boni Consilii School, Paola recited the Opening Prayer. The Hon Mr Speaker Dr Michael Frendo welcomed all those

The Hon Mr Speaker, Dr Michael Frendo and Prof Paul Pace, National EkoSkola Co-ordinator



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present and complimented schools for their environment. He pointed out that environmental issues are commonly discussed at Parliament. Prof Paul Pace, the National EkoSkola Co-ordinator, explained the procedure to be adopted during the session and students from St. Thomas More College, Zejtun Primary B read the EkoSkola Parliament Motion.

After the presentation by students from St. Francis Secondary Sliema, the Hon Owen Bonnici, Opposition spokesperson for Youth & Culture addressed the House. He said that nowadays EkoSkola has become synonymous to success. Education is the best tool to improve

continuous commitment towards the



The Hon Owen Bonnici, Opposition spokesperson for Youth and Culture



The Hon Philip Mifsud, Parliamentary Assistant within the Ministry for Resources and Rural Affairs

the quality of the environment through a change in mentality. Through local action we are showing what we believe in. He encouraged children to continue working for the environment. *"You can all say 'we were there' when the decisions that changed Malta were taken"*.

The Hon Philip Mifsud, Parliamentary Assistant within the Ministry for Resources and Rural Affairs replied to the St. Clare College, San Gwann Primary B's presentation. He said that climate change is problematic because its effects are not immediately apparent. We need to combat the nonchalant attitudes that we

have become accustomed to. *"You are the ones bringing about change. Every little thing counts. Be ready to correct our wrong attitudes"*.

Then it was the students from St. Gorg Preca College, Paola Primary A to present their concerns. The Hon Evarist Bartolo, Opposition spokesperson for Education and Media, invited his colleagues to reflect on what the students are saying. He complimented EkoSkola for bringing about a general change, not just in the promotion of environmental responsibility, but also in the way how education is perceived. Climate change is showing that we are a global village and that our actions are impacting the



The Hon Evarist Bartolo, Opposition spokesperson for Education and Media

quality of life throughout the planet. *"We need to balance environmental, economic and social concerns to avoid being accused of not doing anything about the degradation of our planet"*.

St. Benedict College, Girls' Secondary Tarxien's turn to present their ideas about climate change was followed by a reply by the Hon Dr Stephen Spiteri, Parliamentary Assistant within the Ministry of Education, Employment and the Family. He thanked the children for bringing about change and for being responsible for the continued improvement of the quality of life in schools. *"Climate change is affecting us so we*



The Hon Dr. Stephen Spiteri, Parliamentary Assistant within the Ministry of Education, Employment and the Family

need to do something tangible about it”.

Two presentations followed from Gozo College, Xewkija Primary and St. Clare College Gzira Boys' Secondary School respectively. The Hon Leo Brincat, Opposition spokesperson for the Environment, Sustainable Development & Climate Change, said that the EkoSkola Parliament session is an opportunity for MPs to learn. Children tend to be more aware of and active on climate change issues than adults. *“Climate change is not just a current fashion. It should be a top priority in our political agenda. Even if international powers do not seem to be committed to climate change, you need to show them what needs to be done”.* The presentation of the students from St. Michael School, St Venera followed.



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



The Hon Dr Mario de Marco, Parliamentary Secretary for Tourism, the Environment and Culture

The Hon Dr Mario de Marco, Parliamentary Secretary for Tourism, the Environment and Culture, said that we need to move away from environmental legislation towards developing environmental consciousness. A small country with a dense population means that the smallest mistake has a greater impact. *“You are not just talking about the environment, but you are doing something about it. Although we are already addressing climate change issues, your requests push us to do more”.*

Students from the Archbishop's Seminary School concluded the students' interventions. They were followed by the Hon George Pullicino, Minister for Resources and Rural Affairs, who said that he felt honoured to be in the presence of EkoSkola children. He would have liked to have had the same opportunity when he was a young child. EkoSkola does not just focus on environmental awareness, but seeks to develop responsibility. Climate change is an urgent matter and if we drag our feet we may miss a golden opportunity. *“Children have said Yes to clean energy. We as politicians need to listen to the students' request ... for their own sake and for us. We should not be afraid to take action”.*



The Hon George Pullicino, Minister for Resources and Rural Affairs

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 for granting us permission to use the premises.

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.

Motion about EkoSkola presented to the House of Representatives



Mr Speaker,

On behalf of my friends I would like to thank you for granting us permission to speak in Parliament. We form part of an international programme spread in forty eight countries that includes more than eight and a half million schoolchildren. The EkoSkola programme has been functioning in Malta for these last eight years. During this time the number of schools participating in the programme has increased from six to one hundred and two. Eleven schools have been awarded the Green Flag and are actively working on improving the quality of life in our schools.

This is our sixth visit to this place and we have always presented valid ideas. We feel proud that the members of Parliament dedicate some of their time to listen to what we want to say. During the 2008 session we had asked the House to give more importance to the issue of climate change. We had done so because we are really worried about the impact that this change will have on us and our future. We thank you that you have started working on the issue since that session.

This year, fifty six schools participated in the HSBC Eco-Schools Climate Initiative. This international project focuses on climate change. Besides raising awareness about the problem, participating schools worked hard to do something about it. As a result we have introduced several good practices in our schools and our families. Now, as we are accustomed to do whenever we are here, we are asking your support regarding this issue.

Do not forget that besides being members of parliament, you are also grandparents, parents, uncles and aunties and relatives. We are sure that you are willing to do anything for your children. We are therefore kindly asking you to agree amongst you to ensure a better future for us all. Climate change is having an impact on everybody and we should not waste time on quarrels. We are already doing our part and we are succeeding in resolving the problem by changing bad practices. However, at times, you adults fail to take the problem seriously enough. You employ too much time to do something while the problem is getting worse. We would like to ask you to join us in doing our very best to resolve this problem.



The schools participating in the parliamentary session were:

- Gozo College, Xewkija Primary
- Our Lady Immaculate School, Hamrun
- San Andrea School, Mgarr
- San Anton School, Mgarr
- St. Benedict College, Kirkop Boys' Secondary
- St. Benedict College, Mqabba Primary School C
- St. Benedict College, Tarxien Girls' Secondary
- St. Clare College, Gzira Boys' Secondary School
- St. Clare College, San Gwann Primary B
- St. Edward's College, Cospicua
- St. Francis Secondary, Sliema
- St. Francis School, B'Kara
- St. Gorg Preca College, Hamrun Primary
- St. Gorg Preca College, Hamrun Boys' Junior Lyceum
- St. Gorg Preca College, Paola Primary A
- St. Gorg Preca College, Paola Primary B
- St. Ignatius College, Handaq Qormi Boys' Secondary
- St. Ignatius College, Siggiewi Primary
- St. Joseph, Mater Boni Consilii School, Paola
- St. Margaret College, Cospicua Girls' Secondary School
- St. Margaret College, Kalkara Primary
- St. Margaret College, Xghajra Primary
- St. Michael School, St Venera
- St. Nicholas College, Mtarfa Boys' Secondary School
- St. Patricks Salesian School, Sliema
- St. Thomas More College, Fgura Primary B
- St. Thomas More College, Zejtun Primary B
- St. Thomas More College, Paola Boys' Secondary School
- The Archbishop's Seminary School, Rabat - Malta



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

Visit our website on www.ekoskolamalta.com