

A sustainable development strategy for the maltese islands

[Business](#), [Strategy](#)



A SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY FOR THE MALTESE ISLANDS 2007-2016 Proposed by the National Commission for Sustainable Development 2 A SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY FOR THE MALTESE ISLANDS 2007-2016 National Commission for Sustainable Development 20th December 2006 This proposed Sustainable Development Strategy for the Maltese Islands was adopted by the National Commission for Sustainable Development on 13 November 2006, in terms of Article 8 (7f) of the Environment Protection Act (Chapter 435 of the Laws of Malta).

It is being submitted by the Commission to the Cabinet of Ministers for possible endorsement by the Government of Malta. This document does not necessarily reflect the views of the Government of Malta.

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67 68 69 69 69 71 73 3 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY The process of drafting the National Strategy for Sustainable Development was initiated during the 5th meeting of Malta's National Commission for Sustainable Development (NCSD), held on 9 December 2002, when the Commission appointed a Task Force to oversee the preparation of a National Strategy for Sustainable Development, consisting of an overarching vision and principles, listing the aspirations of Government, civil society and the private sector in this regard, and outlining methods of implementation, taking into account Malta's capacities and constraints.

This decision was taken in line with the functions of the Commission, as listed in Article 8(7) of the Environmental Protection Act (Act XX 2001). The Task Force met soon after it was appointed and set in motion a consultative process to prepare the National Strategy for Sustainable Development. In March 2006, the National Commission for Sustainable Development appointed a second Task Force, in order to update the original draft of the National Strategy for Sustainable Development, published in July 2004, by incorporating suggestions put forward by various organisations and individuals that were consulted during 2004 and 2005 and by government ministries, departments and public sector agencies that were consulted in

March 2006. That version was published in April 2006, 2 and presented for discussion at a National Conference on Sustainable Development, held on 22 April 2006 at the Mediterranean Conference Centre. A third draft of the Sustainable Development Strategy for the Maltese Islands was drawn up to incorporate suggestions put forward during the April 2006 Conference.

Following a second round of consultation with government departments and other public sector agencies, a fourth draft (the current document) was prepared by a third Task Force appointed by the Commission for Sustainable Development and presented to the Commission on 13 November 2006. The Commission adopted this document and decided to submit it to the Cabinet of Ministers for possible endorsement by the Government of Malta. This proposed Strategy represents the views of the NCSD and does not necessarily reflect the views of the Government of Malta. Objective and Mandate

The objective of drawing up a National Strategy for Sustainable Development was first established in the aftermath of the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED), when the Maltese Government, together with the governments of other nations, committed itself to adopt such a Strategy so as to “ build upon and harmonise the various sectoral, economic, social and environmental policies and plans that are operating in the country” and to “ ensure socially responsible economic development while protecting the resource base and the environment for the benefit of future generations. Governments also agreed that the Strategy should “ be developed through the widest possible participation” and that it should be “

based on a thorough assessment of the current situation and initiatives” (Agenda 21, Chapter 8, paragraph 8. 7). In September 2000, some 150 Heads of State, including Malta, signed the Millennium Declaration and reaffirmed their support for the principles of sustainable development and Agenda 21. They also agreed on the Millennium Development Goals, including the need to “ integrate the principles of sustainable development into country policies and programmes and reverse the loss of environmental resources. (Millennium Development Goal 7). 1 2 See http://home.um.edu.mt/islands/ncsd/analysis_public_consultation.pdf http://home.um.edu.mt/islands/ncsd/draftstrategydocument_2006.pdf 5 This activity at UN level prompted the European Union to prepare its own Strategy for Sustainable Development³ in 2001, which was renewed in June 2006. The EU Strategy contains targets and actions on seven key priority challenges, and outlines guiding principles for sustainable development.

The Malta Strategy builds upon and is informed by the Sustainable Development Strategy of the EU. In addition, as a result of its accession to the EU, Malta has embarked on wide-ranging reforms in various sectors, produced national strategic documents in key areas, transposed EU directives in line with the *acquis communautaire*, upgraded its environmental legislation, and bound itself to adopt measures which are strategically aimed at achieving sustainable development goals.

Malta’s Strategy is also in line with the Mediterranean Strategy for Sustainable Development. 4 These commitments, among others, have imposed an obligation and a mandate for Malta to adopt a sustainable

development strategy. Malta has, following UNCED, undertaken various actions which can be considered conducive to sustainable development. These were however not couched within an overarching sustainable development strategy. This Strategy is intended to satisfy this need.

It is the result of the dedicated work of members of the National Commission for Sustainable Development, particularly those forming part of the task forces appointed by the Commission, and also draws on extensive public consultation. It contains an overarching vision and related principles, reflecting the aspirations of the people as expressed in the consultation process. It sets targets and related performance indicators in line with such aspirations and with national commitments, and outlines methods of implementation taking into account Malta's capacities and constraints.

This proposed Strategy for Sustainable Development reinforces the strategic vision identified in key Malta Government policy documents, including the National Reform Programme and the Draft National Strategic Reference Framework. Sustainability is a Two-way Street In various parts of this document, civil society participation is encouraged. Such participation should not be taken to imply armchair criticism, but involvement in the pursuit of sustainable development goals.

