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**Alternattiva Demokratika (AD)
– The Green Party**

Changing Gozo for the better

**Specific Proposals
for the island-region of Gozo**

**Presented by
Alternattiva Demokratika's
Regional Committee for Gozo**

**General Election
8th March 2008**

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Forward

The Regional Committee for Gozo was established by Alternattiva Demokratika in response to a surge of support in the 2004 European Parliament elections. Gozo had contributed an above average share to the 23,000 votes cast in favour of the Green Party. Gozitan supporters demanded and built a separate structure within Alternattiva Demokratika to engage with others and to realize the potential available. Since then the AD Regional Committee has contributed or has been the principal achiever in securing the following:

Environmental Successful Campaigns

- 1) Ta' Cenc: untouched
- 2) Ramla l-Hamra permit: revoked
- 3) Restoration projects finally implemented: the Xlendi and Marsalforn Towers
- 4) Afforestation and landscaping projects have been introduced to Gozo
- 5) The defence of the natural habitat at Hondoq ir-Rummien
- 6) Ix-Xaghra l-Hamra: saved from being turned into a golf course and now a natural and historic park. A legal status is now called upon
- 7) AD's renewable energy policy explicitly acknowledged nationwide
- 9) Imminent abolition of spring hunting
- 8) No mention of marinas and golf courses in recent budget debates
- 9) Climate Change is now part of the discourse of mainstream politics
- 10) Government acknowledges AD's policy that Gozo would benefit if the island will be powered completely by alternative sources of energy
- 11) AD succeeded in raising public awareness for the economic and environmental sustainability of proposed projects in Gozo
- 12) Afforestation and landscaping projects have been introduced to Gozo
Empowerment of the environmental lobby
- 13) The Coast shore of Marsalforn safeguarded and permits for further development by the Otters Club revoked.

Towards socio-economic initiatives

- 14) The unjust Rent Law: now a national issue
- 15) Spiralling property costs burdening newly-weds in acquiring ownerships: we have placed this issue at the centre stage of national political debates
- 16) Reduction in Gozo ferry rates
- 17) The departure tax has been partially reduced
- 18) Niche markets in eco- and agro-tourism are now being seriously considered
- 19) the introduction of seaplane service
- 20) A Shuttle Bus service between Malta International Airport and the Gozo ferry is finally operating
- 21) Channeling Back Office Work and Call Centres to Gozo is now official policy of the party in government
- 22) Maternity leave increased by another week
- 23) Direct transport links between Sicily and Gozo are now under serious consideration
- 24) Upon AD's insistence, the Gozo General Hospital incinerator now closed down

Towards responsible and transparent political measures

- 25) The Gozo region is to remain one whole and distinct electoral district
- 26) The Freedom of Information Act cited on a political level
- 27) The number of Police Officers on duty in Gozo increased in 2007
- 28) The need for the Whistleblower Act cited on a political level
- 29) Voters are becoming aware of the Parties main financiers and their influence in irregularities
- 30) Citizens empowered to use EU structures to fight for their rights

“I also agree with AD wholeheartedly on the issue of sustainability” - The Prime Minister (The Malta Independent, 21st June, 2007)

"Alternattiva Demokratika has achieved all this without parliamentary representation: imagine how much more you could accomplish with Green MPs".

Victor Galea
AD Candidate for Gozo

Introduction

The Gozo Regional Committee of Alternattiva Demokratika presented its proposals in the Green Party's electoral manifesto for the island-region of Gozo, during a press conference, attended by the leader, Dr. Harry Vassallo, in Zebbug (Gozo) on Sunday 2nd December 2007. Since then, the specific proposals for Gozo had been circulated among the civil society and individuals for feedback and comments.

Alternattiva Demokratika felt the need to formulate a specific proposals for Gozo due to the fact that this island has remained a political football between the other two traditional political parties on the eve of every general election, with unsustainable promises which Gozitans are fed-up of hearing. AD wants to demonstrate that it believes that politics is quite different from what the PN and MLP have been doing. It is now the time for every registered voter in Gozo to vote for the Green Party candidate if they want to see substantial reforms taking place in Gozo.

Since Malta became an EU member country, Gozitans understood more than ever before that for real progress, they need a third voice to challenge the monopoly of the traditional parties, financed by land speculators and represented by ineffective members of parliament who only champion the interests of their respective political parties and their lobby.

A sign of change was demonstrated in 2004 when 1300 Gozitans voted for Prof Arnold Cassola, the Green Party candidate in the European Parliament election. Again, 12% voted for Alternattiva Demokratika during the 2006-07 local council elections in Gozo. The formidable political force that the AD Gozo Regional Committee now constitutes has frequently cornered the two traditional parties into changing policies regarding Gozo, fully cognisant of the fact that if they continue ignoring this electoral district, Gozitans are going to convey a clear message in the next general election by voting for Alternattiva Demokratika. The expectation of many observers that the electoral result of the Gozo district will give rise to surprises is fully justified.

