

Integrated approach to addressing air pollution and atmospheric problems  
Keith Bull (UNECE) speaking on behalf of WMO

Distinguished delegates I wish to draw your attention to a report prepared under the umbrella of the Environmental Management Group, an inter-UN agency group chaired by UNEP. The report was invited by the CSD secretariat in preparation for the current CSD cycle.

The report is entitled “Atmosphere/Air Pollution: best practices, lessons learnt and case studies by the UN Cooperative Programmes and Activities” and was prepared by WMO in collaboration with more than 10 other UN organizations and agencies. The report is available as an informal document DESA/DSD/2006/5, so I shall simply highlight some points from the summary and conclusions.

First, I should like to note that (as has been stressed many times this week) the geographic scale of air pollution problems can differ greatly – from indoor and local problems to those at the regional and global scales. Even so, to arrive at solutions we need sound science, accurate sustained observations and scientific assessments linked to policy. Such links are often through some cooperative mechanism such as conventions. UN agencies play a role in every aspect of such work.

Second, I wish to highlight the excellent examples given in the report of the cooperative efforts of UN organizations. For example, WMO and UNEP have cooperated with national experts to develop the Vienna Convention on Protection of the Ozone Layer and its Montreal Protocol. Also, under the UNECE Convention on Long-range Transboundary Air Pollution, that has already been cited by several previous speakers, UNECE, WHO, UNEP and WMO have effectively collaborated for many years.

Finally, despite identifying obvious successes, the report notes there is still room for improvement in UN agency coordination. Indeed, it identifies what we believe are two major gaps or obstacles that need to be addressed in the future:

(1) We need better awareness of one another’s work in the UN agencies, especially at the technical level. For this we suggest that appropriate representatives of UN organizations and agencies meet together under a “Forum on UN Air Pollution Activities”. This could take place, for example, every four years. Such a forum we could promote exchange of information, consider issues of integration and identify areas for cooperation. It could also help prevent duplication of effort.

(2) In the urban megacities regions there is a need for UN agencies to encourage and support their country counterparts in developing air quality management tools and plans.

In addressing these two shortfalls, we must ensure we add support to ongoing activities and not take scarce resources away from them. However, the Forum on UN Air Pollution Activities in particular should, we believe, enable us to find more efficient ways of achieving the goals we are set and add real value to our work.