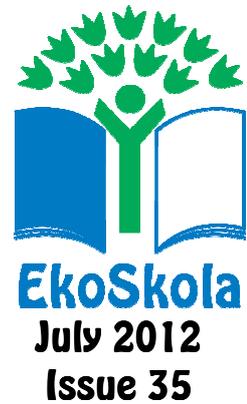


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Special Edition:

The 8th EkoSkola Parliamentary Session



This year's EkoSkola Parliament session was held on the 12th June. It was attended by 70 students from 35 different schools accompanied by 15 Members of Parliament. This event is organised every year and aims to provide students participating in the EkoSkola programme an opportunity to discuss issues related to sustainable development with policy makers. Besides celebrating EkoSkola's 10th Anniversary this year's event was organised as a follow up to the Young People's Environmental Summit during which students voiced their concerns about the state of the environment and compiled a declaration for the Rio +20 Earth Summit.

Isac Spiteri and Kian Sullivan from St Clare College, Gzira Primary, recited the Opening Prayer. The Hon. Mr Speaker, Dr Michael Frendo, welcomed all those present. He praised the students for giving rise to a new generation of environmentally committed citizens. He pointed out that



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

environmental issues have become central to national and global discussions about quality of life. After Prof Paul Pace, the National EkoSkola Co-ordinator, introduced this year's theme, Hon. Mr Speaker invited Omar Xuereb and Matteo Pio Muscat from Gozo College, Qala Primary, to read the EkoSkola Parliament Motion. At the end of the motion, the students were granted permission to table a copy of all the student interventions.

The student's declaration, prepared during the Young People's Environmental Summit, was presented by the following students, who represented those who attended the event: Rachael-Marie Muscat and Jeremy Buttigieg

(St Benedict College, Mqabba Primary School); Daniel Borg and Noel Spiteri (St Patrick's Salesian School Sliema); Kaya Mifsud and Marija Camilleri (St Thomas More College, Zejtun Primary A); Simon Camenzuli and Justin Pisani (St Michael's School, St Venera); Emma Formosa and Jake Calleja (St Ignatius College, Luqa Primary); Amy Bartolo and Juanita Galea (San Anton School); and Kieran Higgins and Luke Polidano (St Francis, Cospicua). Four members of parliament replied to the issues raised in the declaration.

The Hon. Dr Justyne Caruana, Opposition Spokesperson for Family, Children and Persons with Disability, thanked the organisers of the event ... particularly the students. She drew her colleagues' attention towards the students' sense of altruism and social commitment. She urged the students to continue with their commitment and appealed to the other members of parliament to assist these children *"in the defence of our future ... and let us implement their suggestions so that we show them that we care"*.



The Hon. Dr Justyne Caruana, Opposition Spokesperson for Family, Children and Persons with Disability



Hon. Joseph Falzon, Deputy Party Whip for the Government

In his reply the Hon. Joseph Falzon, Deputy Party Whip for the Government, representing the Hon. Giovanna Debono, Minister for Gozo (who was attending another official function) highlighted how Eco-Gozo initiatives were addressing sustainable lifestyles. The major thrust of these initiatives is education. He pointed out that students are important promoters of values that support sustainable development and *"need to be viewed as key ambassadors of sustainability in their communities"*.

The following reply came from Hon. Owen Bonnici, Opposition Spokesperson for Youth and Culture. He remarked that, as in previous years, this parliamentary session proved that young people can educate adults ... at times more than the other way round! After thanking the organisers of the event and the students for their input, he asked the students:

"continue showing us how to appreciate what we have and constantly remind us of the beauty of sharing our possessions with others".



The Hon. Owen Bonnici, Opposition Spokesperson for Youth and Culture

The final reply came from Hon. Philip Mifsud, Parliamentary Assistant in the Ministry for Resources and Rural Affairs (representing the Hon. George Pullicino, Minister for Resources and Rural Affairs, who was attending another official function). He stated that EkoSkola is a success story in that it is empowering students. He also remarked that young people have a lot to teach us about sustainability. He then proceeded to urge the students to *"act as our conscience ... continue offering your suggestions so that we can guarantee a sustainable future"*.

Andrew Thake and Edward Thake (St Edward's College) were then invited to share their schools' experience in integrating Education for Sustainable Development into the curriculum. This was followed by the address of Hon. Evarist

Bartolo, Opposition spokesperson for Education & Media. He remarked that EkoSkola presents one of the most beautiful aspects of our educational system because of the opportunities it offers for student active participation. *"We adults have meddled with the environment and created an uncertain future. The least we can do is to heed their requests"*.