An elected AD MP for Gozo will work hard to reform Gozo's administration to become fully transparent, accountable, democratic and responsible and clean, to

prevent nepotism and clientelism, to create a framework whereby each individual is informed of his/her rights and duties without the need to feel him/herself enslaved to a particular political party. Meritocracy is not found only in a dictionary. Gozo's Green MP will strive for the collective interests of the Gozitan present and future generations.

The AD Gozo Regional Committee proposes opportunities in the IT industry since such businesses are ideally suited to the socio-geographic profile of Gozo. They do not entail additional use of agricultural land for speculative purposes and are compatible with the Green Party proposal to transform Gozo into an ecological island. ***Alternattiva Demokratika is presenting over 100 substantive and innovative proposals for the island-region of Gozo.*** Most of them lead to the creation of new, modern and sustainable jobs in Gozo. The proposals include to transform the current controversies over Ta' Cenc, Ramla and Hondoq ir-Rummien into job opportunities without damaging the natural environment, patrimony and unique ecology.

The document includes proposals for a radical reform in public transport in Gozo, which has been neglected for so many years; proposals for creating new, modern and sustainable jobs in Gozo, proposals for reform in the Gozo Ministry, in public administration and a fully democratic Gozo as well as proposals for a better quality education for all Gozitans to succeed.

All these proposals are a guarantee that through the election of the AD candidate, Gozo will be on the country's political agenda permanently. Gozo is ripe for a reform, which will propel it from an abandoned periphery of Malta to its most successful region. This will happen through the election of an AD MP: a party characterized by long term, consistent commitment to the benefit of Gozo and to the welfare of Gozitans.

Twenty three proposals for creating new, modern and sustainable jobs in Gozo:

AD Gozo Regional Committee is proposing, specifically for Gozo, a set of distinct proposals intended to stimulate the island's economic development by reducing the tax burden on commercial activities and by providing financial and community support to families. Gozo's key economic sectors, with tourism ranking high in the list, thus get a much needed boost. The benefits of the multiplier effect filters down to various socio-economic groups.

✓ *Gozo: a distinct island in the Mediterranean*

With parliamentary representation, Alternattiva Demokratika will invest in:

- 1. The participation in international fairs to promote Gozo as an ideal centre for retirement. Gozo offers a peaceful and friendly environment, a benign healthy climate, sound medical services and frequent links to Malta and Europe. In turn, these retirees, often professionals, enrich the community with their expertise, and participate in the island's wellness in investing capital, in the consumption of goods and services and in attracting relatives and friends from abroad;***
- 2. Clientele-specific infrastructure which will make additional health and other services available to the rest of the island's population while creating new highly skilled employment opportunities;***
- 3. The subsidising of travel costs for Maltese residents during shoulder months so as to increase inland tourism. Drastic reduction in fares during the off-peak periods minimises the negative effects of double-insularity;***
- 4. Educational institutions in Malta such as schools, who would want to organise educational trips in Gozo will benefit from specific reduction rates from the Gozo Channel;***
- 5. The promotion Gozo as a holiday base through low-cost travel;***
- 6. Financial assistance in the private sector to develop niche tourism projects;***

- 7. The promotion and development of Gozo as a base for IT, Back office work, financial services, local and international call centres subject to ensuring that the working conditions offered are reasonable and humane.**

✓ ***Gozo: an ecological island with unique characteristics***

Alternattiva Demokratika's Gozo strategy to generate energy mainly through alternative sources would create numerous Gozo-specific employment and add value to the island's unique characteristics. AD' in a coalition government would strive to turn Gozo into an ecological island and to support this through new and bright types of professions.

On being elected to parliament, AD will push for:

- 8. The transformation of Gozo into an ecological island;**
 - 9. The establishment of Gozo as an island model by virtue of pioneering its launch as a venue as a centre of studies in renewable energy, concurrently generating new employment for technicians, engineers, marketeers and hospitality representatives. Ansa – a tiny island west of Naples, and Ventotene are just two examples.**
 - 10. Gozo as this country's leader in exploiting alternative sources of energy and establishing itself as a centre in alternative energy studies;**
 - 11. Driving a campaign to reduce energy bills for households and businesses in Gozo;**
- ✓ ***Gozo: an outsourcing base for IT, back-office and financial services for the international companies.***

Alternattiva Demokratika has steadfastly insisted that jobs can be generated by the establishment of call centres and back-office facilities - a policy which the government recently partially adopted. Gozo has the potential to develop as an information processing and back-office hub. The island can attract international companies and strengthen this sector. Numerous innovative jobs can be created.

IT development in Gozo provides high-added value and stable job opportunities in the future for our young generations. Modern technology shortens distances and opens up global connections for the exchange of ideas, knowledge and

skills. An IT industry makes a lot of sense for Malta, even more so for Gozo where we face the double insularity factor. The development of the IT sector in Sardinia is a case in point.

