

ESG Radio Broadcast on a talk given to the GONHS
Re: Role of community in environmental management by the ESG

In the last round of talks organised by the Gibraltar Ornithological and Natural History Society, I was privileged to have been asked to address the membership on behalf of the Environmental Safety Group. The title of the talk was: *The role of the community in environmental management*. Let us think, for a moment, what this actually means? When the ESG was formed it was precisely to generate and create environmental awareness in our community. Important aspects like **pollution** and **protection of our natural environment** always featuring high on our agenda.

While recent public events and statements by Govt show these matters will now play a larger role on their agenda, we must not forget that theirs' is primarily a political agenda which they must adhere to at all costs. This is why, it is vital to strengthen the position of NGO's who focus with 100% commitment on specific areas which many will agree, should be on a par with economy and health but which, traditionally remain low on the list of political priorities. i.e: introducing sustainable economies and preventative health measures by providing a cleaner environment for people to live in...

Some of you may be thinking why aren't these NGO's ever happy? The recent signing of the Environmental Charter and pledges of increasing responsibility by Govt and other political players signify a growing political commitment to our environment.

Still, the main thrust of our local Govt, and indeed Govts everywhere continues to be economy and development based. What must be tested now is the preparedness of our Govt to make the necessary reforms of how we run our society in Gibraltar if we are, together with communities all over the world, to genuinely avert the worst that global warming can bring, as predicted regularly and ominously by climate change scientists. Full knowledge of the Environmental Action Plan as advised by the Minister for the Environment needs to be shared by the community as indeed should a revised development plan which sadly continues to be withheld in spite of mammoth construction projects all over the Rock. We are definitely getting mixed signals from this Govt.

Perhaps it is unrealistic to expect politicians, with their political agendas and need to present themselves as "responsible and balanced" to make such necessary reforms. However, without these our environment will continue to be exploited, abused and polluted. Indeed **the very survival** of certain communities and ecosystems around the globe are already threatened with extinction.

It is clear that public awareness and participation has never been as important as it is today to demand that leaders everywhere make environmental reforms and take action NOW. It is a political responsibility but we all share in making it happen.

Going back to our talk I focused on how the ESG has been pursuing an environmental agenda by touching many areas in our community with talks, projects, public events, media campaigns among others. Our continued and strengthened links with colleagues across the border shows a great willingness for communities to co-operate over and above political considerations as we are all affected by a common environment. The ESG would be pleased to give a presentation of its work to any organisation or school interested, just give us a call and we can set this up!

2006 sees a busy time ahead for the ESG with plans to step up our campaign against industrial pollution in the Bay as well as harmful pollution sources in Gibraltar and; we are also planning the next Clean up which will take place in September and will provide another valuable opportunity for members of our community to participate widely on hands-on projects for the benefit of our environment and home town. This event proved to be enormously successful in bringing together people of all ages and every sector of our community not commonly found under an environmental umbrella. It brought the environment under sharp focus with many discussions and workshops held.

One of the key ESG principles is that community participation is vital in ensuring sound environmental management.

Do watch out for details of our activities and events and news on progress of our campaigns.

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