Hon. Evarist Bartolo, Opposition spokesperson for Education & Media

The Hon. Dolores Cristina, Minister of Education and Employment, thanked Nature Trust for EkoSkola and the continued effort being done to promote participative education. She made particular reference to the students' concerns about world poverty and diseases. She stressed on the need to *"invest in education ... particularly that of adults ... since it is through education that solutions to our current problems can be found"*.

The next address was from Fredrick Buttigieg and Kim Tabone of St Therese College B'Kara Primary who highlighted their school's commitment, appealed for support to make the President's Palace more sustainable

and inquired about the promises made in last year's parliamentary session. In his address, the Hon. Leo Brincat, Opposition spokesperson for the Environment, Sustainable Development & Climate Change, spoke about parliament's duty to ensure that environmental action does not become an uphill struggle. He mentioned how Bank Ki-moon (UN Secretary General) urged youths to push their governments into committing themselves to sustainable development. He concluded by reminding his colleagues



Hon. Philip Mifsud, Parliamentary Assistant in the Ministry for Resources and Rural Affairs



The Hon. Dolores Cristina, Minister of Education & Employment



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

that "we should be accountable for our mistakes ... as our decisions weigh heavily on these children. Continue reminding us of our duty".

The final student presentation was from Annah Mallia and Benjamin Mifsud from St Thomas More College, M'Skala Primary who expressed their concern about the situation at the Magħluq tal-Baħar, Marsaskala. The Hon. Dr Mario de Marco, Minister for Tourism, the Environment and Culture, responded by speaking about Rio +20's themes: (i) promoting a Green Economy to combat poverty and (ii) strengthening the supportive infrastructure to ensure the success of the initiatives. He remarked that "the challenges for Rio are great because of varied interests ... however the children's voices

commit us to action".

In his concluding speech, the Hon Mr Speaker, Dr Michael Frendo, congratulated the students for their level of preparation and concern. He then proposed the Motion for the approval of the House of Representatives. The Motion was unanimously adopted by all those present.

As in previous years, the event proved to be a huge success. The EkoSkola Steering Committee would like to thank all those who made this experience possible particularly the Hon Mr Speaker, Dr Michael Frendo and his Office for granting us permission to use the premises. This year's session was audio streamed on the House of Representatives website and widely reported in the media.

As a follow up, Hon. Philip Mifsud, Parliamentary Assistant in the Ministry for Resources and Rural Affairs, tabled a poster and a letter signed by students from St Thomas More College, M'Skala Primary about the situation at the Magħluq tal-Baħar, Marsaskala.



The Hon. Dr Mario de Marco, Minister for Tourism, the Environment and Culture



Motion about EkoSkola presented to the House of Representatives



Mr. Speaker,

Your esteem for Parliament is common knowledge and therefore, on behalf of my friends, I would like to start off by heartily thanking you for giving us the opportunity to talk about environmental issues that are of particular concern to us. This is a very important year for us because we are celebrating the 10th anniversary since Malta joined the EkoSkola programme. This international programme is run in 50 different countries with over 11 million participating students. In our islands, 80% of the students, from 110 schools, participate in the programme. From these, 27 schools received the Green Flag for their commitment.

This is also a special year because it is Nature Trust's 50th anniversary and it marks the next session of the Rio Earth Summit. This is why we want to make a more substantial contribution. For this reason some of us viewed and discussed the speech given by Severn Suzuki, a 12-year old girl, to the delegates attending the Rio Summit of twenty years ago. In this speech she communicated her concerns, on behalf of her friends, about their future because of the steady deterioration of the quality of the environment. And we wanted to do something similar because in May we organised a summit during which we discussed concerns about our environment.

We compiled our ideas in a declaration that we will present during this parliamentary session. If you agree with our comments we would also like to present it to the Maltese delegation attending the Rio Summit. The declaration is not the only thing we have done. We constantly strive to put our words into practice. In fact, 24 schools applied for the Green Flag this year ... 10 of which are first time applicants, 8 are receiving it for the second time, 4 for the third and 2 for the fourth time. Moreover, 12 schools conducted community-based projects about climate change as part of the HSBC-ES Climate Initiative. Other schools had other environmental initiatives.

Once again, Mr Speaker, we thank you for believing in our commitment to improve our nation. Therefore, as Severn Suzuki did twenty years ago, we wish to address you not as members of parliament, but as parents, grandparents, uncles and aunties of the children in Malta and Gozo. Please help us to safeguard our country's environment to ensure a better and healthier future. Finally, Mr Speaker, I wish to request your permission to table a copy of all the interventions which will be made today during this session.