In a coalition government, Alternattiva Demokratika will work towards:

- 12. Promoting Gozo as a 'back-office' hub, attracting both local and international investments;***
 - 13. The establishment of call centres having outsourcing terms and work conditions compliant with EU standards;***
 - 14. Tax incentives for job creating investment in Gozo;***
 - 15. Direct lobbying for the provision of facilities in unutilized industrial buildings;***
 - 16. Encouraging and facilitating large banks to set up call centres while ensuring that workers are treated with dignity and respect;***
 - 17. Encouraging financial institutions to start offering the option of PayPal to sell and buy. This further enhances the flexibility of financial services available to Gozitans as well as diminishing the effects of double insularity;***
 - 18. Making it feasible for Gozitans to sell goods and services online, to ship their products by ship or courier, and to receive funds and payments online. This will reduce the existing comparative disadvantage to other online competitors;***
 - 19. Ensuring that banks and other financial institutions, operating in Gozo, provide the business community such online facilities, including costly websites, to assist in the export of goods/services;***
 - 20. Assisting firms, especially small businesses, to reduce the negative impact of double insularity when trading with international markets.***
- ✓ ***Gozo: an island region in the EU tapping European Social Funds for employment and family welfare initiatives***

We aim to improve the economic climate in Gozo through the generation of jobs in carefully planned sustainable projects, while safeguarding the cultural, historical, archaeological and natural heritage of Gozo. The island needs to retain and increase its market share in tourism, cannot afford more hotel closures, or catering-staff redundancies, nor the demotion of hospitality staff to seasonal part-

timers. This concerns us - The Green Party - and all citizens who believe that political parties should work towards the best interests of their country and not strictly for their own political mileage. Gozo deserves a better deal. It is futile to preach on family-friendly work measures, encouraging female participation in the labour market, when the Gozo Ministry itself fails to implement such procedures in its own institutions. Alternattiva Demokratika, therefore is proposing a number of incentives in carefully planned projects such as:

21. Childcare facilities and related service-provision to be introduced introduced in working establishments in Gozo, such as, in the Gozo General Hospital and other government institutions;

22. Statistics collated for each economic sector in Gozo, shall be prospected and applied to present sustainable and comprehensive policies, and subsequently tap into EU funds such as the European Social Funds for employability projects in the island-region of Gozo;

Alternattiva Demokratika will make the difference in parliament to move from rhetoric to implementation so that Gozo can really comply with EU standards and to benefit there from.

In a coalition government, AD will insist that:

23. Any party or parties in government are to be held politically responsible for Gozo's performance;

Eighteen proposals for a reform in the Ministry of Gozo, public administration towards a full democratic and transparent participation in decision-making

Our interest in the island-region of Gozo comes before that of party politics.

Nowhere more than in Gozo has it become so clear that the ‘special favours’ political culture directly undermines the confidence ordinary citizens, business operators and their employees need in order to develop a strong and healthy local economy.

Gozitans want and deserve better. We know that transformation can happen for the better.

Today, even those who have materially gained from the feudal favours system, crippling Gozo, realize that they are sliding downhill with everybody else. Gozo is ripe for a reform, which will propel it from an abandoned periphery of Malta to its most successful region. Although not yet represented in parliament, Alternattiva Demokratika, is already significantly influencing government policies for Gozo. The greatest reform would be for Gozitans to be represented in Parliament by AD, a party characterized by long term, consistent commitment to the benefit of Gozo and the welfare of Gozitans. Alternattiva Demokratika is committed to supporting Gozitans in safeguarding their island home from private greed. This also shows that AD has Gozo at heart and cares for it and all Gozitans. Moreover, The Greens will endlessly work to increase Gozitan participation at every level of government and to ensure that our public representatives are fully accountable to the electorate. Once elected to parliament, Alternattiva Demokratika will embark upon a number of initiatives among which several administrative and organizational affairs will be addressed:

- ✓ ***The Ministry for Gozo – a democratic, accountable and inclusive body.***

- 1. ***AD proposes the set-up of an inclusive Parliamentary Committee for Gozo Affairs made up of all Gozo’s MPs. The Standing Committee will ensure transparent and serious governance by the Ministry for Gozo.***

- ✓ ***Civil and citizen rights in Gozo – a model for transparency and accountability:***