While it is the Government's responsibility to officially formulate, fund and implement the national sustainable development strategy, there is an equal responsibility placed on individuals, constituted bodies and civil society in general to play their part in supporting initiatives that foster sustainable development, as a way of achieving a better quality of life for current and

future generations. This may involve changes in the way individuals conduct their life, but social responsibility is central to the concept of sustainable development. Implementing the Strategy

The success of this Strategy will lie in its implementation. A prerequisite for successful implementation is an Action Plan relating to the strategic directions, particularly the priority ones. The Action Plan needs to include specific indicators, budget allocations and time frames, thus rendering it amenable to regular monitoring. This Strategy should be undertaken once the priority strategic directions are approved by the Government. 3 “ A sustainable Europe for a Better World: A European Union Strategy for Sustainable Development” COM (2001) 264 final. See [http://www. planbleu. org/actualite/uk/MediterraneanStrategySustainableDevelopment. html](http://www.planbleu.org/actualite/uk/MediterraneanStrategySustainableDevelopment.html) 6

Layout This report is organised in six chapters. Chapter 1 describes how the Strategy was drawn up and the criteria underpinning it. Chapter 2 explains the overarching vision underpinning the Strategy, referring to the various dimensions of sustainable development. Chapter 3, which presents the Strategy, is structured in four sections, covering the environmental, economic and social pillars of sustainable development, as well as cross-cutting issues.

Chapter 4 deals with the implementation of the Strategy. Chapter 5 presents suggestions for the way forward, with a reminder that the Strategy is an ongoing process requiring periodic revisions. The final chapter lists the priority areas, accompanied by indicators and targets. The focal point of this document is Chapter 3, which, as stated, contains the proposed Strategy,

under the following four main headings: (1) managing the environment and resources; (2) promoting sustainable economic development; (3) fostering sustainable communities; and (4) cross-cutting strategic issues.

A number of strategic directions are proposed with regard to each heading. These strategic directions are only accompanied by indicators or targets in cases where priority areas are identified, and are intended to serve as guideposts for the attainment of sustainable development goals in the long term. The priority areas, on the other hand, are to be interpreted as an undertaking by Government to attain the targets indicated within the time frames indicated. Priority Areas

The document identifies 20 priority areas, which were given major importance during the consultation process and which the NCSD considered as warranting foremost attention for the attainment of sustainable development goals in Malta. These priority areas are accompanied by indicators and targets. They are considered to have a direct positive effect on society as a whole, in that they improve the quality of life of the population, are in line with sustainable development goals and could be used to gauge whether Malta is moving towards or away from sustainability.

The priority strategic directions so identified are the following: 1. The EnvironmentClimate Change. Take steps to reduce greenhouse gas emissions through transport policy and an energy policy that seeks to promote environmental protection, competitiveness and security of supplies and, as a result, decouple the rate of growth of GHG emissions from economic growth. Air Quality. Take remedial action to control emissions of

air pollutants (ambient levels of particulate matter, sulphur dioxide, carbon monoxide, benzene, lead, ozone, heavy metals and nitrogen oxides), and achieve compliance with European standards.

Nature and Biodiversity. Halt loss of biodiversity by 2010, and achieve management of protected areas by 2008. Freshwater. Adopt a policy with the aim of ensuring the utilisation of water resources in a manner that is environmentally and economically sustainable, while safeguarding the water needs of the population, and of the agricultural, commercial and industrial sectors, and achieve good quantitative status by 2015. Seawater. Sustain compliance with the Bathing Water Directive and achieve compliance with Barcelona Convention standards. Wastes.

Prevent and minimise waste by achieving EU waste-related objectives and targets, reviewing Malta's Waste Management Strategy by 2007. 2. 3. 4. 5. 6. 7 7. Land use. Protect, maintain and improve the urban and rural environment and, through the planning system, protect the open countryside from uses, particularly residences, which can be more appropriately located in urban areas. Transport. Reduce car ownership rates to the EU average by 2014. Attain 1995 bus patronage levels by 2014 (40 million passengers). 8. 9. The Economy Economic Growth.

Adopt policy measures so that the growth of GDP per capita in real terms occurs at a rate which will enable the Maltese economy to converge towards the EU average. 10. Employment. Create employment opportunities to generate income and improve the quality of life of the population, taking into consideration environmental and social impacts and adopt policy measures

so that the ratio of total employment to the working-age population in Malta converges with the EU average and reaches at least 57 per cent by 2010. 11. Labour productivity.

Adopt policy measures to increase average labour productivity at a rate of 1 per cent per annum over the EU average by 2010, while attempting to balance wages, taxation and productivity, in collaboration with the social partners. Society 12. Poverty reduction. Reduce or, at least contain, the current level of 15 per cent of the population at risk of poverty and decrease the ratio of population aged over 65 at risk of poverty from 20 per cent to 15 per cent, by 2010. 13. Labour force participation of women. Adopt policy measures so that the labour force participation rate of women increases to 40. per cent by 2010. 14. Health. Decrease the ratio of overweight/obese population in line with the EU average by 2010 by, amongst other things, enhancing the focus on healthy living and prevention, in order to reduce the need for curative care. 15. Education. Continue to adopt measures to decrease the early school leavers rate to 35 per cent by 2010 Cross Cutting Issues 16. Spatial development plan. By 2010, draw up an integrated spatial development plan to take forward the National Strategy for Sustainable Development, with the participation of major stakeholders. 7. Economic Instruments. By 2008, draw up a strategy to enhance the use of economic instruments, such as charges, taxes, subsidies, deposit refund schemes, and trading schemes to apply the polluter pays principle and to promote sustainable development in Malta. 18. Enforcement. By 2008, put in place an audit of enforcement arrangements to assess the adequacy of the current

mechanisms and to promote integration of responsibilities and reduction of overlaps. Implementation 19. Institutional setup.

By 2008, put in place a permanent structure, appropriately staffed and funded, to monitor and review the National Strategy for Sustainable Development on an ongoing basis, under the auspices of the National Commission for Sustainable Development, and hold an annual Conference with the participation of major stakeholders to critically evaluate progress relating to the Strategy. 20. Sustainability indicators. By 2008, establish and fund an entity responsible for compiling and evaluating sustainability indicators. This entity should work closely with the National Commission for Sustainable Development and the National Statistics Office. 1.

