

OPENING ADDRESS BY
HIS EXCELLENCY DR. ABDUL HUSSAIN BIN ALI MIRZA
MINISTER OF OIL & GAS AFFAIRS AND
CHAIRMAN OF NATIONAL OIL & GAS AUTHORITY (NOGA)
AT THE
GCC POLICY DEVELOPMENT MEETING ON CLEAN FUELS
AND VEHICLES
KINGDOM OF BAHRAIN
WEDNESDAY 12TH MARCH 2008

Your Excellencies,

Dr. Habib El-Habar, Director & Regional Representative, United Nations Environment Programme, Regional Office for West Asia.

Distinguished Guests and Participants

Ladies and Gentleman,

Good morning to all of you,

It gives me great pleasure to welcome you all to the opening ceremony of the "GCC Policy Development Meeting on Clean Fuels and Vehicles" which is dedicated to discuss the progress achieved by the GCC, North African and Middle Eastern countries in improving the quality of fuels and the challenges we still face for the promotion of lead-free, low-sulphur fuels and improved vehicle standards.

Ladies and Gentleman,

As you know, the environmental and climate change issues are now topping the agendas of the international meetings, conferences and forums, and are occupying a very sizeable portion of the time of the decision makers in the world. This has become more paramount now that the international community has come to a kind of consensus that there is a strong linkage between certain types of human beings activities and the environmental and climate changes that we are witnessing in our planet .

And since the human being activities, both the productive and consuming, are not restricted to any particular economic or social sector on the planet but it applies to all of them without exception, this means that the responsibility for the changes that are taking place in environment and climate should not be borne by one or more productive or economic sectors. The responsibility should be shared by all productive and economic sectors in the world.

Hence, it is only fair that the burden and the cost of emission reduction, as well as the mitigation procedures, should be shared equitably by all productive, services, consuming and economic sectors of the globe.

Obviously, nobody disputes the important role which should be played in this respect by the world's energy sector with all its various affiliated activities, and the vital contribution it can make in addressing the environmental and climate change challenges.

And naturally the international transport sector including the land transport which relies heavily on the finished products of the global oil industry, has a lot to offer in this respect, through its contribution in improving the quality of fuels and other oil products, and in adapting its practices to the international standards.

This of course can be done through a comprehensive practical cooperation package between all the concerned parties including the oil producers and consumers, in areas particularly related to R & D programmes, patent and technology transfers. This we think should serve our mutual goal of, clean fuels for all.

I am pleased to inform you that we in the National Oil & Gas Authority (NOGA) have placed clean fuels on the top of our priorities and we are open for any suggestions, initiatives and proposals to cooperate with all concerned to improve and develop the quality of our fuels and other oil products, including car fuels and other land transport vehicles.

In fact we have already initiated some projects as a part of our extensive modernization programme of Bahrain's refinery. This programme at a total cost of 1.2 billion US dollars commenced in 1998. The aim of the programme is to produce more value added, environmentally friendly, high quality and competitive oil products.

In June 2000, we launched the unleaded gasoline project, with a total cost of 7.4 million US dollars, and since July 2000 the unleaded gasoline became one of Bapco's marketable products.

This was followed two years later, by commissioning of the Kero Merox project at a cost of which produces cleaner fuel for airoplanes.

And on the 5th of December 2007 H. H. Shaikh Khalifa Bin Sulman Al Khalifa the Prime Minister of the Kingdom of Bahrain, inaugurated the Low Sulphur Diesel complex, the cost of which amounted to 725 million US dollars. Apart from its high return on investment which is estimated at 30% p.a., and the opportunity it creates by being a baseline for more down stream projects. This plant will greatly contribute to the quality of environment as it produces low sulphur diesel down to 10ppm which meets the most stringent international standards and regulation.

There are also other environmentally driven projects that should appear on the scene soon, once their technical and financial feasibility studies got finalized.

It is worthwhile to draw attention here to the fact that the kingdom of Bahrain has already fulfilled its commitments towards international community with regards to environment protection and climate change issues, as it has ratified the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change in December 1994 and in July 2005 it has ratified the Kyoto Protocol. It also plays an active role, in this respect, by participating effectively in all international conferences, meetings and dialogues dedicated to environmental and climate change issues.

Ladies and Gentlemen

Before conclusion, I would like to extend my thanks to all those who actively took part in organizing and arranging this highly important regional specialized meeting. I would like also to thank all the distinguished speakers and participants who have spared the time to travel all the way to Bahrain, in order to share with us their ideas, opinions and experiences on the best practices and techniques leading to more effective and environmentally friendly fuels and vehicles. Wishing you all a very successful and productive meeting and a very pleasant stay with us here in the Kingdom of Bahrain.

Thank you.