



Speech delivered by Hon. Leo Brincat, Minister for Sustainable Development, the Environment and Climate Change of Malta during the COP 21 High-Level Segment

I feel particularly honoured to be making this address and to participate at this historical 21st Session of the UNFCCC COP. I would like to start by thanking the French Authorities for the tireless commitment they have demonstrated in preparing for this COP. I believe I am speaking on behalf of all my counterparts present here in Paris when I say that we are profoundly grateful to France for providing us with the required political momentum and support to ensure that we do not leave Paris without having a new legally binding Climate Agreement in hand. It is now up to us to prove to the world outside that we, the Parties to the UNFCCC, are resolved to steer the planet away from a catastrophic future.

Malta has always been at the forefront in advocating climate action. This legacy is proudly ingrained in the history of our nation. We believe that our nation, despite its minute size, has to transform the circumstances that may work against us into the very *raison d'être* for taking up new initiatives and responsibilities, both on a national level and within the international community of States.

This year we have promulgated a Climate Action Act in Malta, which facilitates the implementation of our legally-binding targets to reduce emissions within the context of the EU Energy and Climate Packages. This Statute ascertains a cross-sectoral approach towards achieving a low carbon economy as well as adaptation to climate change. It also establishes a holistic approach towards climate action governance.

At the international level, we have taken the initiative to encourage a high level discussion and adoption of a Commonwealth Statement on Climate Action (which will be uploaded on the UNFCCC COP site this evening) at the Commonwealth Heads of Government meeting which was held in Malta on the eve of the Leader's Day for this COP. This Commonwealth Statement which was communicated by my Prime Minister last Monday is testament to a



collective recognition of the salient issues which need to be encompassed within a Paris agreement to set the international community on the path towards a low-emission climate resilient future. We urge that a salient point from this statement relating to the ‘pledge that Nationally Determined Contributions registered in connection with the entry into force in 2020 of the Paris Agreement will be at least as ambitious as corresponding intended contributions,’ is incorporated into this week’s final outcome.

From a national perspective, Malta strongly believes that our resilience as a nation depends on what kind of “added-value” we can give in this geopolitical world order of the twenty first century. We need to transform words into action. As a member of the European Union, Malta is proud to participate in effective climate action, and is legally committed at a multilateral, European and domestic level to reduce emissions of greenhouse gases in order to mitigate climate change. Malta’s determination to switch to a low carbon economy is characterised by a vision, based on the long-term, socio-economic, and environmental benefits of greenhouse gas emissions reduction.

Let me share with you the steps Malta took, notwithstanding significant challenges, in order to meet its greenhouse gas reduction objectives. For its part, Malta is fully capitalizing on opportunities emerging within its Energy Sector. As the energy generation sector is by far Malta’s highest contributor to national GHG emissions, these measures are expected to domestically lead to around a 40% GHG reduction, compared to 1990 levels, in Malta’s energy sector carbon footprint by 2020 and beyond.

Malta is committed to increase energy efficiency, along the entire energy chain from generation to consumption. Malta is also working with the aim of promoting electricity and gas grid integration between the EU and North Africa, and actively acting as an energy hub in the centre of the Mediterranean.



Malta is also undertaking commitments in its mitigation and adaptation policies through its Climate Action Act, to ensure that efforts in all sectors will be underpinned by the required institutional capacity to monitor, review and verify our reduction targets and adaptation measures, secure better climate governance and ensure the necessary forward planning.

As an EU Member State, Malta remains committed to the efforts that the EU undertakes in its contributions to climate action with a view to financially supporting developing countries, including via technology development and transfer as well as capacity building, and this through the EU budget and the mobilization of the Green Climate Fund. In 2015, Malta contributed to the Green Climate Fund as well as proudly launched a scholarship programme with the aim of aiding in building knowledge acumen in States most vulnerable to climate change. This programme will do so by:

- Offering nationals from these States scholarships in undergraduate/postgraduate studies related to climate action at the University of Malta; and
- Providing assistance and training at a policy making, vocational and institutional level.

I reiterate that the choices we have made have not been without difficulties and there are still many challenges we face, but we remain committed to forge ahead and to identify any possible opportunities that would foster a low emission economy. We draw strength from the fact that we have experienced the benefits of decoupling economic and emissions growth. In conclusion, despite Malta's minute size, its lack of economies of scale, its population density that is amongst the highest in the world, as well as its peripheral geophysical position, through our endeavors toward addressing greenhouse gas emissions and reducing them drastically together with other EU Member States, we are still in a position to confirm that the benefits of a low carbon economy far outweigh the negatives.

Notwithstanding our small size, we consolidate our commitment to contribute to effectively addressing a global challenge that is a common concern of humankind.



While the world leaders have given these proceedings the much needed sense of urgency and commitment, and the technical talks contributed in successfully outlining the final text, the onus is now on us Ministers to get actively and directly involved in the process, if need be by moving out of our comfort zones – to close the small remaining gaps that may still exist between our groups.

We must make use of this momentous opportunity to not only prove to our people that it is imperative that we take climate change seriously, but perhaps more importantly to ensure a better quality of life, health and environment to our present and future generations.

Let us thus commence by reaching an ambitious agreement that will stand us in good stead for years to come.