2. ***Eliminate once and for all the prevalent stagnant clientelist nepotism and in its stead institute an administrative framework to inform and to guarantee the inalienable rights of all citizens and economic operators;***
3. ***Set up an administrative structure to which Gozo residents can address their complaints and through which they can be informed on matters related to construction industry sites affecting directly their everyday life;***
4. ***See that meritocracy replaces the prevailing practice of exclusive selection of “jobs-for-the party-boys-and-girls”;***
5. ***Demand the enactment of the Whistleblower Act to ensure that those who have the courage of speaking up are not victimised;***
6. ***Demand the enactment of a Freedom of Information Act – to ensure that all citizens are informed of the manner in which government through its politicians and civil servants is acting on its behalf;***
- ✓ ***Specific Regional Status for Gozo – a democratic participatory set-up in decision-making.***
7. ***Endeavour to set up new forms of political organisations aiming to expand the evolution of participatory democracy for Gozitans through direct citizens involvement in the decision-making process. A democratically elected Regional Council is completely in line with Green Politics;***
8. ***Institute a legislative function, drawn from the Local Council Act, modified to eliminate reference to byelaws of government departments. This enables the Gozo Parliamentary Committee to raise issues regarding conflict of remit;***
9. ***Based on effective democracy for Gozo and Gozitans, the executive of this Gozo Regional Council will appoint a 'head of ministry', to effectively administer the annual budget allocated to the Gozo Region.;***
10. ***Formulate the legal framework for a Regional Status for Gozo. The concept of this Regional Status is intended to gain more autonomy for Gozo as well as to acquire the legislative and executive potential based on effective democracy;***

- 11. Encourage the close collaboration between the Gozo MPs of different leanings to optimise existing local human talent as oppose to wasting such resources simply because of varied political creeds;**
 - 12. Insert effective review mechanisms to ensure constant transparency. Gozo has inherent promising opportunities but also threats emanating from the omerta' symptom and the structural weakness of social aggression. These challenges shall be explicitly addressed by AD for a better life and work environment in Gozo;**
- ✓ **Regional Institutions: a democratic, responsible and transparent Administration, Law and Order.**

Given that the present premises of the Law Courts in Cittadella are inadequate to accommodate the volume of legal work coupled with the consequent concentration of traffic in the heart of Victoria, Alternattiva Demokratika proposes instead that the law courts be moved to the outskirts of the Victoria to the currently vacant complex formerly used by the Malta Dairy Products. Alternattiva Demokratika proposes the establishment of:

- 13. A Regional Institution to include a Public Registry, a Regional Police Headquarters with lock up cells, a fire brigade and Rescue Centre, Regional Attorney General office, Regional office for Local Government and any other departments which fall under the aegis of the Ministry of Justice and Home Affairs;**

It is imperative that local police enforcement is improved.

Alternattiva Demokratika will:

- 14. Ensure a full manpower of police officers for Gozo;**
 - 15. Ensure all police stations are manned;**
 - 16. Guarantee the right of a fair, impartial and effective police protection for Gozitans in the course of their daily activities;**
 - 17. Certify that all ranks in the police force are entitled to modern training techniques, to be supported and equipped with the latest technological apparatus to provide a service of excellence;**
- ✓ **Fair representation – equal weighting between Maltese and Gozitan votes.**

The two major political parties should be ashamed to conspire in making Gozitan votes weigh less than Malta votes. The electoral mechanism agreement reached between the MLP and PN is truly anti-democratic – this ‘arrangement’ confirms that both major parties are denying Gozitans the democratic right to appropriate and commensurate parliamentary representation. The current Gozo MPs are comfortably silent on this issue. It is evident that Gozitans are being treated as second-class citizens because the two big parties are safeguarding their interests above all else. The MLPN agreed to maintain Gozo as a single electoral district but ashamedly failed to increase Gozo’s parliamentary representation to reflect the significant voter increase of the Gozo electorate.

We are confident that Gozitans are aware of our island’s plague of this political duopoly by the two major parties intent to preserve their ‘status quo’. Gozitans are urged to use their votes intelligently to get rid of this stagnant situation. For this reason Alternattiva Demoktatika in parliament will:

18. Strive to obtain a fair, proportionate representation for Gozo voters in that the quota of Gozo’s MPs reflect the number of Gozo’s registered voters This means that Gozo should be allocated a sixth elected MP to its current five representatibes.

Twenty two proposals for a radical reform in Gozo's public transport:

Bus services, shuttle service to MIA,rt, development of ancillary routes, cargo ferry service, Gozo channel services, catamaran and other island links, cruise liners, roads infrastruectue.

✓ *Bus transport*

The two traditional political have both miserably failed to address the shambles within Gozo's public transport system. Once elected to parliament, AD will immediately tackle the reform of Gozo's public transport introducing further mobility options between all villages. Alternattiva Demokratika thus proposes to:

- 1. Address and reform the current monopoly of the transport system in Gozo***
- 2. Introduce smaller buses operating on environmentally-friendly bio-fuels to run frequently and regularly***
- 3. Ensure that ferry passengers arriving at Mgarr after 1900 hours find available public transport to the Victoria bus terminus***
- 4. Improve the frequency and quality of public bus services between the villages in Gozo through a rotation system. This bus schedule is currently inexistent. Its introduction benefits locals and tourists alike***