INTRODUCTION 1. 1 The Process of Drafting the Strategy The process of drafting the National Strategy for Sustainable Development was initiated during the 5th meeting of Malta's National Commission for Sustainable Development (NCSD), held on 9 December 2002, when the Commission appointed a Task Force⁵ to oversee the preparation of a National Strategy for Sustainable Development, consisting of an overarching vision and principles, listing the aspirations of government, civil society and the private sector in this regard, and outlining methods of implementation, taking into account Malta's capacities and constraints.

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March 2006 the National Commission for Sustainable Development appointed a second Task Force⁷, to update the original draft of the National Strategy for Sustainable Development, published in July 2004⁸ by incorporating suggestions put forward by various organisations and individuals that were consulted during 2004 and 2005 and by government ministries, departments and public sector agencies that were consulted in March 2006. That version was published in April 2006⁹ and was presented for discussion at a National Conference on Sustainable Development, held on 22 April 2006 at the Mediterranean Conference Centre. ⁰ A third draft of a Sustainable Development Strategy for the Maltese Islands was drawn up to incorporate suggestions put forward during the April 2006 Conference. Following a second round of consultation with government departments and other public sector agencies, a fourth draft (the current document) was prepared by a third Task Force¹¹ appointed by the Commission for Sustainable Development and was presented to the Commission on 13 November 2006.

The Commission adopted this document in terms of Article 8 (7f) of the Environment Protection Act (Chapter 435 of the Laws of Malta) and decided to submit it to the Cabinet of Ministers for possible endorsement by the Government of Malta. 1. 2 The Mandate With the setting up of the National Commission for Sustainable Development in 2002, in terms of the Environment Protection Act (2001), Malta took the first steps to develop a National Strategy for Sustainable Development.

The NCSD's main remit is to advocate national sustainable development across all sectors, to review progress in the achievement of such sustainable development and to build consensus on action needed to achieve further progress. The NCSD is also charged with identifying relevant processes or policies which may undermine sustainable development, and with proposing alternative processes or policies for adoption by the Government.

One of the specific The Task Force was composed of Lino Briguglio, as coordinator, Godwin Cassar, Marguerite Camilleri, Victor Axiak and Ray Cachia Zammit 6 See http://home.um.edu.mt/islands/ncsd/analysis_public_consultation.pdf. 7 The second task force was composed of Lino Briguglio, as coordinator, Godwin Cassar, Marguerite Camilleri, Paul Pace, Martin Spiteri and Marisa Scerri. 8 See <http://home.um.edu.mt/islands/ncsd/draftstrategydocument.pdf> 9 http://home.um.edu.mt/islands/ncsd/draftstrategydocument_2006.pdf 10 See http://home.um.edu.mt/islands/ncsd/conference_report_22-04-06.pdf 11 The third task force was composed of Lino Briguglio as coordinator, Godwin Cassar and Marguerite Camilleri. 5 9 tasks of the Commission is “ to prepare a National Strategy for Sustainable Development” (Chapter 435 of the Laws of Malta, Article 8).

The objective of drawing up a National Strategy for Sustainable Development was first established in the aftermath of the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED), when the Maltese Government, together with the governments of other nations, committed itself to adopt such a strategy so as to “ build upon and harmonise the various sectoral,

economic, social and environmental policies and plans that are operating in the country” and to “ ensure socially responsible economic development while protecting the resource base and the environment for the benefit of future generations. Governments agreed also that the strategy should “ be developed through the widest possible participation” and that it should be “ based on a thorough assessment of the current situation and initiatives” (Agenda 21, Chapter 8, paragraph 8. 7). In September 2000, some 150 Heads of State, including Malta, signed the Millennium Declaration and reaffirmed their support for the principles of sustainable development and Agenda 21.

They also agreed on the Millennium Development Goals, including the need to “ integrate the principles of sustainable development into country policies and programmes and reverse the loss of environmental resources” (Millennium Development Goal 7).¹² This activity at UN level prompted the European Union to prepare its own Strategy for Sustainable Development¹³ in 2001, which was renewed in June 2006. The EU Strategy contains targets and actions on seven key priority challenges and outlines guiding principles for sustainable development. ⁴ The Malta Strategy builds upon and is informed by the EU Sustainable Development Strategy. In addition, as a result of its accession to the EU, Malta has embarked on wide-ranging reforms in various sectors, produced national strategic documents in key areas, transposed EU directives in line with the *acquis communautaire*, upgraded its environmental legislation, and bound itself to adopt measures which are strategically aimed at achieving sustainable development goals.

These commitments, among others, have imposed an obligation on and a mandate for Malta to adopt a National Strategy for Sustainable Development. Malta has, following UNCED, undertaken various actions which can be considered conducive to sustainable development¹⁵ but these were not couched within an overarching sustainable development strategy. The Strategy contained in this document is intended to satisfy this need. See <http://www.un.org/millenniumgoals/> “ A sustainable Europe for a Better World: A European Union Strategy for Sustainable Development” COM (2001) 264 final. ¹⁴ The seven priorities emerging out of the renewed EU Strategy are: • Climate change and clean energy • Sustainable transport • Public health • Sustainable production and consumption • Conservation and Management of natural resources • Social inclusion, demography and migration • Global poverty and sustainable development challenges. ⁵ See Report submitted by the Government of Malta to the World Summit on Sustainable Development (2002). http://home.um.edu.mt/islands/Malta_WSSD.pdf 13 12 10 1. ³ The Main Benefits of a Sustainable Development Strategy The main advantage of drawing up a National Strategy for Sustainable Development is that such a strategy informs policy-making agents across different sectors. It also provides a framework for a systematic approach within an institutionalised process of consultation and consensus building.

