



PERMANENT MISSION OF THE REPUBLIC OF

Azerbaijan

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Thematic discussion:

INTEGRATED APPROACH TO ADDRESSING AIR POLLUTION AND ATMOSPHERIC PROBLEMS

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Addressing of air pollution and atmospheric problems is central to achieving sustainable development. It holds potential to advance in the areas of health, ecosystem and development as a whole. There is inextricable relationship between atmospheric problems and industrial development and this relationship requires holistic approach to management of problems. The cleaner is industrial production, the cleaner is the air.

My Government is guided by this principle and actively pursues the policy of environmental/air protection. The creation of emission inventory system, mainstreaming of energy efficiency into sectors of economy, establishment of legal provisions for air quality control and monitoring are integral elements of the state environmental policy.

In Azerbaijan total emissions of air pollutants by stationary and mobile sources have fallen since 1990, due to the recession and reduced industrial activity followed by the collapse of Soviet Union. In general, the ambient air quality in Azerbaijan has improved in recent years as a consequence of the sharp decrease in air emissions. In Baku, emissions of industrial pollutants not related to the oil and gas industries are relatively low. The main sectors contributing to air emissions today are transport, industry and energy.

Today lack of technology and equipment for the purification of stack gases remains a serious problem for reduction of sulphur, carbon and nitrogen oxides in the oil and gas industries. Most emissions originate from the flaring of fuel in the heaters and low refinery utilization capacity. However recently, emissions were reduced through installation of modern equipment. Emission reductions of 3.9% (440 tons) were achieved in 2004 at the "Azemeflyanajag" and of 45% (2,364 tons) at "Azerneftiyag" compared to the previous year. Some old oil refinery units of State Oil Company are being changed with the new ones. Refinement of oil with high sulphur concentration from Kazakhstan and Turkmenistan mines has stopped. As a result of this, amount of hazardous emissions have been reduced up to 10,000 tons a year.

In general, most thermal-electric power plants in Azerbaijan are relatively old and in need of modernization, and much of their equipment has outdated. Currently, several projects are under way to restore and add new capacity to Azerbaijan's power sector. In 2002, a decree was adopted for the energy sector, setting the goal of eventually switching all thermal power plants to natural gas fuel. So far, a new 400 MW natural gas-fuelled expansion was completed for the Severnaya (North) State Regional Power Plant (also known as the Shimal Power Plant) and is now in operation. This has reduced the emissions of NO_x and SO₂.

New gas-turbine blocks that are working only on natural gas have been constructed on thermoelectric power stations of Baku city. That was a chance to take out of production old power-generating unit and thus, reduce emissions of sulphuric compounds. Construction in Sumgayit in 2004 of modern landfill for burial of mercury wastes helped to reduce mercury emissions to environment. Inspections are being held on large-scale enterprises which are the main source of waste that pollute air.

At the fourth "Environment for Europe" Ministerial Conference in 1998, Azerbaijan agreed to the regional strategy for phasing out added lead in petrol by 2005, and it has banned the use of leaded petrol since 1997. While a ban on the use and production of leaded petrol is the major step towards phasing out added lead in petrol, enforcement and control are also important in ensuring a complete ban.

The emission inventory system used in Azerbaijan is based on annual emission reports, which the operators of air polluting companies are obliged to provide; however due to the transition period in country's economy, the forthcoming privatization and the break-up of larger units, the system suffers from some data inconsistencies.

The monitoring of air in Azerbaijan is crystallized in the *Law on Environmental Protection and the Law on Air Protection*. Three types of air monitoring takes place: monitoring of industrial emissions, monitoring of background emissions and monitoring of air in inhabited areas. Furthermore, the establishment of air quality data collection mechanism has played an instrumental role for creation and analysis of database. At present, the monitoring network has a relatively small number of stations with a limited mode of operation and the analyses of air quality do, therefore, not reflect Azerbaijan's complete air quality situation. There is a need for network expansion and increase in operation mode of stations.

It also needs to be mentioned that most of gas and dust filters in industrial enterprises has deteriorated. If these enterprises resume their operations in near future, air of our major industrial cities will face next environmental disaster. Increased amount of discharges from vehicles is another source of concern. Use of old, inappropriate vehicles imported from foreign countries at low price leads to significant additional discharges to air of our cities. Processes in cities' public transport during last years are also not promising. As old buses are getting out of order, they are replaced by low capacity minibuses which create traffic jams and increased volume of discharges to air. Following measures and technical support for their implementation are required to address these problems:

- fixing or replacing gas and dust filter in industrial enterprises;

- full transfer to unleaded petrol
- organization of disposal of old, substandard transport means;
- introduction of environmentally friendly passenger transportation, enhancing “walking areas” within cities;
- Planting trees on the territory of industrial enterprises, on their sanitary-safety zones, along the roads
- Achieving equipment of imported vehicles with catalytic gas neutralizations and compliance with EU toxic norms.