North Africa Sub-regional Workshop on Better Air Quality

23-25 November 2009, Tunis Tunisia

Recommendations

Context

The United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) and the Sahara and Sahel Observatory (OSS) organised, with support from the Tunisian Ministry of Environment and Sustainable Development, a sub-regional workshop on Better Air Quality in North Africa. The workshop, which took place on 23-25 November 2009 in Tunis, Tunisia, was supported by the International Union of Air Pollution Prevention Associations (IUAPPA), the Stockholm Environment Institute (SEI), the Global Atmospheric Pollution Forum (GAP Forum), the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (Sida), the European Union (EU) and the Air Pollution Information Network for Africa (APINA).

Experts from Algeria, Egypt, Libya, Mauritania, Morocco and Tunisia drawn from government, academia and civil society met to discuss the various sources and implications of air pollution in North Africa. Observers from Jordan, Lebanon, Senegal and Yemen contributed to the discussion. Technical experts from France, the United Kingdom, Norway and Cyprus presented the scientific evidence of air pollution in the region and its impacts.

The workshop was officially opened by His Excellency Nadhir Hamada, the Minister of Environment and Sustainable Development of Tunisia. The recommendations of this sub-regional workshop are contained herein below and will be submitted to a High-Level Conference to be convened by UNEP, OSS, the GAP Forum and partners in 2010.

Background

The experts identified, in particular, the following considerations relevant to the future quality of the atmospheric environment of the region:

- The recommendations in the Tunis Declaration on international solidarity to protect Africa and the Mediterranean region against the negative impacts of climate change;
- the Ministerial Resolution made at the CAMRE 18th Session- Algeria 19-20 December 2006: Appreciating the efforts exerted by Arab States that have been using Unleaded Gasoline; and inviting other Arab states to achieve this (goal) by Year 2008, utilizing the support provided by UNEP *vis-à-vis* the PCFV Initiative; as well as inviting all Arab States to reduce sulfur contents in Diesel;

- the significant impacts of emissions originating within and without the region on human health and the environment;
- the conclusion of the IPCC 4th Assessment Report (AR4) that Africa is one of the continents most vulnerable to climate change;
- the potential adverse impacts that tropospheric (ground-level) ozone can have on food security and health in North Africa;
- the linkages between air quality and the Millennium Development Goals - the poor being the most vulnerable to air pollution and climate change;

Recommendations

In the light of these considerations the experts at the meeting recommended the establishment of an intergovernmental network on air pollution for the region. The network would provide a platform for concerted action on pollution abatement and a suitable framework to share experiences and best practice in the region, and to tackle transboundary issues through, among other avenues, harmonising and strengthening existing national and sub-regional systems and policies. The network should in particular:

- Promote the exchange of information on air quality management (North-South and South -South) with a focus on capacity development/enhancement and action research;
- Harmonise national legislation on air quality, standards, control procedure and data management in the region;
- Promote cooperation on law enforcement, including enhancing national institutions to tackle smuggling and other illegal practices compromising fuel quality;
- Step up cooperation with existing air pollution and climate change networks in Africa and around the world;
- Establish a regional reference laboratory to co-ordinate quality control and assurance procedures;
- Develop a regional air quality monitoring network and database on emissions and air quality, building on existing initiatives;
- Promote and enhance the exchange of technical capacity for the monitoring, modelling and forecasting of regional air quality;

- Initiate regional environmental and epidemiological studies to characterise pollutants and inform cost-benefit analyses and policy options to address environmental and human health impacts; and
- Seek technical assistance and financial support from UNEP and other partners.