✓ *Shuttle service to the Malta International Airport*

Alternattiva Demokratika feels satisfied that after constant pressure from its representatives, a public shuttle service has been established between Cirkewwa, MIA and vice-versa. Once elected to parliament, AD will:

- 5. Extend the shuttle bus service from MIA to the Victoria bus terminus. This should include a check-in and luggage handling service***

✓ *Adding a seaplane service directly to Marsalforn*

To alleviate the concentration of all commuting services on Mgarr harbour, a thorough review is warranted to explore the potential of Marsalforn harbour. Once elected to parliament, Alternattiva Demokratika will ensure that:

- 6. Structural works on the existing Marsalforn amenities will commence to facilitate smooth and safe accessibility for seaplanes**
 - 7. Seaplane links between Malta International Airport directly to landing points in Gozo for commuters to avail themselves of this facility**
 - 8. Convenient and reliable public transport, such as mini-bus services, should be available from seaplane arrival points to various points of the island**
- ✓ **Cargo ferry service**

Sea transport directly from the Sa Maison to Mgarr has varied benefits such as less traffic congestion, less damage to the roads infrastructure, less noise and pollution over a wide stretch of Malta. The present unreliable Sa Maison-Mgarr service typifies a monopolistic situation. This, along with the frequent suspension of this service, has a negative impact on Gozitan economic operators and other ordinary commuters.

Once represented in parliament, Alternattiva Demoktaika will ensure that:

- 9. The Sa Maison cargo ferry will be improved and maintained according to fixed and reliable time schedules thus eliminating this heavy traffic from the much longer route across Malta to Cirkewwa. These large commercial vehicles also occupy most of the ferry car deck area of what is intended to be a passenger/car ferry between Cirkewwa and Mgarr**
- 10. Funds from the EU Marco Polo Programme will be tapped to improve the Mgarr - Sa Maison cargo ferry service, reducing road congestions and environmental damage to the community. Thus AD**

will improve and maintain an efficient operation of this service for the benefit of the whole country

✓ ***Gozo channel fares***

The Gozo Regional Committee of Alternattiva Demokratika has always since its set-up advocated that the Gozo channel link must at all times provide a social service to Gozitans rather than merely a profit-making venture. We firmly believe that the Gozo channel services need to adapt and develop according to the exigencies of the commuters they serve. Indeed the party in government has in recent months partially implemented AD's policy. An AD parliamentary representative will keep insisting that:

11. Charges for ferry fares should be kept to a bare minimum for Gozo residents

12. The wide discrepancy between charges on ferry fares paid by visitors and those paid by Gozitans is to be narrowed. This encourages more Maltese and tourists to visit Gozo, and enhances inland tourism in winter

13. Constant dialogue is held between the tourist industry stakeholders for feedback leading to adaptation and updating the Gozo ferries' schedules to required efficiency standards

✓ ***Catamaran***

Alternattiva Demokratika suggests a catamaran service as an added inter-island link to promote Gozo as a distinct tourist destination. We will raise awareness of the possibility to introduce a catamaran service running on environmentally clean fuels. With parliamentary representation, AD will:

14. Insist on a catamaran link between the Valletta/Marsamxett harbours and the Mgarr/M'forn terminals to encourage Maltese, tourists and cruise liner passengers to experience Gozo

15. Reintroduce the Mgarr/Sa Maison catamaran/hydrofoil service for daily commuters from Gozo

16. Negotiate with catamaran companies in Malta to include stopovers in Gozo in their Malta-Sicily schedules. Schengen's free movement for EU citizens eases such direct travel from Gozo to any EU country

✓ **Exploring other island links**

European travel agents/companies are offering commuters, business executives and VIPs comfortable, stylish flights and ancillary services in modern and technologically safe airships seating an average of 15 passengers. AD proposes that:

17. Through its established international contacts it will be in a position to explore the possibility to venture into such other island links for the benefit of the normal commuter, the business person and the tourist sector in Gozo. Leisure flights, observatory missions and flights covering TV broadcasts could be programmed.

This fits AD's strategy to brand Gozo as an accessible and distinct island.

✓ **Cruise liners**

Alternattiva Demokratika believes strongly in marketing Gozo as a tourist destination per se. Once represented in parliament, AD will:

18. Put pressure on the central authorities to instal berthing facilities in Gozo for cruise liners

✓ **Road infrastructure**

Alternattiva Demokratika believes in sustainable road infrastructures with central authorities considering public transport improvements in line with alternate transport options. Thus AD's representative in parliament will:

- 19. Guarantee serviceable alternate routes for vehicles prior to the undertaking of works on main roads**
- 20. Introduce bicycle lanes and bicycle parking facilities wherever suitable as a standard measure of road infrastructure**
- 21. Set up professional road signage indicating historical, cultural and natural heritage sites for visitors to be directed to diverse places of interest**
- 22. While acknowledging safety and security for persons and property, we will recognize the importance of quality of light versus quantity of street lights. In order to preserve and enhance the unique qualities of the island's rural undisturbed countryside and the visual environment, we will work towards the highest quality of outdoor night-time lighting through the adoption of lighting standards.**

Seventeen proposals to save and develop sustainable tourism in Gozo:

Malta's tourism industry includes references on the island of Gozo in its promotional campaigns. However none of the traditional political parties have so far divulged any originality in improving Gozo's potential as a holiday destination on its own. Gozo needs to product position itself to maximize its assets to reap competitive advantages.

