

**MINISTERIAL SESSION OF THE EASTERN AFRICA SUB-REGIONAL
WORKSHOP ON BETTER AIR QUALITY IN CITIES
OCTOBER 23, 2008, CONF ROOM 9/10**

Speaking Points:

INTRODUCTION

- *Welcomed Ministers and Mayors to UNEP on behalf of Achim.*
- *Director, Division of Regional Cooperation in UNEP*
- *Thanked partners who have supported the workshop:*
 - the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (SIDA);
 - the Stockholm Environment Institute (SEI);
 - the World Bank
 - the Air Pollution Information Network for Africa (APINA)
 - the United States Environment Protection Agency (USEPA)
 - the Partnership for Clean Fuels and Vehicles (PCFV).
 - And UNEP
- Over the past two days experts from all East African countries met to discuss the issue of deteriorating urban air quality
- They developed a set of practical actions for us to consider to address the situation.

Your excellences, ladies and gentlemen,

[BACKGROUND]

- In July 2006 Sub Saharan Ministers met here at UNEP Headquarters to discuss the issue of urban air pollution
- They recommended that urgent action be taken. They also identified key to focus on. And they asked for the development of concrete action plans per African sub-region.
- This is why we are meeting today – to develop a set of concrete actions for East Africa

[URBANISATION IN EAST AFRICA]

- As you all know, cities are engines for economic growth and development. They drive economic development and provide employment. They also have important social functions – they bring people together, house universities, etcetera.
- In principle cities are also good from an environment point of view; they provide economies of scale that reduce the need for energy, reduce land use and reduce travel.
- However, these economic and environmental benefits of cities can be offset by uncontrolled urbanization. Rather than providing economies of scale cities become health hazards, pollute their surroundings, encroach on lands and block sustainable development.

- Today half of the world's populations is urbanized – in 2030 it will have grown to two-thirds.
- By 2015 the world will have over 500 cities with populations of over 1 million and three-quarters of these cities will be found in developing countries.
- The urban growth rate in Sub-Sahara Africa is the highest in the world
- Cities like Nairobi, Dar es Salaam, Kampala, Djibouti, Addis Ababa, and Asmara are growing rapidly – each doubling in size every 10 to 15 years.
- Often this growth is poorly planned. This has detrimental effects for the cities, the environment and the health of the people.

[PROBLEMS]

- Look at Nairobi, often referred to as “the city under sun”: waste collection is poor, if taking place at all. As a result much of the waste is being burned. Few industries and companies comply with existing environmental regulations. Traffic has grown tremendously, the city is highly congested. A UNEP supported study found that the air quality of Nairobi is worse than that of famous cases like Mexico City or Sao Paolo.
- Unless deliberate steps are taken by countries, urban air pollution will become worse, much worse, as our cities are still rapidly urbanizing.
- For example, Uganda private vehicle imports grew by 600% in 19 years, in Kenya it more than doubled over the past 6 years, and in Tanzania the car fleet is growing 20% every year.
- Urban planning does not seem to be to keep up with the rapid urbanization. While roads are constructed, little infrastructure is provided for pedestrians or bicyclers – even through the majority of the people do not have a car. People have to walk on the roads and risk their lives to get to work. As a result, traffic accidents and casualties are extremely high.
- The WHO estimates that 50,000 deaths occur each year in Sub-Saharan Africa as a result of outdoor air pollution. National public health expenditure is expected to increase with worsening air pollution. Respiratory diseases are increasing – especially among the poor.
- This calls for an integrated, well coordinated approach to tackling air pollution as it is a multi-sectoral issue and affects all sections of the population.

Excellencies. Ladies and gentlemen,

[SOLUTIONS]

- Over the last two days technical experts from your countries have been meeting to discuss actions that can be taken to improve air quality in the sub-region. You will be presented with their recommendations later on.
- Experts have identified measures that are often simple to take, are cost effective and can have immediate effect. For example:
- Why should we continue to import vehicles that are very pollutive and do not meet the required standards in the countries that they are coming from? Simple import regulations can make a huge difference.

- Why have many of our cities malfunctioning solid waste management systems while the –local- private sector is keen to work with us to improve waste collection, reducing waste burning?
- Why are we still constructing roads that do not have pedestrian and bicycle facilities? Even though the majority of our people do not have a car and these facilities only cost a fraction of the road investment?
- Why do we still allow importation of very dirty fuels – often 500 times dirtier than those used in developed countries?
- Why do we lack decent public transport facilities while there are excellent examples of developed and developing country cities that have put in place cost-effective public transport systems?
- For sure the most expensive option isto do nothing.....both in terms of human health, development, and in economic terms.

[CLOSING]

- Finally, there is also the global dimension. Local actions have global impacts. Promoting cleaner transport will not only reduce urban air pollution, but will also reduce greenhouse gas emissions. Thus many of the interventions proposed by the experts can be supported by global climate change funds.
- Earlier this year, in March, a similar set of actions was developed for Southern Africa and was adopted by SADC. The 14 SDAC Countries adopted the Lusaka Action plan and have already started implementing some of the recommended actions at the national level.
- After today's conference on East Africa, UNEP and its partners are also planning to organize similar meetings for Central/ West Africa and North Africa
- I call on you to seriously consider the recommendations from the experts. To adopt their proposals. And to start implementing these actions.
- In 2002 UNEP set a target to eliminate leaded gasoline by end 2006 in Sub Saharan Africa. With our partners we worked with all of you to meet this target. By the end of 2006 all of East Africa had gone unleaded...even ahead of Europe....
- I see no reason why we can not achieve similar results for other issues.
- We stand ready to support you in the implementation of the proposed actions