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AIR POLLUTION / ATMOSPHERE

Integrated approach to addressing air pollution and atmospheric problems

- Mankind needs clean air. Clean air is as important for human health and well-being and the environment as are clean water or safe food. Indoor and outdoor air pollution is causing premature deaths by the millions, and severe health impacts such as aggravation of asthma and certain heart and lung diseases. In developing countries women and children suffer major health damage due to indoor air pollution caused by cooking and heating practises that are not sustainable. Air pollution is also causing severe damage to the environment such as through acidification of natural soil and water ecosystems, land degradation, tropospheric ozone damage to agricultural crops and corrosion of materials and cultural heritage.
- **There is no doubt that air pollution by particulate matter, tropospheric ozone, nitrogen oxides, sulphur dioxide and many other pollutants, is a major public health issue.** The Secretary General report has provided us with comprehensive evidence of this fact. The WHO has evaluated that as many as 2.5 million people die prematurely every year due to air pollution. Indoor air pollution is taking a particularly heavy toll on human health in developing countries: more than 1.5 million people - mainly children and women – die prematurely every year due to indoor air pollution from low-quality fuel and poor combustion technology. Also in economies in transition and advanced economies the negative health impact of ambient air pollution is substantial. The European Commission has used a similar methodology as the WHO and it has estimated that ambient air pollution presently causes more than 350,000 premature deaths in the EU annually.
- Air pollution affects also the achievement of sustainable development in the economic sense – sick people and premature deaths also constitute a major loss for productivity and economic growth.
- Air pollution/atmosphere is **closely intertwined** with the other themes of CSD14 and 15 - energy, industrial development and climate change. This cluster of issues is also closely linked to the crosscutting issues of JPOI, especially poverty eradication, sustainable consumption and production, education, health and gender equality. Furthermore, air pollution is linked to other policy areas, such as transport, urban planning and land-use management. This calls for an integrated approach in addressing these issues.
- The Report of the Secretary-General on the thematic cluster focuses mainly on the theme of energy for sustainable development. However, it is important also to closely review the theme of air pollution/atmosphere and how this interlinks with industrial development, sustainable energy services and climate change.
- Within the theme of air pollution/atmosphere, we also have to tackle the problem of illegal trade of ozone depleting substances taking into account the objectives of SAICM. This include tracking imports, exports and re-exports of ozone-depleting substances and implement licensing systems that cover all categories of imports and exports, with the aim of reducing end markets for illegal ozone-depleting substances.
- Further consideration should be given to issues related to the depletion of the ozone layer and climate change and the links between the Montreal Protocol and the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change and its Kyoto Protocol, in order to maintain the Montreal Protocol's momentum while achieving the Kyoto Protocol's targets. Countries should

continue to consider available win-win solutions which are cost-competitive when compared with options for reducing carbon dioxide and other green-house gases.

- **We may have even more severe health problems due to air pollution in the future** as the **increased demand for energy and transport services** risks outbalancing the efforts to reduce the emissions per unit produced - particularly so in countries with rapid economic development and weak governance and enforcement of legislation and standards. Continued urbanisation, particularly in the developing world, leads to an increased number of people being exposed to high levels of air pollution and the poorest people in the poor countries are those being exposed to the poorest air quality.
- The EU believes that part of the solution to the problem of air pollution lies in the fact that the CSD14 themes are interlinked. That means that there is potential to create win-win situations through the use of smart investments: investments in clean energy that will also have positive effects on air pollutions as well as on climate.
- The EU has made significant progress in combating air pollution. Contributing factors for progress have been the **introduction of environmental protection principles such as the Polluter Pays Principle, the Precautionary Principle, the Principle of Prevention at the Source, Integration of Environmental Issues in the Sector Policies and the use of Best Available Techniques (BAT) through legislation in the management of environmental protection and also applied in air pollution policy**. Further contributing factors have been the setting of emission standards for industry, products (such as vehicles) and fuels. Also the strict application of air quality standards to be achieved through abatement measures on the sources and effective management of energy, industry and transport demand has contributed to improved air quality in urban areas. The administrative capacity of a country is a key issue in applying these principles and air quality standards.

Enhancing means of implementation through sub-regional, regional and international cooperation

