



Press Release

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Inaugural Malta Climate Friendly Travel Think Tank concludes with finding that, the eXistential climate crisis requires even more urgent action by the entire global Travel & Tourism sector

Minister Julia Farrugia Portelli addressed members of the SUNx Malta Climate Friendly Travel Think Tank, during a press conference, on the Government of Malta's commitment to establishing itself as a centre for Climate Friendly Travel.

The key takeaway from the meeting was that the eXistential Climate Crisis requires even more urgent action by the entire global Travel & Tourism sector than has been generally recognized to date.

The Government of Malta, in its role as ally and partner, has committed to becoming a global Centre of Climate Friendly Travel. Malta's Minister for Tourism and Consumer Protection Julia Farrugia Portelli, was on hand to conclude the meeting and discuss the findings of the Think Tank.

Minister for Tourism Julia Farrugia Portelli stated that our country is not just acting as a member of the international community in leading a global effort, but is putting on the forefront the Maltese tourism sector in addressing climate change by promoting climate-friendly travel through reduced emissions with the ultimate objective of carbon neutrality.

The minister added that Malta has a strong tradition of spearheading initiatives of global environmental significance such as the initiative at the 1967 United Nations General Assembly that culminated in the adoption of the 1982 United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea and Malta's action at the United Nations General Assembly in December 1988 that inspired UN's resolution on the urgent need to conserve climate in the interests of mankind by protecting it against negative man-made changes and recognising climate change as a "common concern" requiring "timely action".

SUNx Malta has been established through support from the Ministry for Tourism & Consumer Protection, and Malta Tourism Authority (MTA). On Monday 24th February they held the inaugural Climate Friendly Travel Think Tank, which gathered 35 international thought-leaders from across academia, industry, and government to debate the key issues on Climate Change in relation to Travel & Tourism. The goal was to review and update the first Climate Friendly Travel 2050 Ambitions Report which was released on the sidelines of the UN General Assembly in New York in September 2019.

The Think Tank followed the core framework of Climate Friendly Travel: Measured to Manage; Green to Grow; 2050-proof to Innovate. Leslie Vella, Deputy CEO of MTA, and Chairman of SUNx Malta opened the event with an overview of why Malta has chosen to make itself a centre for Climate

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Friendly Travel against the backdrop of pushing the existential nature of climate change on the UN Agenda starting in 1987.

The key calls to action from the Think Tank were:

- **The climate crisis is eXistential.** All stakeholders including Transport, Hospitality, Travel Services, and Infrastructure Providers must urgently start the transformation in 2020 to get onto the Paris 1.5o trajectory within the next 7- 10 years. Governments, companies, communities and consumers, must all engage and take action now.
- **“Climate Friendly Travel”.** Under the banner of climate friendly travel, the industry must adopt this as an imperative and the new norm.
- **Fully transforming all modes of transport** was seen as pivotal. SUNx Malta’s call for a Moon-shot approach for aviation to further accelerate technological research and deployment was strongly supported, which must include the immediate distribution and rapid scaling up of currently available solutions to substantially reduce aviation fossil fuel reliance.
- **Climate Financing.** Citing the Green New Deal as an example, the travel & tourism sector must engage more actively with emerging green finance programmes to be able to secure adequate funds for transformation. High-quality offsetting of carbon impacts was seen as short-term transition instruments but totally inadequate as a long-term solution. In this context, it was broadly believed that aviation action to date was falling behind the rapidly intensifying transformation need.
- **Emerging innovations and technologies.** Building refurbishment, cruise shipping, carbon reduction, waste to fuel transformation, developing consumer behaviour and digital opportunities.
- **The SUNx Malta Climate Friendly Travel Registry of Ambitions** was reviewed and endorsed, as was the initiative with WISeKey to develop an innovative consumer-facing secure platform.
- **Education of the Next Generation** was underscored as a high priority with an emphasis on an accredited Graduate Diploma, from the Gozo Institute of Tourism Studies Campus. The SUNx Malta 100,000 STRONG Climate Friendly Travel Champions and as well as its school’s program is a very positive step forward to support company and community transformation. Additionally, improving the research base was underscored on both decarbonization and sector resilience.

Professor Geoffrey Lipman, President SUNx Malta said: “We must act now, and we must act fast. We’re already seeing with the emerging Malta collaborative framework between the government and the travel & tourism supply chain, that a pioneering approach can achieve this. It can be replicated around the world, as States seek to fulfil their Paris Agreement Nationally Determined Contributions.”

He added, “We are delighted that Malta has taken a leadership position on tackling the existential threat of climate change and creating a support framework for travel & tourism which can help companies and communities in the transformation required.”

The event concluded with a town-hall session led by Minister Farrugia Portelli, with a discussion of Malta’s commitment to the importance of tackling climate change and creating a model of climate friendly travel.