



Cutting down on Greenhouse gas emissions – Proposals by Alternattiva Demokratika.

Today, it is a well established fact that tackling Climate Change is one of the greatest challenges facing humanity. Our failure to do so will not only lead to long-term environmental degradation but will also lead to severe economic repercussions. Scientists in the field have established important causal links between extreme weather events such as the floods which devastated Central Europe in autumn 2003 or hurricane Katrina and human induced climate change. In both cases the expenses related to remediation of the ensuing damages ran into millions of Liri.

Malta too, has a moral obligation to go beyond the rhetorical speeches pronounced at the Montreal Conference in December 2005 and do its part to stop climate change.

According the report submitted to the UNFCCC, Malta emitted 2600 kilotons of carbon dioxide (CO₂) in 2003. The major culprits being the electricity generation sector (Enemalta) and transport. Therefore any “green house” gas abatement strategy must target these two sectors in particular.

Electricity generation with its 1783 kilotons of CO₂ emitted per annum is responsible for 75% of Malta’s CO₂ emissions. Furthermore projections based on the Malta’s first National Communication to the UNFCCC indicate that if the demand for electricity

were to continue increasing at the present rate of *ca.* 5% per *annum* emissions of CO₂ will increase by *ca.* 12% in 5years.

Alternattiva Demokratika believes that the first step in the abatement of CO₂ emissions should be the management of the demand for electricity. It is clear that the consumer plays the key role in this strategy. If this idea is to be successful then the consumer has got to be educated into sustainable energy consumption patterns, which include choosing energy-saving appliances.

All retail outlets selling domestic appliances must label these goods according to their energy saving characteristics, L.N. 99 of 2002 (and subsequent amendments). It should be ensured that the legal notice is being followed, there are a number of outlets who still do not label their goods according to this legal notice. The public must also be made aware of this requirement.

AD supports the introduction of market based initiatives which encourage the consumers towards more eco-friendly behaviour, such as eco-taxation. At this point we have to note that the so called “eco-contribution” introduced by the Nationalist Government in 2004, through the Eco-Contribution Act of 2004 has got to be reformed. Levying a flat contribution on all appliances irrespective of energy performance does not make the energy saving product more “palatable”. Alternattiva Demokratika suggests that the levying of this tax should depend on the energy efficiency of the appliance. The government should consider waiving the

eco-contribution altogether on the most energy efficient products (the A-rated appliances) and increase heftily the contribution levied on the C and D-rated appliances (i.e. those appliances that are least efficient).

Figures from the 2003 show that *ca.* 9% of the total electrical power generated is used up to produce potable water. We are pleased to note that this represents an improvement over the past years, however we believe that it is very important to minimise water wastage. We strongly support the introduction of fiscal incentives aimed at promoting products (showers, taps, mixers etc.) which minimise water wastage. We also suggest that the government should study how to best utilise second class water for “non-drinking” purposes. As things stand the government plans to throw second class water produced by sewage treatment plants into the sea.

As far as power generation is concerned AD is in favour of a complete switch to combined cycle gas turbines (CCGT) operating on natural gas. This system has got the double advantage of being both more efficient at producing energy as well as utilising a “cleaner” fuel. Alternattiva Demokratika acknowledges the fact that this shift will involve a huge initial capital outlay of around but we believe that the long term benefits which will ensue will make up for the initial expense. We also understand that the supply of natural gas may pose significant technical difficulties and has profound implications on our security of supply. We are therefore suggesting the commissioning of a study in order to come up with solutions to this problem.

Increasing the contribution of renewable sources, to energy production is one of the basic pillars of climate change strategies throughout the European Union. In fact renewables contribute to *ca.* 4% of the energy generated in the EU. Furthermore the EU is committed to increasing the contribution of renewable energies to 12% of the energy generated by 2010. Through L.N. 186 of 2004 Malta has established for itself a National Indicative target for energy generated from renewable sources of 5% by 2010. We note with disappointment that so far Malta has done very little or nothing in this area and it is highly probable that this target will not be met. Rather than making hurried pronouncements regarding the non-viability of renewable energy resources (Budget Speech 2006), the government should think about schemes aimed at subsidising the generation of electricity from renewable resources and promoting research into renewable energy and climate change technologies (as is done by governments through the EU).

A large proportion of the electricity used for domestic consumption is used up to heat up our houses during winter and cooling them down during summer. This is partly due to the fact that our buildings are designed without keeping energy efficiency in mind. Alternattiva Demokratika supports the introduction of legislation which makes the inclusion of energy saving measures in our buildings mandatory. We also believe that the Architecture course at University should also be orientated in this direction.

In 2003 Malta emitted 525 kilotonnes of CO₂ (*ca.* 20% of the total emissions) from road transport. Without any doubt extensive use of private cars was the major contributor to this amount.

According to Eurostat figures, Malta has the 5th highest car ownership rate in the European Union, *ca.* 2 cars per household (508 cars per 1000 inhabitants) and the number of passengers using public transport declined by 20% over 8 years. These figures are indicative of our public transport's un-popularity and un-success. Alternattiva Demokratika believes that the Government is obliged to take all the necessary steps to make public transport a viable commuting option for the greater portion of the population. The reform should start with the buses, we believe that all "pre-Euro standard" buses should be replaced with buses which conform to at least Euro IV and preferably operating on bio-diesel and/or natural gas. Other methods of transport should also be looked into to create a network of public transport options for commuters. Wider usage of sea transport especially in the Sliema, Valletta, Cottonera harbour areas, the introduction of bicycle lanes, electric buses, trams should be seriously considered. Public transport needs investment on the part of the state, but such an investment will yield a host of benefits in terms of the quality of life of people, especially those living or working in urban areas, not to mention economic benefits by reducing dependence on costly fuel for mobility.

As regards private cars, the present registration system should be reformed.

Registration tax should be based on the amount of CO₂ emitted per kilometre driven.

Consumers must be incentivised further to purchase, should they need a car, cars employing alternative propulsion systems such as electrical cars, hybrid engines etc.

Alternattiva Demokratika believes that CO₂ emissions can be curbed, as long as there is the political will to do so. We also think that a wide ranging and deep consultation exercise should take place. Political parties, unions, industry associations, NGO's etc. should meet around a table to agree upon a set of measures which will be taken in order to reduce greenhouse gas emissions. We believe that in this way our generation would have contributed towards making the earth habitable for the generations to come and that Malta's economy is strengthened by reducing our dangerous and expensive dependence on fossil fuels.