

Managing Climate Change Seriously

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In today's world there is so much attention dedicated to sources of political and economic insecurity that there is often a tendency to overlook or underestimate the importance of environmental security in general and climate change in particular.

Yet it is clear that a fundamental shift in our weather patterns is already having a tremendous impact on our ability to sustain a healthy outlook for humankind. This becomes even more of a serious threat in regions such as the Mediterranean where the livelihood of so many people is dependent on a stable weather pattern in sectors such as agriculture and tourism.

Changes in weather have led some to the conclusion that unpredictable is the best weather forecast one can provide. Constant change in weather patterns, especially unseasonal temperatures in winter and rain during the summer season are just some of the most obvious noticeable shifts that are occurring more and more regularly.

Moreover, a general rise in temperatures has an impact on everything from the harvest cycle in agriculture to travel trends in tourism. Perhaps one of the most serious consequences of rising temperatures is an increase in the sea level which impacts negatively on coastal areas where most people across the Mediterranean tend to live. It is thus no exaggeration to regard climate change as having a direct correlation on the well-being of all of our lifestyles.

Another very serious consequence of environmental degradation is the possibility of the emergence of environmental refugees on a large scale. As drought and soil erosion result in higher instances of famine, an exodus of more people from hotter climates should be expected.

Thus without better management of climate change more migration from Africa to Europe is certain to occur as hotter weather makes living and

vegetation more difficult in several African countries.

An increase in environmental refugees would lead to an even larger amount of migrants seeking to cross the Mediterranean.

Such a development would exacerbate the already major challenge of addressing the continuous flow of migrants across the Mediterranean.

If the climate of popular tourist destinations such as those found in the Mediterranean becomes more unpredictable and extreme in nature then a significant drop in tourism is also to be expected. This would have a catastrophic impact on the economies of all Mediterranean countries and thus calls for a more robust collective effort to address this phenomenon more effectively.

The more regular warmer weather experienced in Northern Europe including the United Kingdom has already resulted in an increase of people deciding to stay home for the holidays. Instead of having to travel on vacation to somewhere warmer, several Europeans are opting for so-called 'staycations'- enjoying their holidays in their own country thanks to the warmer weather. If such a trend becomes a permanent feature, this will result in billions of euros less being spent on holidays overseas every year.

Given such developments it is essential for Malta which is located in the centre of the Mediterranean and which has significant limits when it comes to natural resources to continue to champion action internationally to address climate change. Only such a continuous campaign will ensure that our children and grandchildren inherit a country and region that remains habitable and prosperous in the years to come.