- The regional implementation meetings have clearly shown us that the challenges vary between the different regions. There are **substantial differences between countries and regions** not only when it comes to the causes of air pollution but also in terms of the capacities and resources to address the challenges.
- **Major reasons of air pollution are the use of traditional biomass, poor quality fuels, poor combustion technologies, energy production and industry with inadequate abatement technology, transport and some forms of agriculture, such as slash-and-burn agriculture.**
- National capacity to tackle air pollution and at the same time pursue other sustainable development goals, such as eradicating poverty, achieving universal primary education, providing safe water, sufficient food and energy, and combating climate change, varies greatly between countries. We have to admit that there might not be a "silver bullet" that can allow a country to meet all goals at the same time and that the measures need to be adapted to the national capacities and taken stepwise to improve and achieve the objectives of the Johannesburg Plan of Implementation.
- **Good governance, appropriate administrative, economic and legal frameworks, a knowledge-based approach** in which **education** plays a key role, and **access to adequate human, technical and financial resources** are however common requirements for reaching the MDGs and the JPOI goals. There are also plenty of good experiences from various regions that can be used to **identify ways forward**.
- Good governance includes the **knowledge** of the origin and impact of air pollution, the **capacity of identifying the appropriate measures and enforcing the legislation**. In many developing countries and countries with economies in transition, industrial development and energy production and consumption, including transport, are major contributors to air pollution that could be effectively abated. In some cases there is a lack of understanding of the role and origin of air pollution, but in most cases lack of human and financial resources seems to be the main obstacle. There is a substantial body of knowledge on effective abatement technologies, including "best available technologies" that - if properly applied - could reduce the impact of air pollution at a relatively low cost.
- Good governance requires setting up stable legal systems for the society, including clear rules on licensing for operation on industrial installations and power production and setting air pollution limits or standards. Furthermore, as the objective is to protect public health, it is equally important to set standards for ambient air quality. The most recent global air quality guidelines by WHO recommend a stepwise approach with a starting value to be achieved first, and then gradually setting more ambitious targets.
- Emissions originating outside the national boundaries need to be tackled as well. By the late 1970s, transboundary or regional air pollution was recognised to be a problem facing many countries all over the world: In Europe, acid rain was taking a particularly heavy toll, killing forests and lakes even in remote areas far from industrial sources. A good example of **regional cooperation on air pollution** is the UNECE Convention on Long Range Transboundary Air Pollution. The Convention and its Protocols and national implementation measures have led to substantial reduction of air emissions in Europe. Further international cooperation is needed to address emission sources not regulated under national law, such as **international aviation and maritime shipping**. It is also important in some cases to widen the co-operation further and include emissions sources of pollutants being transported on a transcontinental scale, such as precursors of tropospheric ozone, particulate matter, mercury and persistent organic substances.

Addressing energy, industrial development, air pollution/atmosphere and climate change in an integrated manner, focusing on interlinkages and cross-cutting issues

- In order to properly address these interlinked challenges, we need to **maximise synergies** by addressing the themes of CSD14-15 in an integrated manner. There are numerous win-win opportunities, as access to sustainable energy, a modernisation of industrial installations and measures to reduce greenhouse gases and air pollution. We should focus more on maximising these co-benefits.
- The least developed countries are facing specific challenges. In rural and poor urban areas indoor air pollution from traditional biomass and low quality stoves is of major concern. For them, **access to affordable clean energy and heating technology is crucial**. Poor health undermines the attempts to meet the MDGs, including the possibility for children to obtain primary education. Targets and objectives could be considered for access to safe, affordable and sustainable energy services, as is the case for access to safe water and sanitation. This requires focused efforts and adequate financial backing by national governments, donors and the private sector. There are also clear links between providing access to sustainable energy services and climate change and land-use management as the traditional use of biofuels often has a strong negative impact on the local natural resources such as forests.
- The world now sees an urbanisation in the developing countries that is unprecedented and will have local as well as regional and global effects, if not managed properly. Urban planning and land use management are prerequisites for sustainable urban development. Urban planning has consequences for urban transport, energy use, location of industry and waste management, areas (issues) that are all closely linked to air pollution and the other CSD-themes.
- Developing countries are in urgent need of improved quality of life, infrastructure and services to the fast growing urban population. Infrastructure has a long life time and if wrong decisions are taken now, the results (effects) will be there for many years. The CSD provides an opportunity to stress the importance of urban planning to reduce air pollution, reduce poverty and to increase the exchange of experience in these fields.
- Presently, air pollution causes high “external costs”, i.e. damage to human health and the environment. In most cases, the polluter does not yet pay the full cost for pollution. This will prevail as long as it is cheaper to pollute than to use more costly, but environmentally sounder technologies. The “prize” for pollution will be paid by others at another time. The cost for environmental degradation must be highlighted and more efforts made to quantify this cost with the aim to fully internalise the externalities.

Enhancing the contributions of the private sector and other stakeholders in addressing air pollution and atmospheric problems, combating climate change and promoting industrial development

- **Financing of clean and affordable energy services and investments in clean production are crucial** especially for developing countries and countries with economies in transition. Foreign direct investments contribute to globalisation of the market. It is important that such investments are made with a view to achieving sustainable development for the protection of human health and the environment locally as well as globally. This implies that investments would need to meet sustainable development standards, including environmental standards. The various sources of financing – domestic, multi- and bilateral donors, private sector – need to be considered jointly to meet the challenge of unlocking the resources needed.
- Achieving air quality that does not cause significant negative impacts on human health and the environment requires an **integrated approach** that takes into account all sectors of society to find the least costly measures. This means that not only energy production or industry need to be considered, but also other sources of air pollution such as agriculture, transport, including shipping and aviation, and domestic small scale heating must be taken into account.
- Finally, win-win situations for improved air quality can be found in all regions. Some are more successful than others. The **Clean Air Initiative** of the World Bank is particularly important as it is about sharing experience between cities and countries with similar problems. The EU has played and will continue to play an important role in pushing for win-win solutions that contribute to the JPOI goals in the fields of sustainable energy, air pollution industrial development and climate change – including with initiatives such as the **Johannesburg Renewable Energy Coalition, (JREC) and the Patient Capital Initiative, and the EU energy initiative and the attached facility**. You will be hearing our experiences with these and other policies and initiatives throughout this session.