The Declaration:

Caring for our Future

Preparation for the Rio de Janeiro Earth Summit

10th May 2012

We EkoSkola students ...

- prepared this declaration to show our concern about the environmental problems that might have a negative effect on our future;
- wish to submit this declaration to the Maltese political leaders, especially those who will be representing our country at the Rio Earth Summit;
- wish that decision makers consider what we are saying and do their best to ensure that our future is a safe, healthy and sustainable one.

We EkoSkola students support ...

- and appreciate every effort towards environmental improvement;
- waste separation and every effort towards waste minimisation;
- every action aimed at promoting the use of alternative energy;
- every action that promotes the just and sustainable distribution of resources;
- the aid Malta gives to counties in need and wish to see similar actions by rich countries;
- the Rio Earth Summit because it offers the governments of different countries the possibility to meet and find ways of safeguarding the environment.

We EkoSkola students are concerned about ...

- dirty industry that is polluting the air, the sea and the land;
- habitat destruction that is leading towards plant and animal extinction and environmental refugees;
- the lack of accessibility to good quality drinking water;
- the lack of consideration for finding ways to collect, recycle and make wise use of water;
- our over reliance on reverse osmosis plants for our water supply;
- climate change and its negative effects on the quality of life;
- the increase in diseases related to the environment we are living in;
- poverty and ever increasing difference between those who have too much and those who have too little to live;
- governments who take their Rio Summit promises lightly;
- decision makers who are too comfortable to consider those who are suffering;
- politicians who do not set good examples because of their lifestyle and decisions.

We EkoSkola students suggest ...

- safeguarding living things from extinction by protecting their habitats;
- planting more trees and ensuring safe and open spaces;
- serious efforts relating to the use of alternative energy;

- that water reserves are considered as a common heritage of humanity and not as a property of those who have the technology to exploit them;
- the setting up of systems that facilitate sustainable transport (e.g. planned streets, viable bicycle lanes and electric vehicles);
- incentives that reward those who adopt sustainable lifestyles;
- introduce taxes on companies who profit their lack of environmental responsibility (e.g. pollution, over packaging);
- the nurturing of a culture that is against the waste of resources (eg. the best use of land);
- the sustainable use of our resources to ensure that there is enough for us and for those who are coming after us;
- the introduction of sustainable agricultural practices (e.g. permaculture);
- the introduction of sustainable practices in governmental organisations (e.g. the use of emails instead of paper);
- a rethink of past decisions that are clearly having a negative impact on the environment (e.g. the decision to replace glass bottles with plastic ones);
- more sustainable advertising practices (e.g. a ban against junk mail);
- that rich countries send their experts to help poor countries in their development plans;
- that rich countries invest their technologies in poor countries so as to help in their development plans;
- the setting up of environmental education programmes for children and adults;
- that part of the profits generated by worldwide events, like the World Cup 2014 and the Rio Summit, goes towards people in need of the host country;
- that we, children and young people, are given the opportunity to voice our ideas and to adopt an active role;
- that politicians consider our suggestions and update us about any actions they take in their implementation.



Participants in the Young People's Environmental Summit

The schools participating in the parliamentary session were:

- Gozo College, Qala Primary
- Gozo College Rabat Primary
- Gozo College, Xewkija Primary
- Maria Regina College, Naxxar Primary
- Our Lady Immaculate School, Hamrun
- San Andrea School
- San Anton School
- St Benedict's College, Hal Ghaxaq Primary
- St Benedict College, Mqabba Primary School
- St Benedict College, Safi Primary
- St Benedict's College, Girls Secondary, Tarxien
- St Benedict College, Zurrieq Primary
- St Clare College, San Gwann Primary B
- St Clare College, Gzira Primary
- St Clare College, Gzira Boys' Secondary
- St Edward's College Malta
- St Francis, Cospicua
- St Gorg Preca College, Paola Primary A
- St Jeanne Antide College, Immaculate Conception School, Tarxien
- St Joseph Mater Boni Consilii, Paola
- St Ignatius College, Luqa Primary
- St Ignatius College, Siggiewi Primary School
- St Michael's School, St Venera
- St Monica School B'Kara
- St Monica Gzira Primary
- St Monica Gzira Secondary
- St Nicholas College Boys Secondary Naxxar
- St Patrick's Salesian School Sliema
- St Therese College B'Kara Primary
- St Theresa College, B'Kara Boys' Secondary
- St Theresa College, Lija-Balzan-Iklin Primary
- St Theresa College, Msida Primary
- St Thomas More College, Fgura Primary B
- St Thomas More College, M'Skala Primary
- St Thomas More College, Zejtun Primary A

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