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**Officials discuss air quality issues**

The transport sector is one of the major contributors to worldwide concerns over climate change, global warming and other environment problems, according to Transport Department Director General Mr Viengsavath Siphandone.

Mr Viengsavath said the large number of vehicles on the roads was contributing to global warming.

Officials from the Transport Department, under the Ministry of Public Works and Transport, and the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) attended a workshop called partnership for clean fuels and vehicles in Vientiane yesterday.

It was aimed at protecting air quality in Laos , which is considered to be in good condition, according to an environmental health country survey undertaken by the World Health Organisation in 2005.

During the survey, wind speed around Vientiane city was found to be low, indicating poor ventilation. This means pollution is often trapped in areas where it is generated, such as along roadsides, affecting the health of local people, Mr Viengsavath said.

Mr Viengsavath warned the country's air quality would deteriorate if there was not proper control of low quality fuels imports and usage.

"I think it is time we introduced concrete measures on fuel quality and vehicle standards," he said.

Another environmental programme currently underway is the National Environmentally Sustainable Transport strategy, initiated by the United Nations Centre for Regional Development.

The strategy targets 12 key areas, including clean fuel and vehicle emissions but guidelines on the implementation of the strategy are still to be outlined.

Transport Department officials estimate around 70 percent of vehicles in Vientiane use diesel, with the remainder using unleaded gasoline. The burning of these fuels releases carbon dioxide into the atmosphere and contributes to global warming, Mr Viengsavath said.

People who drive vehicles are contributing to global warming said UNEP representative, Ms Mary M'Mamukindia.

She said the increasing number of vehicles on the road and rising demand for fuel was a challenge that needed to be overcome, particularly in developing countries, and the workshop provided a valuable opportunity to discuss and share ideas on the issue.



**By Meuangkhamb Noradeth  
(Latest Update August 5, 2008)**

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Vientiane Times Pangkham Rd, P.O.Box: 5723 Vientiane, Lao PDR  
 Tel: (856-21) 216364 , 251619; Fax: (856-21) 216365;  
 Email: [info@vientianetimes.org.la](mailto:info@vientianetimes.org.la)  
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