

Intervention by Mr. Iftikhar Arain of Pakistan
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Integrated approach to addressing air pollution and atmospheric
problems
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Mr. Chairman,

At the very outset let me extend thanks to the panelists for their very informative briefing.

Pakistan is an arid country with rainfall ranging as low as 80 mm in the south to as high as 1600 mm in the north. Moreover, the wind speed, which is essential for flushing of pollution, is also low in our cities. In the dry and low wind days, natural dust and anthropogenic pollution when generated in excess, takes longer time to disperse off. Over the last few years average rainfall has declined in many parts of the country. The levels of suspended particulate matters and other pollutants, which have active correlation with meteorological conditions, are likely to increase given the dry air condition prevails.

2. One of the major environmental issues is degradation of ambient air quality particularly in urban areas. There are several pressures contributing to air pollution increase. The key factors contributing to air pollution in Pakistan are: rapidly growing energy demand and a fast growing transport sector. In the cities, widespread use of low-quality fuel, combined with a dramatic expansion in the number of vehicles on roads, has led to significant air pollution problems.

Mr. Chairman,

3. Pakistan is the largest user of CNG in Asia and presently, some 800 CNG stations are operating in the country while 200 are under construction. Use of CNG as fuel in transport sector has observed a quantum leap, replacing traditional fuels and has helped a lot in lowering the pollution load in many urban centers. After the successful CNG programme for petrol replacement, the government is now embarking upon a programme to replace the more polluting diesel fuel in the road transport sector. The government has planned to offer incentives to investors to introduce CNG buses in the major cities of the country.

4. Stationary sources of air pollution have been on the increase in Pakistan as well as the air pollution caused due to industrialized areas

especially around petroleum refineries, petrochemical plants, cement factories, fertilizer factories and iron steel industries. Some 314.9 million tons net weight animal excreta are produced each year. This causes high indoor air pollution in rural areas. Respiratory diseases are quite common among villagers. Government has planned to deal with this issue through one of the components of clean air programme under the umbrella of National Environment Action Plan (NEAP). Another source of degradation in ambient air quality is the presence of carbon monoxide in the air occurring due to incomplete combustion of fuel. The major source is from motor emission. Diesel trucks and buses have increased at an alarming rate of 200-300 % since 1980. Diesel particulate filter (DPF), which is a device used in many countries to control emission in diesel vehicles cannot be used in Pakistan as it requires low sulphur diesel i.e. 0.05-0.5 % sulphur.

5. In an attempt to assess the deterioration in air and water quality in the major cities of Pakistan, we undertook a project to measure air and water quality in three cities, Lahore, Rawalpindi and Islamabad. This study forms the initial part of the agencies plan to stem the deterioration. One significant achievement has been the elimination of lead gasoline. Government has also aggressively pursued fuel switching from fuel oil to natural gas in the industry.

6. On the advice of the Pakistan Environmental Protection Council, the Ministry of Environment opened dialogue with Industrial sector. The industries were initially reluctant to adopt environmental measures realizing that environmental improvement and pollution control is essential for the market economy and public health. The Chambers of Commerce and other industrial associations took initiatives and created environmental cell within their organizations. Despite these achievements, extra efforts are still required to promote green productivity and adoption of ISO 14000.

7. One cleaner production center of petroleum sector is already functioning with the assistance of UNIDO and another for leather industries in the public sector will start soon in Sialkot. These cleaner production centers envisage promoting adoption of ISO 14000 and help improve environmental performance of the industry. Combined waste treatment plant for Kasur tanneries is in the final stage of completion while similar arrangements are being planned in Sialkot and Karachi.

I thank you.