The National Strategy for Sustainable Development should serve as a guide in prioritising actions that are undertaken by all members of society to ensure the prudent use and management of resources in a way that meets the needs of the present without compromising the needs of future

generations, thus contributing to a better life for everyone. The Strategy addresses social, economic and environmental concerns in a coherent manner and permits policy makers to assign relative priorities to these three pillars of sustainable development.

It affords an opportunity for identifying specific initiatives and for committing authorities towards their implementation within defined time frames. The extensive public consultation exercise that was carried out enriched the process by encouraging participatory schemes, and the exercise was an educational experience in itself for the participants and facilitators.

1. 4 The Criteria Underpinning the Strategy

The criteria on which the Strategy was based are similar to those set out by the United Nations Department for Economic and Social Affairs¹⁶ namely that the Strategy should:

- seek to integrate economic, social and environmental considerations;
- be inter-sectoral and multilayered;
- have a long-run perspective and an ethical dimension with regard to future generations;
- be developed on the basis of broad participation and generate a feeling of ownership by stakeholders;
- be backed by strong political commitment;
- serve to develop capacity and itself generate an enabling environment;
- promote the development of monitoring and assessment procedures;
- foster an educative process and a sustainable development culture;
- be coherent, in that there should be a balance between the funding potential and strategy priorities; and
- be anchored in sound technical and economic analysis.

1. 5 Layout of the Document

This report is organised in six chapters. Chapter 2, which follows this introduction,

explains the overarching vision underpinning the Strategy, referring to the various dimensions of sustainable development. Chapter 3, which presents the Strategy, is structured in four sections, covering the environmental, economic and social pillars of sustainable development, as well as cross-cutting issues. Chapter 4 deals with the implementation of the Strategy.

Chapter 5 proposes a way forward, with a reminder that the Strategy is an ongoing process requiring periodic revisions. The final chapter lists the priority areas, accompanied by performance indicators and targets. 16 UN DESA (2002). “ Guidance in Preparing National Sustainable Development Strategies,” available at http://www.un.org/esa/sustdev/publications/nsds_guidance.pdf

11 2. UNDERLYING PRINCIPLES 2. 1 The Overarching Vision and Goal The National Strategy for Sustainable Development is primarily aimed at improving the quality of life of all members of society, promoting convergence between the interests of different sectors and layers of society and between the interests of current and future generations. 2. 2 Sustainability is Multifaceted

Sustainable development must be based on a multifaceted approach, covering environmental, economic and social concerns, since the quality of life is dependent on these factors considered together and not in isolation from one another. This holistic approach requires a long-term view of development, rather than one based on short term economic gains. It assigns major importance to the integrity of nature and biodiversity, as well as to the eradication of poverty, the removal of social injustice and other factors that work against human welfare of current and future generations.

For this reason, economic development must be planned and executed within a framework that respects environmental capacity constraints and conservation priorities.

It should be emphasised that sustainable development cannot be compatible with economic stagnation and retardation – the word “ development” itself suggests improvements, including material ones. It is for this reason that, in this document, the need for economic development is given due importance, emphasising the point that sustainable development is not just an environmental issue, but a multidimensional and multifaceted one. However, while it is recognised that sustainable development objectives need to take into account economic realities, it is likewise recognised that to date, in spite of remarkable efforts towards environmental protection, such constraints have often excessively shifted the national priority towards economic requirements. The Strategy drawn up in this document acknowledges this reality.

Furthermore it sets as a top national priority the need to improve our quality of life and of the environment, in an effort to safeguard the long-term prospects of economic growth and social wellbeing. 2. 3 The Democratic Dimension: Participation is Necessary Directly or indirectly, all members of society are potentially affected by decisions related to sustainable development. Public participation in decision-making is therefore an essential feature of sustainable development. Principle 10 of the Rio Declaration states that sustainable development issues are best handled with the participation of all citizens concerned, and that these should have

the information and opportunity to be able to participate in decision-making processes, including judicial redress. Agenda 21 emphasises the need for enabling the participation of major groups.

More recently, the World Summit on Sustainable Development (WSSD) Johannesburg Declaration recognised the importance of a broad-based commitment to public participation in policy-formulation, decisionmaking and implementation at all levels. In this regard, Malta has signed the UNECE Aarhus Convention on Access to Information, Public Participation in Decision-making and Access to Justice in Environmental Matters and, following accession to the EU, has adopted the EU directives relevant to this convention, namely Directive 2003/4/ and 2003/35. 12 Public participation is important for two principal reasons. First, public participation is a good in its own right, empowering people both individually and collectively and reducing social exclusion and alienation.

Second, decisions taken through participatory processes are sounder because they are based on a broader spectrum of knowledge and are easier to implement because they are owned by a wider group of people. 2. 4 Social Responsibility and the Ethical Dimension While it is the Government's responsibility to officially formulate, fund and implement a national Sustainable Development Strategy, there is an equal responsibility placed on individuals, constituted bodies and civil society in general to play their part in supporting initiatives that foster sustainable development, as a way of achieving a better quality of life for current and future generations. This may involve changes in the way individuals conduct their lives, but social

responsibility is central to the concept of sustainable development. Sustainability has a strong ethical dimension and can be considered as a value to be upheld. In this regard, the issue of responsibility towards future generations takes centre stage – this aspect of sustainable development was an important component of the most widely used definition of sustainable development, as proposed by the Bruntland Commission in 1987, which states that sustainable development is the improvement in the quality of life of current generations without compromising that of future ones. There are also ethical considerations relating to science and technology, since these have major impacts on sustainability.

