

SOUTH AFRICAN STATEMENT TO THE 15th SESSION OF THE COMMISSION FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

THEME: AIR POLLUTION AND ATMOSPHERE

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Mr. Chairman, South Africa aligns itself with the statement made by Pakistan on behalf of G77 and China.

South Africa, like all developing countries needs accelerated socio-economic and industrial development, enhanced productivity and the transport of goods to markets in order to achieve economic growth. This requires intensive use of energy, which is accompanied by increased air pollution and GHG emissions with its attendant health impacts.

It is our view that in order for us to achieve the sustainable development goals as outlined in Agenda 21 and the Johannesburg Plan of Implementation, it is critical that air pollution be addressed in an integrated manner, at national, regional and international levels taking into account its inter-linkages with the other three thematic areas of Energy for Sustainable Development, Industrial Development, and Climate Change. As a developing country, South Africa believes that efforts to tackle air pollution must be carried out in a manner which does not hamper our economic and social development initiatives. In addition, we believe that to succeed in this effort, we require the full and unwavering involvement of all UN member countries in line with chapter 9 of Agenda 21 and the relevant sections of the Johannesburg Plan of Implementation.

Mr. Chairman, for developing countries, particularly in Africa air pollution has huge implications for health and poverty. Indoor air pollution is one of the major causes of respiratory diseases among women and children, especially in rural areas, where access to clean and affordable energy and combustion technologies are virtually non-existent.

In urban areas, poor land use planning, unregulated emissions from vehicles using high sulphur fuels, coupled with dangerous industrial emissions, exacerbate the public health burden in urban areas of our countries. In all these instances it is the poor who bear the brunt of this problem, as they neither have the ability choose where they live, nor the resources to meet the health costs associated with air pollution.

POSSIBLE ACTIONS

We do agree that the design of policies and strategies to combat air pollution is essential, but remain convinced that the impacts of these policies often come to naught if not backed by the necessary technical and financial resources to ensure their effective implementation. It is in this regard that we call on all member states, particularly developed countries to show real commitment by taking concrete steps to facilitate access by developing countries to environmentally sound technologies as well as the necessary financial assistance, in line with the Rio principle of common but differentiated responsibility.

Some of these steps, which are outlined in detail in a document which we will circulate through the secretariat, include the following actions:

- The promotion of research at national and regional levels aimed at quantifying the contribution to air pollution by various sectors, such as transport and industry, and their impacts on human health.
- Financial and technical assistance to developing countries on favourable terms with respect to implementation of policies at national and regional level.