

Business Today

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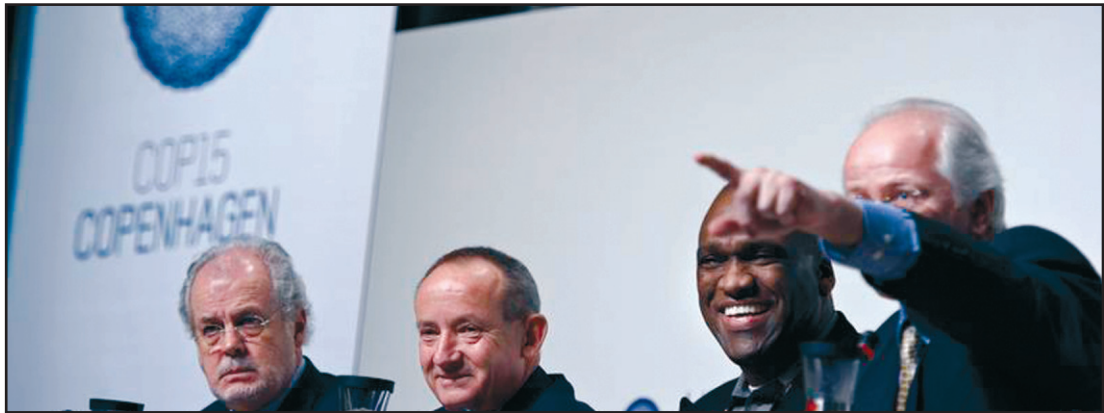
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Copenhagen told this was warmest decade



The U.N.'s top climate official Yvo de Boer, second left, is flanked by Malta's Michael Zammit Cutajar, left, and John Ash, second right, chairmen of the two key negotiation committees as UN spokesman Eric Hall, right takes a question at a press conference in Copenhagen, Denmark. The U.N.'s top climate official said that the world is entering talks on a new climate pact with unprecedented unity, and leaders must seize the moment to create a turning point in the history of mankind

This decade has been the warmest on record and this year is likely to be the fifth warmest, according to the World Meteorological Organisation's assessment of global average temperatures. The WMO released the preliminary data at the Copenhagen climate summit yesterday, in what the UK Met Office, which contributed to the figures, admitted was an attempt to influence the negotiations over cutting greenhouse gases. According to the WMO, there

were sharp differences between regions, with central Africa and parts of southern Asia having their warmest year but the United States and Canada experiencing cooler than average conditions.

The WMO is also anxious to quell doubts about the scientific analysis of temperature records raised by the publication of stolen e-mails in the 'Climategate' scandal.

The UK's Met Office, one of three main sources for the WMO figures,

said its records showed that each of the last six decades had been warmer than the previous one.

Since the 18th century, the global temperature has risen just over 0.7C.

The Copenhagen summit is trying to agree a global action plan to prevent the temperature rising more than 2C above the pre-industrial average.

See full report on Copenhagen climate summit on pages 2-3

GWU, Forum in move to sideline UHM, CMTU

Karl Stagno-Navarra

A letter sent by European Trade Union Confederation (ETUC) secretary-general John Monks inviting the General Workers' Union and the Forum of Maltese Unions urging the formation of a Trades Union Council, is being interpreted as a move to sideline the Union Haddiema Maghqudin (UHM) led by secretary-general Gejtu Vella.

Sources in Brussels told Business Today that John Monks's letter "came as no surprise", following a number of recent contacts made by officials from the GWU and the Forum, a collection of 11 unions that includes the Malta Union of Teachers.

The GWU is considered to be the "closest" among national unions to John Monks and the ETUC, while the Forum, led by MUT President John Bencini is still insisting with government to have its group of 11 unions represented on the Malta Council for Economic and Social Development (MCESD).

The same sources have confirmed that Forum President John Bencini who has since become very close to Tony Zarb, has attempted to seek affiliation with the ETUC in a bid to bypass the resistance for its representation within MCESD.

According to sources, the move

by GWU and Forum to have John Monks write to them and also copy the Confederation of Maltese Trade Unions president William Portelli (the CMTU groups all unions bar the GWU and MUT) as an arranged attempt "to mount pressure on MCESD and meanwhile sideline the UHM who have been avid promoters of a social pact.

Business Today understands that the issue is also a matter of a "clash of personalities" to the extent that should a TUC be formed in Malta, John Bencini would be pushed to run for president, given his eagerness to take centre-stage after pulling MUT out of the CMTU last year.

Industrial observers told this newspaper that the proposed TUC would also vie for national influence with the CMTU, while Zarb's influence on the trade union scene would be bolstered, practically sidelining the UHM, and eliminating the CMTU.

The idea of forming a TUC in Malta developed in 2006 but so far never worked out.

In his letter, John Monks said that he was prompted to write "to again raise the subject of a proposed unified Malta TUC that has been discussed, on and off, for several years. ► **page 11**

Fenech explains Budget measures in personalised letter to self-employed

Charlot Zahra

In a letter sent to all registered self-employed, Finance Minister Tonio Fenech has pledged a series of initiatives to assist the vast category of businesses.

"Whoever is in business or working as a self-employed knows that economic stability and job creation are important to increase trade and commerce in our country," Fenech said in his personalised letter to the self-employed, a copy of which was seen by Business Today.

He explained how the world was passing through an economic crisis which had left its effect on "every country, including Malta. In the budget we have made sound choices"

Fenech added that in the Budget 2010, "the Government would continue focusing on job creation, incentives for the self-employed, and incentives for tourism".

One of the initiatives mentioned by Fenech in his letter was a micro-credit financing up to €25,000, "so that you have more money to invest, benefit

from advantageous interest rates and you are not asked for the guarantees that banks usually ask from".

Another initiative from the Finance Ministry was a 40 per cent tax credit up to a maximum of €25,000 "so that in the next two years you can refurbish your business, buy more modern equipment and also employ new persons," Fenech pledged.

Moreover, another incentive will assist adaptations of places of work for disabled people.

Finally, the Finance Minister is pledging to fight bureaucracy by not requesting information which is already available at one Government department by another one.

"We will simplify the licensing system, and we will create a one-stop shop so that people are granted assistance about EU programmes and funds that you can benefit from," he added.

To this effect, the Finance Ministry has created a free phone number 8007 2215 to enable self-employed to obtain more information about these

programmes for the self-employed.

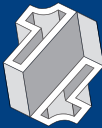
Asked by Business Today to elaborate more on the interest that these incentives have created among the self-employed, a spokesperson for the Finance Minister told this newspaper that interest in the tax credit and micro-credit schemes had been "substantial with hundreds of calls reaching the offices of the Micro Business Support Unit during the first week following the sending of the mentioned information letter, along with a number of emails or enquires in person at the Ministry.

"Although most of the interested businesses were at this stage only seeking clarifications on the methodology of the schemes, on their applicability to their businesses and the time-frames involved, there seems to be a genuine interest by Maltese and Gozitan SMEs to renovate their businesses, to invest in new machinery or technology or to employ new personnel through these unique incentives being offered," he added.

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