It is important that scientific and technological developments have the improvement of quality of life as a central aim. Ethics also have an important role in the promotion and sharing of knowledge and in the participation of stakeholders in the process. The association between sustainable development and matters such as information, transparency and participation is also ethically based, as noted above. The keyword with regard to the ethical dimension of sustainable development is “responsibility” and this pertains to environmental quality, political matters, use of economic resources, education, culture, intergenerational concerns and international affairs.

2. The Political Dimension: Integrative Legislation and Policy

The political dimension of sustainable development relates to the need for strong political commitment from all layers of authority, including Government and local authorities. It is therefore important that those in authority recognise the benefits of sustainable development and take steps to promote it. The multifaceted nature of sustainable development requires

cooperation and effective linkages between the different government departments and parastatal organisations at national and local level. In this context, the National Commission for Sustainable Development is a useful and important vehicle for co-operation and effective interface, both at the national and local level, between the various Government entities.

The political dimension is also relevant because the process of sustainable development requires consensus-building on the ways in which natural and economic resources are to be utilised. Sustainable development is primarily a political process since it is based on constant negotiation¹³ between the various individuals and groups that have different interests with regard to the use of resources. The process also involves subsidiarity – a principle associated with the decentralisation of power and the provision of an enabling environment, including material assistance to the decentralised units, in order to achieve sustainable development objectives.

In general, sustainable development requires a good legal foundation to ensure protection of the environment, to promote macroeconomic stability, to safeguard the welfare of vulnerable groups and to cater for the interests of future generations. Moreover, achieving the desired results requires an integrated approach. 2. 6 The International and Regional Dimensions Agenda 21 created a new development model, endorsed by the 2002 World Summit on Sustainable Development (WSSD), aimed at preparing the world for the challenges of the 21st century. It placed the primary, though not exclusive, responsibility on national governments, which were expected to adopt national strategies, plans, policies and processes conducive to sustainable

development, in order to secure the well-being of current and future generations.

The international commitments of states to promote sustainable development at the regional and international levels emanate from ethical and mutual interest considerations. The ethical obligations stem from the concept of human solidarity. Actions by one state that place a burden on other states or that disregard the plights of other states work against such solidarity. This is one important reason why collaboration is necessary, and should also be an underlying reason for countries, Malta included, which form part of the donor country group within the United Nations to accept international commitments, including those proposed at UNCED and the WSSD, even when such commitments do not produce material gains to the donor countries.

Another ethical consideration is that Planet Earth has a limited capacity to deal with negative environmental, economic and social impacts, and collective responsibility is therefore called for. The ‘mutual interest’ consideration is associated with the fact that many sustainable development problems are not confined within the borders of nation-states. Obvious examples are climate change, which has an international dimension, and air and seapollution, which generally have regional impacts. There are also economic aspects of sustainable development connected with trade and aid, which have clear regional and international mutual interest dimensions.

There are many international and regional arrangements for coordination and co-operation including the United Nations, the European Union and the

Mediterranean Commission for Sustainable Development, within which Malta operates at the international and regional level. These have developed and promulgated their own sustainable development strategies and plans, and member countries have an obligation to abide by the commitments which they undertake within such organisations. 14

3. THE PROPOSED STRATEGY FOR MALTA

This chapter presents the National Strategy for Sustainable Development adopted by Malta, with reference to the environmental, economic and social dimensions.

These three pillars of sustainable development are interrelated and action in this regard should be integrated. In this Chapter, the three dimensions are treated separately, in different sections, for the purpose of exposition only. There are a number of cross-cutting issues which cannot easily be categorised under any one dimension, and these are considered separately in the last section of the chapter. A number of strategic directions are proposed with regard to each heading. These strategic directions are intended to serve as guideposts for the attainment of sustainable development goals in the longer term, are only accompanied by indicators or targets in cases where priority areas are identified.

The priority areas, on the other hand, are to be interpreted as an undertaking by Government to attain the targets within the time frames indicated. This proposed Strategy for Sustainable Development reinforces the strategic vision identified in key Malta Government policy documents, including the National Reform Programme and the Draft National Strategic Reference Framework.

3. 1 Managing the Environment and Resources

3. 1. 1

The Main Environmental Challenges Malta's environmental challenges have been systematically assessed in a number of official reports including the State of the Environment Report (1998, 2002 and 2005) and Malta's National Report to the World Summit on Sustainable Development (2002).

On the basis of these reports and following an extensive consultation process in connection with the drawing up of this Strategy, the following environmental challenges facing Malta were identified:

- Air quality and climate change
- Energy-efficiency and renewable energy resources
- Biodiversity
- Freshwater
- Wastes
- Marine and coastal environment
- Land use
- Transport
- Natural and technological risks
- Leisure and the environment

3. 1. 2 Air Quality and Climate Change The quality of Malta's air should be completely safe for human health and able to support biodiversity. In addition, human activities should have the smallest possible impact on climate and on global life-supporting systems (including the ozone layer). The significant improvement in data availability since 1998 has allowed a thorough quantitative assessment of air quality over the Maltese Islands.

Parallel work on determining emissions, the drawing up of a greenhouse gas inventory, as well as observation of transboundary pollution, have provided a detailed identification of sources and their relative importance, providing a sound information base for policy. 15 Electricity generation and transport are the major contributors to air pollution in Malta. In recent years, greenhouse gas emissions have increased due to the increased demand for electrical energy and the growth in private car ownership. This has resulted in

atmospheric pollution by particulates, ozone, sulphur oxides, nitrogen oxides, and volatile organic compounds including benzene and lead.