AD in a coalition government will nurture and brand the key image of the island's green and natural environment. The Labour and Nationalist parties have underestimated Gozo's needs for long term sustainable development. The Gozitan workforce need to benefit from year-round, long term repeat tourism business of a scale and measured magnitude which small islands like Gozo can realistically manage.

Niche tourism aimed to target specific market segments will be introduced. Sadly both major political parties have shown preference for mega-projects with their resultant negative impacts. A tiny minority of speculators prosper and Gozo's society continues to lose its cultural and environmental heritage. Golf courses and yacht marinas are not the solution to Gozo's problem of tourism seasonality. Government should on the other hand prioritise Gozo's wellness, and its social and natural attractions to lure foreigners to set up residence on the island. These newcomers would provide a stable, year-round revenue to various economic operators in Gozo. Besides they are likely to invite and promote a new inflow of tourists when friends and relatives visit.

The island's decline in tourist revenues has created further unemployment and has given rise to serious concerns. Major hotels have closed shop in recent years. It makes no social sense when other hoteliers plan to grab more virgin natural sites.

Tourism in Gozo warrants more than eleventh hour pre-election reprieves. Gozo needs a clear and reliable strategy in which all stakeholders participate with confidence and from which they expect returns..

Tourists often come across unsightly rotting rubbish and litter bags in front of every household typical of a third world country – their holiday pleasure is dented, the island's image distorted. With parliamentary representation, Alternattiva Demokratika ensures that:

- 1. A general clean-up of the countryside and heritage sites under supervisory experts will become a priority**
- 2. Unsustainable building projects are strictly impeded and to guarantee that the law is not weak with the strong and strong with the weak**
- 3. When considering building planning applications, the authorities must protect Gozo's natural assets as the island's key attributes for discerning tourists, a market segment characterized by high disposable income groups**
- 4. Partnership projects will be promoted between the Ministry for Gozo, the Ministry for Tourism, the Malta Tourism Authority, the Gozo Tourism Authority, Local Councils and NGOs so that visitors to the island may explore spectacular country walks and heritage sites as well as get the opportunity to sample Gozitan lifestyle and culture**
- 5. The tourism product line in Gozo will be extended further to include varied specialized niches, such as: religious tourism, agro-tourism, stellar observation tourism, trekking tourism, eco-tourism, adventure tourism and other forms of leisurely and responsible tourist activities**
- 6. A national tourism policy be initiated so that all tourist service providers can receive training to assist them in adapting such policy to their particular product**
- 7. Village cores and their architectural characteristics will be safeguarded**
- 8. Direct links to Sicily and other Mediterranean destinations are explored; negotiations will be held with seaplane, ferries and catamaran operators**
- 9. A rent reform is enacted to accommodate permanently a substantial number of potential residents in Gozo's many vacant properties. This would generate short- and long-term revenues to the island's tourist sector**
- 10. Public holidays falling on weekdays to be shifted to a Friday or Monday as the case may be. This increases the incidence of long weekend breaks for Maltese to spend in Gozo**

- 11. The Gozo Tourism Association (GTA) will be financially supported to inform, to consult and dynamically engage itself with all interested operators to develop the Gozo product and strengthen the island's economic growth**
- 12. GTA members will address conflicts of interest, real or perceived, so that the Association would be well integrated to avail itself from EU structures and mechanisms which provide access to data, expertise, resources and funding for approved tourism projects without fear or favour**
- 13. Funds will be available to market Gozo as an attractive retirement location for foreigners who would eventually decide to settle and invest in property, and if so, shop around for their daily needs, and also encourage friends and relatives to visit them in Gozo. Their presence solidly addresses the seasonality problem of various existing and new tourism facilities**
- 14. The ferry fares for non-Gozo residents will be drastically reduced in off-peak periods so that the double insularity setback is softened**
- 15. Investment will be available to encourage small single farmhouse type holiday accommodation, thus safeguarding Gozo from over development and the expansion of large-scale complexes**
- 16. A regulatory body will define, establish and supervise criteria guaranteeing quality standards of tourist services on offer**
- 17. A support mechanism for training and assisting tourist service providers will be introduced**

