

Intervention by Jamaica
4 May 4, 2006
10:00am-1:00pm Conf. Room 2

Thematic Discussions: Integrated Approach to addressing air pollution and atmospheric problems

Mr. Chairman, my brief intervention is to offer constraints from a SIDS perspective on this issue in the thematic cluster because air pollution has unique and localized characteristics for SIDS.

1. Air pollution and its attendant problems are largely a by-product of the mining and manufacturing as well as tourism and transportation sectors. However, air pollution is also associated with the waste management in particular the burning of solid wastes generated from households. This is partially due to a lack of awareness on the part of the citizenry but often is due to lack of infrastructure for municipal collection and disposal of these wastes. This is a severe resource constraint. The burning of plastics especially poses a significant health threat to inhabitants of SIDS. With limited space for solid waste disposal, SIDS are often faced with the option of burning solid waste to reduce volume.
2. The inadequate combustion of hospital waste containing toxic compounds is a significant problem. Incinerators and other such technologies are very expensive.
3. There is an urgent need for the transfer of technologies that will improve disposal of solid wastes, technologies that promote recycling etc. There needs to be new arrangements for transferring technology to SIDS to assist us in developing alternative waste management practices to avoid burning.
4. Following on that, there is also a lack of research infrastructure and skills.
5. For us, access to pollution monitoring systems is also a constraint so that the availability of data to inform policy and decision making is a problem
6. In the Caribbean sub-region, due to liberalization of motor vehicle policies, there have been a large number of used and reconditioned vehicles being imported which contributes to our air pollution problems levels. The essential problem is that often these vehicles are exported from developed countries when the catalytic converter goes bad and these vehicles can no longer meet the standards in their own countries. For Jamaica, we have a policy of not importing cars over 4 years old into the country.
7. In summary, lack capacity and finance, poor and inefficient household energy-use practices, unsustainable production and consumption practices particularly in transport and industry, lack of public awareness as well as barriers to access to environmentally sound technologies are obstacles to achieving good air quality for SIDS.

8. Among Jamaica's policy responses to these barriers have been:
 - i. The development of air quality regulations
 - ii. The complete phasing out of leaded gasoline.
 - iii. The Introduction of a pilot project to replace the MTBE octane enhancer with ethanol. Under this project, the gasoline is mixed with 5% ethanol and is marketed as E10. The goal is to achieve a 90% : 10% petroleum: ethanol mix. This will result in lower emissions and more fuel efficiency.
 - iv. The phasing out of ODS as a means of implementing the Montreal Protocol and will soon promulgate an Ozone Act.

9. In concluding, we believe that existing intergovernmental initiatives need to be strengthened and widened in scope in order to address issues of concerns with respect air pollution, and the promotion of clean technologies and development, as well as trade in sustainable and renewable energy resources and technologies. The successes of the Montreal Protocol must be replicated especially with respect to its Multilateral Fund.

Rohan A. Richards
Director
Environmental Management Division
Ministry of Local Government & Environment, Jamaica