A shift to better-quality and lower-sulphur fuels was made in 2004 and leaded petrol was phased out in January 2003. Results from the national air monitoring programme indicate that the two main air pollutants of concern are particulate matter and ozone, while nitrogen oxides and sulphur dioxide also pose challenges. The main anthropogenic sources of particulate matter are transport and electricity generation, as well as quarrying and construction activities. As a user of ozone-depleting substances (ODSs), Malta also contributes to dispersion in the environment of these substances. The challenge in this area is to attain EU air quality standards while ensuring efficient production and use of energy, as well as a cost-effective transport system.

Measures designed to encourage energy end-use efficiency, to use renewable sources of energy and to restrict overall vehicle use, including the provision of a high-quality public transport as well as traffic management measures, will be conducive towards this end. Furthermore, support for the use of alternative fuels such as biodiesel should be continued. Government has already introduced financial incentives to promote biofuels, through the exemption from excise duty of the biomass content in biodiesel. The biodiesel produced in Malta originates from waste cooking oil, and waste collection programmes have been established. Targets for the use of biofuels in road transport have also been set. A balance needs to be found between the costs of introducing alternative fuels and the benefits of reduction in use

of conventional fuels. Landfills have been a source of air pollution for many years.

The rehabilitation of old landfills and the proper engineering of new ones are expected to resolve the negative impacts associated with past operating practices of Malta's landfills. Mitigation and adaptation issues and the political and economic aspects of climate change need to be properly addressed as these involve significant economic costs and may impact heavily on Malta's development. Adaptation to rising global surface temperatures and the anticipated consequential rise in sea level need to feature in future development strategies. In particular, future development strategies should consider the impacts of climate change on coastal areas in terms of risks to settlements and human safety, commercial activities and habitats.

16 Promote the adoption of new technologies, including mandating use of catalytic converters, to affect

- Take steps to reduce greenhouse gas emissions through an energy policy which seeks to promote
- • • • • • • •
- environmental protection, competitiveness and security of supplies, and as a result decouple the rate of growth of energy demand from economic growth.

Take remedial action to control emissions of air pollutants (ambient levels of particulate matter, sulphur dioxide, carbon monoxide, benzene, lead, ozone, heavy metals and nitrogen oxides) and achieve compliance with European standards. Encourage people to make use of public transport or to adopt car-pooling practices in order to reduce vehicle emissions. Introduce smaller buses on certain public transport routes.

Require the construction industry to reduce generation of fine dust particles. Continue to monitor landfills for air pollution and take remedial action as required. Continue to monitor transboundary pollution and take remedial action as required. Develop a hazard map for coastal areas prone to erosion and flooding. Take action to reduce Malta's vulnerability to Climate Change. significant cut-backs in vehicle emissions. Main strategic directions with regard to air quality and climate change: 3. 1. 3 Energy-efficiency and Renewable Energy Resources. Energy efficiency and the use of renewable energy sources (RES) can be economically and environmentally advantageous.

RES are not extensively used in Malta, although they may have immediate local application. Solar water heating could offset a substantial proportion of annual generation of electricity, avoiding emissions of CO₂. Generation of electricity using photovoltaics (PV) is currently limited to a small number of specialised applications. The use of photovoltaics will, in practice, be determined by economic factors (the cost of panels and associated equipment), the extent to which these systems can be connected to the electricity grid, and the associated feed-in tariff established, including any support measures for renewable electricity. Various incentives and support measures could speed up market penetration.

Market forces on their own may not spur the use of RES, and government intervention in the form of subsidies or other incentives is required to encourage investors to develop these sources of energy and to encourage consumers to use them. It is important, however, to ensure that the use of

RES does not pose unduly high fiscal burdens. In 2005, the Government of Malta introduced a series of measures to support electricity generation from RES. These include financial incentives in the form of grants on the capital costs of photovoltaic installations and micro-wind generation systems by domestic households. A net metering arrangement and purchase by Enemalta at established tariffs of excess electricity generated from small-scale PV systems have also been introduced.

In addition, grants on the capital cost of solar thermal water heaters installed by domestic consumers and other financial incentives related to meter installation charges for new domestic consumers installing such systems have been established. The Government has also published a draft Renewable Energy Policy for Malta, with the three key objectives of promoting RES, improving the quality of life and providing support facilities and services in a holistic manner. Further reductions in CO₂ emissions are likely to be attained through the construction of energyefficient buildings and the use of small combined heat and power plants by industry, the introduction of energy-efficient electric motors and drives, the proper dimensioning of airconditioning units and attendant ducting, and further use of energy-saving lamps.

Emissions could also be reduced through improvements in electricity generation and use, as discussed in the previous section. Such reductions could also be attained through fuel pricing as part of an energy 17 policy, and through making available alternative sources such as Biodiesel, Liquid Petroleum Gas (LPG) and Compressed Natural Gas (CNG). The use of energy

from animal waste and oil waste is also being studied and reviewed by Government. Efficiency in government electricity usage should be very visible so as to encourage private users to change their own behaviour with regard to electricity usage, as well as to curb light pollution. Such visibility includes more efficient street lighting and luminous devices used in road safety signs.

Floodlighting of public buildings could also be reduced late at night. Government departments should adopt energy-efficient lighting and air-conditioning in order to lead by example. Energy-saving pilot projects by the Housing Authority should be encouraged. Main strategic directions with regard to energy-saving and renewable resources

- Adopt a national energy policy that seeks to improve efficiency in electricity generation and to promote a secure, competitively priced, and environmentally sound energy supply,
- Put in place an integrated approach, supported by a nationwide educational campaign, to promote energy efficiency and conservation by users. Carry out an energy audit of street lighting and propose measures to promote efficiency in lighting
- Step up funding for research to improve knowledge on local materials and conditions in building for energy efficiency and in the use of renewable energy sources
- Adopt building regulations that would include design requirements relating to thermal efficiency.
- Direct more development permit applicants to adopt energy efficiency measures.
- Promote the introduction and use of renewable energy sources through support mechanisms and other appropriate measures.
- Promote energy audits and energy-efficiency improvements in commercial and industrial establishments. Heighten water conservation methods to reduce

dependency on reverse osmosis plants. 3. 1. 4 Freshwater Water in the Maltese Islands remains a scarce and basic resource and is under intense pressure from competing users. While traditional problems associated with the lack of availability of supply have been addressed mainly through significant investment in desalination plants, this has been achieved at a high cost. Furthermore, new challenges emerge as more information becomes available from studies carried out on environmental impacts. It is likely that modern technological progress will chart the way towards higher levels of efficiency in the use of water resources.