Further Recommendations on Priority Issues

The Expert Meeting also reviewed the challenges related to air pollution and agreed the following recommendations:

1- Transport

1.1 Establish/strengthen legal frameworks on vehicle emissions (age limit for imported vehicles, catalytic converters, etc.);

1.2 Set-up emission assessment/testing programmes for vehicles;

1.3 Promote adoption of cleaner fuels (lead free and 50ppm sulphur fuels);

1.4 Promote cleaner and more fuel-efficient vehicles through fiscal policies and incentives;

1.5 Harmonise fuel and vehicle standards across the region;

1.6 Create laboratories for fuel quality control and strengthen existing ones;

1.7 Conduct environmental and socio-economic assessments of the utilisation of cleaner fuels (e.g. CNG) and biofuels provided that they do not compromise food security;

1.8 Develop multimodal transport infrastructure to promote public transport as a viable alternative to privately-owned vehicles; and

1.9 Promote investment and programmes to encourage the use of non motorized transport systems.

2- Waste management

2.1 Develop and implement programmes for integrated waste management;

2.2 Where they do not exist, set up facilities for the collection, transport and processing of all types of waste to minimize air pollution;

2.3 Develop and/or enforce regulation pertaining to the manufacturing, trade and use of plastic packaging, particularly polyethylene; and

2.4 Develop and/or enforce legislation for the prevention of uncontrolled open-air waste burning.

3- Industry & mining

3.1 Elaborate and adopt policies and legal frameworks to promote: (i) efficient, low-emission technologies, (ii) promote and encourage the use of cleaner fuels and renewable energy, and (iii) energy efficiency in industry;

3.2 Systematically integrate air quality into environmental and socio-economic impact assessments of industrial activities;

3.3 Promote synergies between climate change mitigation and air pollution abatement;

3.4 Enhance land use planning methodologies and tools (zoning) to determine suitable locations for industrial activity;

3.5 Develop capacity within national institutions in charge of analysing and controlling emissions from industry and mining; and

3.6 Harmonise regulations and standards with a view to tackling transboundary air pollution from industrial and mining activities.

4- Indoor Air pollution

4.1 Promote the use of cleaner and more efficient cooking stoves, notably in rural areas;

4.2 Promote renewable (solar, wind, biogas) options for domestic energy use;

4.3 Introduce technical specifications and norms regarding indoor combustion and ventilation;

4.4 Introduce/enforce anti-smoking laws in public spaces;

4.5 Improve access to electricity in rural areas; and

4.6 Develop capacity for monitoring indoor air pollution.

5- Environmental Governance

5.1 Improve coordination between national actors for the development and implementation of air quality strategies and policies;

5.2 Define the role of local and regional (provincial) government in the management of air pollution;

5.3 Enhance the capacity of institutions in charge of air quality management;

5.4 Develop and regularly update national emission inventories;

5.5 Revise standards and norms in light of international best practice;

5.6 Set-up a sub-regional database on air quality; and

5.7 Harmonize emission inventories procedures in North Africa.

6- Community Participation

6.1 Conduct communication and awareness-raising on air quality and engage the media, rural community associations and local government reprsentatives;

6.2 Support capacity-building initiatives by governments, academia and civil society for a multi-stakeholder, participatory approach to air quality management;

6.3 Underpin the role of civil society with a view to strengthening its role in the development and implementation and monitoring of air quality programmes;

6.4 and support scientific research and academic programmes on air pollution/quality.

7- Capacity Development and R & D

7.1 Mobilize and further develop existing capacity in the region;

7.2 Develop regional training centres/ centres of excellence;

7.3 Elaborate training programmes and create summer schools on the evaluation of air pollution and climate change issues;

7.4 Develop impact assessment methodologies and tools in partnership with national and international institutions; and

7.5 Promote inter-regional cooperation on transport issues through, among others, the IUAPPA transport seminar series;

7.6 Set up an ISO 17025-accredited regional reference lab for the sampling and analysis of air quality. The lab would also serve to coordinate procedures pertaining to air quality monitoring; and

7.7 Promote and enhance exchanges with a view to bolster technical capacity for the monitoring, inventorying, modelling and forecasting air quality in the region.