Twenty six proposals for improving educational standards and services in Gozo

To create and retain a highly qualified workforce in Gozo, it is essential to develop a range of educational training opportunities with the quality standards required to guarantee decent well-remunerated jobs for Gozitans. The secondary and especially the tertiary economic sectors of the island need well qualified human resources. Our educational system, ranging from the primary to tertiary studies, is to be equipped with the resources necessary to offer a holistic approach to meet the dynamic requirements of a modern based economy. Alternattiva Demoktatika then proposes:

- 1. The use of modern technologies such as video conferencing through the Gozo University Centre so that Gozitan students will not need to commute to Malta just for a seminar or two;***
- 2. Post-16 staying-on rates will be increased through the provision of courses that are attractive and relevant to the students and to the economy of Gozo;***
- 3. The educational provision will include vocational and technical courses that reflect the needs of the island;***
- 4. To work with all stakeholders to develop more effective policies on Labour Market Intelligence and Research in order to identify the current and future employment needs of Gozo;***
- 5. Research will be carried out to find out what employers require and the level of skills needed to create sustainable employment for the workforce across all areas of employment;***
- 6. The education and training programmes will anticipate and prepare its students for new industries which might move into the island as well as offering courses that keep pace with the newer emerging technologies;***
- 7. Ensure the development of more effective careers' guidance and support systems in institutions to enable students to make more informed choices for further/higher education and training opportunities for future employment;***
- 8. Enhance the programmes of basic skills in literacy, numeracy and computer competence. These courses must be available to all, including adults, requiring realistic targets to be set for achievement***

- of basic skills. These will be reviewed annually;*
- 9. The provisions for students with special educational needs will be reviewed and reformed. Wherever possible integration into mainstream courses will be the goal. Particular attention will be given to enable access to buildings and facilities;*
 - 10. Key subjects of the sciences, mathematics and modern languages will be encouraged with emphasis that IT/ICT are equally important in the technical subjects such as plumbing, automotive/marine engineering, construction, horticulture/agriculture, and utilities technologies;*
 - 11. Address the current mismatch in supply and demand on the islands with too many academics and not enough engineers, scientists and highly qualified craft and trades people;*
 - 12. Pay particular attention to all the skills that are required in the service based employment of retailing, hospitality, catering especially customer care and after sales aspects;*
 - 13. The quality of vocational and technical curriculum will be improved and MCAST, the Institute of Tourism Studies and other training providers will be properly resourced and supported;*
 - 14. The vocational curriculum will be viewed as equal in importance to the so-called academic subjects and be available to all and not just the less able;*
 - 15. Ensure that international educational models of excellence are used and adapted to our region;*
 - 16. Review the conditions of work of teachers and lecturers;*
 - 17. Introduce training programmes to improve professional standards for all teachers and administrators;*
 - 18. There will be a more effective and open inspection process. Annual staff appraisals will be compulsory and marginal performers will receive support and guidance. Institutions will be required to publish action plans after the inspections;*
 - 19. The reasons why so much out of school tuition is occurring will be investigated and reformed if necessary. This is a burden on many families who are left without an option but to send and pay extra money for their children to learn from private lessons. If it is found*

- that private lessons are necessary, then the state will financially support the families for having to seek private tuition. A national policy on private tuition will be proposed;***
- 20. Training courses should lead to a recognized qualification for example City and Guilds or NVQ Units;***
 - 21. Encourage training to be provided by the employer at the workplace;***
 - 22. Where the skill required is rare, for example in art restoration, then the state should fund the student travel costs;***
 - 23. Environmental awareness and education together with fieldwork studies be introduced as from the pre-kinder stage and all across the primary and secondary education;***
 - 24. Learners must be given the tools to develop strategies to succeed in learning. Teachers and learners discuss, value and respect earning pattern combinations that differ from their own and learn to tolerate and evaluate these difference;***
 - 25. Introduce democratic skills studies as from the primary age especially in the areas of problem-solving and decision-making;***
 - 26. Introduce community outreach educational programmes;***

Seventeen proposals for Hondoq ir-Rummien, Ramla I-Hamra and Ta' Cenc:

Alternattiva Demokratika remains committed to support, to maintain and develop a sustainable economy for Gozo and its inhabitants. AD cares for Gozo's heritage and natural environment. Mega projects such as the proposed holiday complex and marina at Hondoq ir-Rummien, the villas at Ramla I-Hamra and the bungalows at Ta' Cenc, however attractively presented, need to be carefully examined thoroughly in all their stages before a final decision can be taken.

The quality of life for all Gozitans must not deteriorate as a result of such developments. In spite of illusory promises of sustained jobs, these developments are often driven solely by political, financial and short-term profit considerations. Alternattiva Demokratika will never play a double game... we are a political party enshrined in consistent green credentials.

Hondoq ir-Rummien

Alternattiva Demokratika is expounding concrete proposals for a geological and industrial heritage park along with afforestation projects at Hondoq that would also generate local employment in the short- and long-term. Our proposals contrasts the present job situation in which non-EU immigrants are getting pitiful wages in the construction and hospitality industries at the cost of local labour engagement.