The fair allocation of water resources is considered to be a major priority that needs to be addressed throughout the decision-making process. Water demand and supply need to be managed on a geographical basis, especially in areas where second class water requirements take precedence. The integrated management of water resources at water catchment district level is considered to be crucial. Available water resources should be fairly allocated to the different stakeholders while taking into account sectoral requirements in terms of quality and quantity. Such an exercise would require a sound regulatory system and a clear policy, backed by legislation, that sets priorities for water use and lays the foundations for the sustainable management of water resources.

In this context, Malta will have to eliminate wasteful practices and move towards the conjunctive use of groundwater with other non-conventional sources such as desalination, treated sewage effluent and stormwater. Stakeholders' requirements, the relative supply costs and the benefits

accrued, as well as the value of the externalities generated by the use of water, need to be carefully assessed. 18 The quality and integrity of groundwater bodies in the Maltese Islands are currently at risk mainly from over-exploitation (including uncontrolled private abstraction of groundwater), leading to increased salinity, and from contamination by excess nitrates (mainly from agriculture) and other pollutants.

Information on and awareness of the importance of groundwater and the risks posed to its integrity by over-exploitation and pollution need to be more widely disseminated. The ‘polluter pays principle’, as well as the EU Environmental Liability Directive provisions, need to be more extensively used and enforced. Investment in stormwater management and flood relief are key priorities for the Maltese Islands. The installation of stormwater catchment facilities will allow this source of freshwater to be utilised for a wide variety of purposes, reducing the strain on the current freshwater resources. Furthermore, road and land development have often failed to recognise the importance of maintaining natural aquifer recharge.

Legislative changes introduced in 2000 with the establishment of the Malta Resources Authority involved the separation of the regulatory and operational responsibilities previously carried out by the Water Services Corporation. This has led to a clear distinction of regulatory and operational roles between the regulator and the utility agency, thus promoting an improvement in the level of services provided, to the consumers as well as better regulation of the sector. Drinking water quality standards have improved during the past three years as a result of infrastructural

improvements which allow a more uniform blending of groundwater with desalinated water throughout the Maltese Islands.

Further improvement is foreseen as the Water Services Corporation plans to upgrade its desalination facilities in an endeavour to improve product quality and energy efficiency. The introduction of a better-regulated system for groundwater abstraction, together with enforcement of environmental measures to improve the qualitative standards of groundwater supplies, is also envisaged. In recent years, the Water Services Corporation has also stepped up its water conservation efforts and has reduced losses from the distribution network. Better use of harvested rainwater and treated sewage effluent is envisaged in the coming years, while further measures and incentives to store stormwater run-off in urban/semi-urban areas will be considered.

Potable water quality needs to be improved in order to reach EU standards and the present plans of the Water Services Corporation and of the Malta Resources Authority to achieve this aim need to be fully implemented in a sustainable manner. Through EU Structural Funds, measures and projects are underway to improve drinking water quality. At the same time, conservation measures related to water produced through sewage treatment, controlled abstraction of groundwater, the better use of cisterns and wells, and the cleaning of existing dams and building of new ones in strategic locations need to be encouraged through the enforcement of existing legislation, a more effective consumer education programmes and,

possibly, economic incentives and disincentives. Measures to store rainwater, including the use of disused quarries, need to be explored.

Valley beds need to be cleared from unauthorised interventions in order to allow for the safe collection of water; however, the ecological value of valleys must be recognised in addition to their water transport function, and the haphazard clearing of valleys should be prohibited. As well as supplying potable water for human use, freshwater also sustains a variety of perennial springs and small water bodies which, in turn, support a variety of species. Such freshwater ecosystems are extremely threatened by the combined effects of habitat loss and by the lack of water availability, resulting from anthropogenic activities and recurring episodes of drought.

These freshwater habitats need to be very carefully managed and all efforts should be made to safeguard them before they are completely lost. To this end, the importance of such measures will be reflected in the implementation of the Water Catchment Management Plan under the national legislation transposing the Water Framework Directive. Around 14.3Mm³/year of treated sewage effluent are expected to be available for re-use in Malta and Gozo during the next five years. As a signatory to the Barcelona Convention, Malta is committed to treat all wastewater before discharging at sea, and is thus planning to set up three new sewage treatment plants: one in Gozo and two in Malta.

The treatment plant in Gozo and that in the north of Malta are expected to be operational by 2008. Once the projected sewage treatment plants are operational, the country should have significant quantities of second-class

water. While not suitable for human consumption, this water may be suitable for other purposes. Other uses should be explored, especially for those sectors and activities with heavy water consumption. In this regard, projects that require large quantities of water to sustain them need to be carefully assessed for their impact on the water supply. Since sewage is increasingly being seen as a water resource, it must also be protected against contamination from hazardous industrial and other effluents.

