

**SPEECH BY THE MINISTER FOR ENVIRONMENT AND MINERAL RESOURCES HON. JOHN NJOROGI MICHUKI, EGH, MP, DURING THE EASTERN AFRICA SUB-REGIONAL WORKSHOP ON BETTER AIR QUALITY IN CITIES ON 23<sup>RD</sup> OCTOBER 2008 AT THE UNEP HEADQUARTERS, GIGIRI, NAIROBI**

**Honourable Ministers from the Eastern Africa Region,**

**Executive Director of UNEP,**

**Permanent Secretaries,**

**Your Worship the Mayors,**

**Technical Experts from the Region and Other Countries,**

**Ladies and Gentlemen,** let me start by thanking the United Nations Environment Programme, the World Bank, Swedish International Development Agency and other partners who were involved in organising this forum that touches on our livelihood and wellbeing.

On behalf of the Government of Kenya, I express our gratitude to the workshop organisers for convening the workshop in Kenya. I hope that your travel was comfortable and that your experiences have so far been good. Allow me to invite you to tour the country at the end of this meeting.

**Ladies and Gentlemen,** air pollution has been identified as a major challenge towards the attainment of the Millennium Development Goals in terms of increasing health costs and environmental effects. It is estimated that one billion people worldwide are exposed to outdoor air pollution exceeding maximum recommended levels and that approximately 800,000 premature deaths are due to urban air pollution every year globally.

While developed countries have been grappling with increasing air pollution for years, it was found necessary to institute measures to reverse the deteriorating trend. This was necessitated by increasing health and environmental costs. Most of us will recall the London smog due to air pollution which killed thousands of people in a few days at the turn of the industrialisation era.

**Ladies and Gentlemen,** as a result of rapid urbanization, industrialization and motorization, we are already witnessing increasing problems of urban air pollution in air cities. Studies conducted within the region show that air pollution is a serious issue comparable to some of the bigger cities in the world.

For example, a study conducted in Nairobi in 2004 comparing 10 cities in the world, including Sao Paulo, Mexico City, Pune among others, showed that on average cars in Nairobi were the worst polluters, compared to cars in the US.

The way cities are planned and grow also impacts on air pollution. Urban planning and management will play a key role in reducing air pollution in future. Cities should be friendlier to pedestrians and cyclists, as well as have efficient public transport systems.

Indoor air pollution is also a major killer in sub-Saharan Africa, estimated to kill approximately 400,000 people yearly; particularly women and children.

Thus unless steps are taken to incorporate air pollution abatement in the pursuit of economic development, any positive gains in the economy will be wiped by the health costs borne by the population. The poor in the society are disproportionately affected as they work and live near heavily polluted areas, like along major highways and industrial areas.

**Ladies and Gentlemen,** the situation analysis of effects of air quality in Kenya is depicted by the Economic Survey (ES), 2006, which indicates that the trend of morbidity levels on the Upper Respiratory Tract Infections (URTIs) has steadily increased from 23.2% to 24.7% of morbidity cases in 2001 and 2005 respectively. About 5.6 million cases of morbidity were reported in 2005.

Recent air pollution studies undertaken in Kenya have shown that the levels of some gaseous pollutants and particulates do exceed the World Health Organization (WHO) ambient air quality guideline levels. The consequences have been an increase in reported cases of upper respiratory tract infections, damage to material and cultural monuments as well as degradation of ecosystems.

The other effects of gaseous pollutants is trapping of the heat near the surface of the earth causing atmospheric warming, generally referred to as 'urban heat island'. This could be the source of discomfort to the urban residents.

**Ladies and Gentlemen,** in view of the above issues, the Government of Kenya initiated air quality monitoring programmes in 1996. The main aim of the programme includes Ozone monitoring at:

- i. Dagoretti Corner, Nairobi, and
- ii. Mt. Kenya Global Atmospheric Watch (GAW)

We have also established programmes for ambient air quality surveillance in the cities of Nairobi and Mombasa which have helped to monitor industrial and vehicular emissions during different seasons.

May I also report that Kenya is Party to the Montréal Protocol on Ozone Depleting Substances, among other Multilateral Environment Agreements.

**Ladies and Gentlemen,** in regard to the Legal and Policy instruments on air pollution, Kenya developed the Sessional Paper No. 2 of 1996 on Industrial Promotion to the 2020 which sets the background for incorporating environmental issues in the development of industries. Later we developed the Sessional Paper no. 6 of 1999 on Environment and Development that provided the baseline for enacting the Environmental Management and Coordination Act, 1999 that demonstrated the Government's commitment in safeguarding the environment. This Act provides incentives to encourage enterprises to adopt proactive measures towards prevention of air pollution.

Through these legal and policy instruments, the Government encourages industries to import new equipment and adopt new technologies, which can ensure adherence to air quality standards.

**Ladies and Gentlemen,** the Government is concerned with the status of ambient air quality and has formulated and implemented a regulation banning smoking in public places. In this regard, almost all Public and Government buildings have been declared non-smoking zones. For instance, in urban areas smoking is illegal except in specified areas designated as smoking sites. No study on impacts on non-smokers has been carried out. The Government will support some studies in order to institute additional measures for preventing the effects of smoking to non-smokers in public places.

**Ladies and Gentlemen,** in regard to intervention measures, the Government after consultations with various institutions gazetted the Kenya Standard (KS 1515) which limits vehicular exhaust emissions to 3.5% Carbon Monoxide and 0.12% Hydrocarbons by volume, respectively. The government has also formulated Draft Air Quality Regulations which stipulate limits on Particulate Matter, Hydrocarbons, Volatile Organic Compounds, Nitrogen Oxides, Sulphur Oxides and major vehicular pollutants.

**Ladies and Gentlemen,** it is also noteworthy that the Government of Kenya also banned sale of leaded gasoline in Kenya from 31<sup>st</sup> December 2005 as per the Dakar Declaration on phasing out leaded gasoline in sub-Saharan countries by that date. However, the current Lead level in ambient air is unknown. Therefore, the impacts of this decree will be assessed through preliminary measurements of ambient air quality pollutants. The major challenge on this issue is regulation of activities in the informal sector where Lead metal is used under uncontrolled conditions.

Other Government interventions include:

- Preparations to gazette Air Quality Regulations that will require capacities to be built to ensure compliance and enforcement;
- Establishment of two urban air quality monitoring stations in Nairobi for industrial area and vehicular emission assessment;
- Acquisition of more sampling instruments for motor vehicle inspection unit to assess quality of vehicular exhaust emissions;
- Provision of incentives to the industry to adopt emission control technologies.

Through stakeholder consultations the government has provided incentives for adapting pollution control equipment. However, the challenge is that most of the industrial processes are based on old technologies.

**Ladies and Gentlemen,** this workshop is thus critical in that it provides a forum to discuss air pollution issues in the sub-region and actions to reduce air pollution from key sectors namely transport, industry, mining and household. I am informed that other relevant cross-cutting issues including regional cooperation will be discussed.

I look forward to a successful dialogue on these issues and the adoption of the action framework at this Ministerial Session.

Thank you.