The Nationalists and the Labourites are both intent to destroy Hondoq. The Labour Party objects to the construction of apartments, villas and a hotel at Hondoq but is in favour of a yacht marina. As in Zewwieqa at Mgarr, where a yacht marina drove away bathers from what has become a polluted and ruined habitat, another yacht marina at Hondoq would similarly destroy this popular swimming beach and coastline in the southern part of Gozo.

Our island is guaranteed a sustainable and healthy future with Alternattiva Demokratika's representation in parliament. AD then proposes:

- 1. To transform Hondoq ir-Rummien into a geological and industrial park complemented with an afforestation project***
- 2. Guarantee free public access to Hondoq ir-Rummien bay***
- 3. Monitor frequently through seawater samples these sea bathing areas***

- 4. Rehabilitate the derelict distillation plant into an indoor swimming pool heated by solar panels for use by all Gozitans as an added amenity to this ecological park***

Ramla I-Hamra

The spectacular landscape value of the valley and the bay at Ramla constitute a fundamental point of reference for tourism in Gozo. Such a natural asset is an attraction to all those visiting the island and therefore benefits all other existing tourist businesses. It is then obligatory to prevent the threat of opportunistic development in this area which would also damage the Gozo tourist product as a whole.

AD would never acquiesce with the proposed building development for Ramla I-Hamra. Gozo attracts Maltese and foreign tourists for its strength as an island rich in history and natural assets. AD will safeguard these assets for future generations and as a source of income for today's tourist operators. Alternattiva Demokratika will:

- 5. Reform MEPA (as per AD's Manifesto for a coalition) to guarantee that this Authority truly safeguards the environment***
- 6. Continue to refer to the European Commission breaches of its directives***
- 7. Support Heritage Trusts and NGOs in obtaining EU funds to transform the whole Ramla area as an international heritage site, reinstating its archaeological remains, highlighting its geomorphologic features and habitat that supports endemic flora and fauna.***
- 8. Endeavour to promote Ramla for a Blue Flag bay status***
- 9. Ensure that Ramla I-Hamra remains free from light pollution, a characteristic sought avidly by our visitors.***
- 10. Protect its spectacular landscape value and promote it as an ideal location for astronomical observation***
- 11. Insist that the state should claim back the land from the Ulysses Lodge proprietors, to remove the abandoned building, restore the partially concreted-over Roman pathway to its former self and holistically restore the whole area***

Ta' Cenc

Alternattiva Demokratika will continue to fight for the rights of all citizens and for the rule of law. The Ta' Cenc plateau and coastal cliffs have been identified as an important ornithological breeding area for shearwaters and falcons. We believe that Gozo's economy benefits much more from sustainable long-term projects rather than from land speculation for mega constructions.

These speculators time their planning applications on the eve of general elections. The two major parties exhibit their self-interests by sympathising with such requests – in this case both support the proposed golf course at Ta' Cenc. Only with Alternattiva Demokratika in parliament can the country be guaranteed that Ta' Cenc is saved for posterity.

AD's clear and consistent proposals are:

- 12. Ta' Cenc will be given as a gift to the nation by being expropriated and hence be protected for present and future generations;***
- 13. Ta' Cenc will benefit from the award of a special legal status as a National Park;***
- 14. Access conditions will be made clear to the owners and free access to the public will be restored;***
- 15. The whole plateau (and not just the cliff sides) will be included to the European Union Natura 2000 Network lists and declared as a special protected area designated under the 'Wild Birds Directive' and the 'Habitats Directive';***
- 16. Ta' Cenc agricultural land will become the first GMO free growing area;***
- 17. Different niches of tourism will be encouraged at Ta' Cenc such as agro-tourism, eco-tourism, bird-watching tourism, nature tourism, cultural tourism, adventure tourism, heritage and archaeological astronomical observation tourism and other sustainable projects that will generate sustainable employment;***

Conclusion:

These proposals specifically designed for Gozo is based on feedback received by AD's Gozo Regional Committee since its foundation way back in 2004.

We would therefore like to thank all those individuals, households, members of the civil society, Gozitan organisations and various local councils who communicated, shared and discussed ideas for developing better quality living in Gozo.

Our proposals aim to tackle many years of stagnant clientelism, and to provide a framework whereby all citizens and economic operators realise where they stand in order to defend their inalienable rights within an equitable society.

We are committed to offer the Gozitan community a golden opportunity to direct synergies for a better future. The island is ripe for reform which would project it into a successful region and not to remain a quasi-abandoned periphery of Malta.

We strongly believe that the best reform for Gozo is for Gozo's registered voters to elect an AD member of parliament.

For Gozo, for its residents, for Malta as a whole, we kindly invite you to discuss and to disseminate our proposals.

We thank you for your generous support. We thank you for voting for the real change needed for a better quality living for all of us.