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Air pollution/Atmosphere

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I have the honour to speak on behalf of the European Union. The Candidate Countries Turkey, Croatia and the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, the Countries of the Stabilisation and Association Process and potential candidates Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina and Serbia align themselves with this declaration.

Air pollution is one of the major threats to human health and the environment. It affects social welfare and economies worldwide.

Air and atmospheric pollution is linked to crucial policy areas (e.g. agriculture, waste management, urban and transport planning, etc) and is also closely interlinked with the other three CSD15 thematic issues, climate change, sustainable industrial development and energy for sustainable development.

An integrated approach should be pursued as the main tool to define a long-term policy, based on sound and updated scientific knowledge on air pollution sources and related impacts. This kind of approach should also support the identification of technical and non-technical measures needed in each economic sector at the least cost to society.

In the European Region several examples exist on the application of the integrated approach, in particular the GAINS/RAINS models developed in the framework of the UN ECE Convention on long-range transboundary air pollution (CLRTAP). The dissemination of these models on a wider scale (from regional to global) is needed in order to share the European (and national) experiences in interested geographical areas, as part of the wider aim of enhancing regional cooperation.

Furthermore, the World Health Organization Global Air Quality Guidelines should be the basis for setting national air quality standards in order to meet the long-term objectives.

In urban areas, where a high and increasing number of people live, primary emission sources are traffic, industry and domestic heating and cooking.

Worldwide, cities face common (but regionally different) environmental problems: poor air quality, high levels of traffic, and generation of waste are among these.

Comprehensive land use plans should use Strategic Environmental Assessments, including for industrial plants location.

Sustainable urban planning should start from improving environmental performances of all modes of transport shifting from private road vehicles to rail, water and collective transport means.

Citizens' awareness and inclusiveness in decision making are key strategic objective. A sustainable urban development should also achieve proper living conditions and security.

Improving the quality of fuels, energy generation technologies and abatement technologies are important priorities taking into account the need for their affordability. Synergies with Kyoto mechanisms should be evaluated and pursued.

The EU has already set up emission limit values for different mobile and stationary sources and we invite other countries to consider similar measures.

Development and implementation of adequate and comparable monitoring systems and high data quality are essential to assess the real outdoor and indoor population exposure risks.

The transport sector is a key element for most countries' economies and social welfare. However, the increase of pollutant emissions from transport throughout the globe, including those coming from the aviation and maritime sectors, are becoming more and more important and in some areas are amongst the main sources of air pollution. Transport is often transboundary, and solutions have to be found also in the framework of international agreements and organizations such as ICAO and IMO, to supplement regional and bilateral efforts. It is important that IMO, the Marine Pollution Convention (MARPOL), and ICAO strengthen their efforts to reduce the emissions of air pollutants, especially NOx. The EU is currently considering the inclusion of aviation emissions under the European Emission Trading scheme.

The achievement of sustainable transport worldwide through decoupling environmental impacts form transport growth is an urgent objective. To achieve this objective, traffic management policies reducing exposure to pollution should be introduced. The improvement of fuels quality, vehicle efficiency and emission standards, as well as vehicles inspection and maintenance are among the priorities.

Recent WHO investigations on the global burden of diseases showed that indoor air pollution from household energy supply is among the major social and health threats in least developed countries, in particular for women and children.

Figures related to health impacts from indoor pollution are probably underestimated since they have been poorly investigated. It is important to improve knowledge on health effects and on sources of indoor air pollution in order to properly integrate health impacts in cost-benefit analysis of policies and measures to face the problem.

Targeting access to energy, supporting educational programmes and addressing the specific gender aspects of air pollution are also priorities. Increased investments in basic energy infrastructure including clean and efficient cooking energy are needed to reduce health threats and to meet the MDGs. Governments should address these issues and improve women's access to modern energy in poverty reduction strategies and national sustainable development strategies.

The international governance of air and atmospheric pollution is rather fragmented and major efforts should be spent in creating stronger synergies and ways of cooperation among relevant international and regional actors, such as WHO, IMO, ICAO, Montreal Protocol, UNECE/CLRTAP, UNFCCC, UN-HABITAT, UNIDO, UNEP and WMO. Availability of financial resources to reduce air pollution needs further proactive involvement of international funding mechanisms (such as the Global Environmental Facility, the World Bank etc.).

All the above mentioned actors should be actively involved in the implementation and follow-up of CSD 15 decisions, according to their respective mandates as to ensure an adequate air monitoring system worldwide and appropriate financial resources.

In the field of illegal trade in substances that deplete the Ozone layer, while some positive results have been achieved, enhancing the implementation of existing mechanisms have to be encouraged as well as an introduction of a license system, through e.g. the ratification of the Montreal Amendment, and custom control at regional and international level.