

Attachment V

Opening Remarks, Secretary, Ministry of Environment.

Director General, Asif S. Khan, Mr. Surendra Shrestha , Regional Director, UNEP, distinguished guests, participants in this National Stakeholders Forum.

A very good morning to all of you.

I am very sincere when I say that I am most grateful for having been invited this morning. If I had missed this opportunity, I would have missed a highly educative introduction to this forum. I am grateful to you Asif and particularly more so grateful to you Mr. Surendra Shrestha, for your opening remarks, which should act as a trigger for any conversion to the cause of combating pollution of all sort. Particularly, air pollution ,with which you are concerned. I wish this forum great success in its deliberations and I hope that the Ministry of Environment, the Government of Pakistan will be guided by the common wisdom that emerges from these deliberations.

I am really being educated by the introduction from Mr. Surendra Shrestha and one cannot be unmindful of the urgency with which the nations of the world have to react to a situation essentially of our own creation but to which we have to react and in the words of Mr. Surendra Shrestha not with reactive incrementalism; in our common pursuit we are generally reactive incrementalists; but with a proactive resolution of the situation, which in his opinion lies in prevention.

We are mindful of the challenges ahead of us. We are also mindful of the kind of awareness that we all have to develop and establish at the highest levels particularly in decision making at the decision making levels, wherein we have to demonstrate the importance of addressing environmental considerations and to ensure that the goals of enrichment and preservation of our environmental assets are integrated into all policies and guidelines and laws that nations or the world community at large, enacts for itself. We are mindful of the transboundary nature of air pollution itself and hence the need for a very collective approach to possible solutions in this particular area. The hazards to health and the economy have already been highlighted.

In the Government of Pakistan, we are very mindful of the importance of addressing air pollution. Pak-EPA has recently got a project approved by the Government just a few days back, for establishing air monitoring stations which will

help us in collecting data, turning it into information and using that information for guidelines in all laws & regulatory frameworks. In addition, I can share; rather it is at a very initial stage, but in the Ministry of Environment we are very conscious of addressing the problem of air pollution and Pak-EPA at this point of time is in the midst of preparation of a consolidated plan with a clear roadmap for addressing the issues of air pollution in Pakistan and we propose to lay before the next meeting of the PEPC scheduled for 28th December, 2004. We wish to lay before them our roadmap for addressing air pollution in Pakistan called the Pakistan Clean Air Program (PCAP), wherein we will identify the solutions to air pollution problems and then they are being addressed with a clearly laid roadmap because only then a program is defensible and implementable, and again a sustainable change is essentially incremental. Revolutionary changes have not historically proved to be sustainable, so we have to bring in a sustainable change, a sustainable improvement and therefore, we planned to have a roadmap wherein we will identify first the size of cities, say 5 million plus in 2 years time to control the public vehicles. We will be taking into consideration the interest of the industry; what is the size of the industry which is presently involved in it? What is the time it takes to replace? What is the economic life of the vehicles already on road and how can we take them slowly, newer vehicles from bigger cities to smaller cities and ultimately over a period of reasonable time, say 10 years, taking them off all together?

We are working on a timeframe and we want to go to our political bosses that they may approve this timeframe to fight air pollution and then we will have to get it into a legislation which would be essentially a guideline and then the legislation would need to be made by the sub-national governments and local governments and the federal government can provide a policy guideline. The education that I got in these introductory remarks will help me to sell this concept to our political bosses and for that alone I am very grateful, Mr. Director General, for having been invited.

For us, particularly in developing countries, this is not the easiest thing when, as you mentioned, we are all talking about merely in terms of GDPs & GNPs and revelling in growth rates. It is very difficult to sell objectives which have longer term benefits. But that does not take us away from our duty and I am quite sure that the political will in this country is also conscious of the environmental considerations and the Prime Minister, when he was Finance Minister, for the first time actually ordered

that no project will now be funded from the public sector development program until it is environmentally examined.

In this particular area of air pollution, we are already very mindful and I hope that the new year will bring in better news I wish the deliberations here again a lot of success and I thank you all for your patience.

Thank you very much.