

**Statement by Stavros Dimas,
European Commissioner for Environment,
European Commission
CSD14 PLENARY SESSION 'THE WAY FORWARD', Thu 11 May
Air pollution and its interlinkages to energy and climate change**

- Thank you Mr Chairman. I would like to use this opportunity to highlight what I believe are the key challenges in the field of air pollution this CSD cycle should focus on.
- First of all, clean air is essential for human health and the environment, just like clean water or safe food. But air pollution levels - both outdoor and indoor – are far too high in many places.
- At CSD we have an excellent opportunity to look at air pollution together with energy, climate change and industrial development. Air pollution also affects and is affected by other policy areas, such as transport and land-use planning. This calls for an integrated approach in policy making, so that we can maximise synergies and make the most of win-win opportunities.
- Air pollution is a major concern for most countries, but the sources as well as the challenges and solutions vary from one region to another.
- In Europe, the main sources of outdoor air pollution are the energy, industry, transport and agriculture sectors. Over the last decades we have successfully reduced emissions through application of cleaner technologies and by infrastructure changes. But despite progress made, the health and environmental damage caused by air pollution is still alarming. The European Commission has estimated that the present levels of particulate matter cause some 350,000 premature deaths annually in the EU. Pollution by ozone may cause some extra 20,000 premature deaths annually. This clearly makes air pollution not only an environmental but also a social as well as an economic issue.
- We are committed to take further action to reach long term objectives of safe and clean air. Our new Strategy on Air Pollution is designed to meet interim targets by 2020, and it aims to halve the premature deaths in the EU due to air pollution between the year 2000 and 2020. There will be costs to take action but the 'costs of inaction' are much larger: the benefits of our new Strategy are at least 6 times higher than the costs.
- In developing countries, access to safe and affordable energy services remains a key challenge. According to the WHO, 1.6 million women and children die every year because of respiratory diseases caused by indoor air pollution. Uncontrolled urban sprawl increases the number of people being exposed to unsafe levels of ambient air pollution. These issues need to be addressed decisively in our policy discussions next year.

- In the EU, we have successfully reduced air pollution levels through ambitious legislation and technology development. Importantly, we have considered all relevant sectors and put in place cost-effective measures to reach health and environment objectives.
- Although most air pollution problems are concentrated in urbanised areas, we have also recognised the importance of regional cooperation early on. Air pollution travels long distances. Multilateral agreements are thus important. A good example of a successful regional agreement is the UNECE Convention on Long-Range Transboundary Air Pollution. It is a best practice other regions might be able to use as a model.
- The EU Energy Initiative responds to the developing countries' need for sustainable, more efficient use of traditional biomass, and cleaner alternative fuels. The EU also supports developing and transition countries through capacity building and exchange programs; including on abatement technologies
- **To conclude**, my key messages are that:
- We need an integrated approach to tackle air pollution, industrial development, energy and climate change, to identify the most cost-effective measures and win-win solutions that bring benefits across the various policy areas. We must also address demand management, including measures to improve energy efficiency.
- Policies and measures need to take into account capacities and needs of each country. New technologies continue to be part of the solution, and cooperation between countries and with business to boost innovation and technology development is important.
- Finally, CSD offers an opportunity to discuss issues not yet covered by international fora, but where international co-operation is needed. Examples of such issues are air pollution caused by international shipping and aviation as well as transcontinental transport of air pollution. Further efforts are needed to protect the ozone layer, including phase out and recovery of ozone depleting substances. I believe these must feature in our policy debate next year.
- Thank you, Mr Chairman.