

**Commission on sustainable development
Fourteenth Session, New York, 01 – 12 May 2006**

Main session on Air Pollution/Atmosphere 10 AM to 1 PM, 4 May 2006

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First, the European Commission support the statement made by Austria speaking on behalf of the EU.

Indeed, air pollution is not only a problem for developing countries. Also in developed countries air pollution is a major public health issue: The European Commission has estimated that about 370.000 people die prematurely every year in the EU due to air pollution and mainly due to the pollution by airborne particulate matter.

The European Commission also think that the integrated approach is key to achieve progress, particularly considering the themes in the CSD 14 cycle but also taking into account other important sectors such as trade agriculture and land use/planning. The integrated approach is also important in finding multi-benefit measures in progressing towards our objectives.

In answer to the question raised by the chair of constraint and barriers to progress to achieve our (MDG) objectives the experience in the EU:

- One major obstacle is the cost of taking action, the cost often incurred by industry or commercial activities, and hence potentially influencing the jobs and competitiveness. On the other hand we have costs incurred in society: the price of poor air quality has to be paid by our citizens through poor health and premature deaths.
- Another obstacle is how rapid we which to achieve the objectives, we are to a large extent “stuck” with old infrastructure which require a long time before it is replaced. In the transport sector the fleet of vehicles is replaced by new and better vehicles only at a slow rate.
- For some activities like industry or commercial activities there is generally speaking a number of effective policy instruments such as laws and regulations. It is much harder to find effective and acceptable instruments to address the general public or personal choices, examples would be found in the personal choices in the transport sector and in the choice of domestic heating.
- Further, there are obstacles due to lack of knowledge about the problem and the effective policies, and in some cases in administrative and financial capacity. Such obstacles are likely to be much greater in developing countries.

The chairman of the session also asked about social development issues. In the EU we have noted that people having the lowest income have the lowest level of education and training and these people also have the poorest housing and are exposed to the highest levels of air pollution.

The social issue is likely to be much greater in developing countries, both in rural areas and also in the fast growing mega-cities, where the poorest would be subject to the poorest air quality.

Finally, we view that we are dealing with urgent public health issues and where the CSD would add value to other ongoing action within the UN and in other places. Some items have already been mentioned in this session such as air emissions from international shipping and aviation. We support those suggestions.

Also the European Commission side event during the lunch break was announced.