Main strategic directions with regard to freshwater:

- Adopt a policy with the aim of ensuring the utilisation of the nation's water resources in a manner that is environmentally and economically sustainable.
- Allow the natural biodiversity of surface water eco-systems to be sustained and to flourish, and achieve good ecological status for inland surface waters by 2015 in line with the Water Framework Directive.
- Ensure a reliable and good-quality supply of potable water in accordance with international water quality standards.
- Reduce and prevent further pollution of waters with the aim of achieving good status of all water bodies by 2015 in line with the Water Framework Directive. Establish and operate comprehensive monitoring networks for all water bodies in the Maltese Islands in order to reliably assess the achievement of 'good status' objectives in these bodies.
- Encourage initiatives for the adoption of water efficiency and conservation measures.
- Introduce effective catchment management and design roads so as to maximise the channelling of water towards reservoirs.
- Improve public awareness on the environmental, social and economic value of water.
- Strengthen and enforce regulatory measures with regard to illegal abstraction.
- Encourage the recycling of non-potable sources of water for

secondary use. • Assess projects that require large quantities of water in order to ascertain that they do not unduly create water supply shortages. Optimise the use of second-class water particularly in those sectors that make heavy use of water. 3. 1. 5 Biodiversity Though small in size, the Maltese Islands and their territorial waters support a variety of habitats and significant biodiversity which are still not adequately recognised as an environmental asset to be protected and sustained. Loss of biodiversity, i. e. the irreversible loss of species and ecosystems, can have very damaging effects on various aspects of a nation's development. A number of endemic and sub-endemic species are not only of scientific importance but are also of evolutionary and biogeographical interest, being relics of past Mediterranean flora and fauna.

Over the years, not enough commitment has been shown to protect such biodiversity, leading to rapid habitat loss and uncontrolled exploitation of wildlife. This has meant that unique and important habitats such as wetlands, sand dunes and woodlands have disappeared or are on the verge of disappearing. Furthermore, some elements of Malta's biodiversity have a wider regional and global importance, and as such are protected under international legislation. 20 Extinction and loss of species has been documented since 1998 by the State of the Environment Reports. In spite of the introduction of substantial legal protection for important habitats during the last 15 years, effective protection has lagged behind.

Effective conservation requires the allocation of financial, physical and human resources to enable management, including short- and long-term

monitoring. Moreover, in situ and ex situ conservation is urgently required (e. g. propagation, habitat restoration, containment, control or eradication of invasive alien species and reintroduction of indigenous species). In spite of efforts to protect and manage indigenous biodiversity, most threatened species and the majority of endemic species, remain under threat from human-mediated activities (such as overexploitation, illegal capture and killing, land development and introduction of alien species) and from the consequences of such activities such as loss and degradation of habitats, pollution, disruption of foodwebs, erosion and eutrophication) that lead to undesirable changes in ecosystems. The dwindling areas of garigue, sand dunes and cliff faces are some examples of habitats that are endangered. Due to the state of such habitats, even certain recreational activities, such as off-roading, camping and abseiling, need to be better regulated. The state of knowledge of local biota is still poor and resources for the implementation and enforcement of existing regulations have still not reached the required levels. The biodiversity monitoring programme is still rudimentary and under-funded.

Exploitation, whether illegal or unregulated, of a number of wildlife species and communities is still ongoing (and, in some cases, possibly increasing), mainly through hunting, trapping and fishing. The currently available data on such activities are not sufficient and not sufficiently reliable to permit a thorough assessment of the impact of such exploitation on the local biodiversity. This issue should be addressed as an immediate priority. Land reclamation in sensitive ecological areas should be prohibited and the re-use of abandoned fields encouraged. This needs to be linked to the promotion of

land stewardship, establishment of ecological corridors and organic farming. The uncontrolled introduction of alien species into local eco-systems continues to be of serious concern.

An increasing number of such species are establishing themselves in the wild, with adverse effects on the local eco-systems. It is widely documented globally that human-mediated activities, namely trade and tourism, facilitate the introduction and transfer of such species into new environments. Once alien species are introduced, either deliberately or accidentally, into the environment, they can establish themselves. In certain cases, alien species start to compete with native species, in which case they become invasive and could become the dominant species. Invasive alien species involve and affect a wide range of social, ecological and economic activities and can also affect public health.

To prevent these impacts, a strategy to control existent alien species and to prevent the further introduction of alien invasive species, should be drawn up. Genetically modified organisms (GMOs) can be considered as alien species and the regulation of GMOs should be included in any policy and/or legislation on alien species. Malta's official policy is that applications to deliberately release or place on the market GMOs are assessed and evaluated on a case-by-case basis and by means of a thorough scientific assessment. Support should be given to research and development to predict and prevent invasive behaviour of alien species and GMOs before they are released into the environment.

The Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety should be ratified and implemented in order to control transboundary movements of GMOs with the aim of providing a comprehensive and holistic approach to the conservation of biological diversity, the sustainable use of natural resources and the fair and equitable sharing of benefits deriving from the use of genetic resources. 21 In order to comply with the EU nature protection acquis, Malta has designated an extensive network of Special Areas of Conservation, of which 31 are of international importance and which amount to a respectable 12.5 per cent of the national territory in terms of land area. The total area of protected terrestrial habitat on the Maltese Islands relative to the total surface area compares favourably to the EU average.

Additional efforts should now be made so that rare or scientifically important eco-systems not yet protected, as well as representative examples of more widespread habitats such as marine eco-systems, are afforded legal protection. Natural areas which are declared protected need to be monitored and managed in accordance with adopted management plans, the more so since this is also a legal obligation. Management plans have already been adopted for some of the sites, and others are in the pipeline. Monitoring work has been undertaken and policy provisions are being drawn up to ensure that the EU Directives are adhered to. Nonetheless, the process of agreeing on management plans for protected areas will have to be significantly accelerated in order to meet Malta's national and international obligations.

A commendable dev