

UN Environment Remarks: Ghana Soot Free Workshop - June 2017

- Hon. Kwaku Ofori Assiamah - Minister for Transport
- Hon. Prof. Frimpong Boateng - Minister for Environment, Science, Technology & Innovation
- The EPA Executive Director,
- The African Association of Public Transport
- ECOWAS Commission

Distinguished guests, Ladies and Gentlemen

Let me start by thanking the Government of Ghana, through the EPA for organizing and hosting this sub-regional workshop.

On behalf of the UN Environment, I would like to express our sincere gratitude to Ghana for the continued partnership towards a better environment not just in Ghana, but in the sub-region.

Honorable Ministers, our engagement with Ghana started in 2004 on the issue of eliminating leaded petrol and air quality monitoring. More recently we have partnered with the National Petroleum Authority to lower sulphur levels in fuels. We are also collaborating with the EPA to look at the vehicles imported into the country in terms of their average CO₂ emissions and fuel consumption. This data will inform the right policies to promote import of cleaner and more fuel efficient vehicles.

The reason we are here today as already mentioned is to discuss options for the introduction of soot-free buses in Accra.

This program is funded under one of the Initiatives of the Climate and Clean Air Coalition, which aims to reduce emissions from Heavy Duty Diesel Vehicles and Engines. I am glad to note that Ghana is an active member of this Coalition.

Ladies and gentlemen, all these programs that we have been partnering with Ghana, and some of the countries present here today, aim at reducing harmful emissions from vehicles while also address climate change issue.

According to the World Health Organization, air pollution is “the world’s largest single environmental health risk.”

In 2013, an estimated 250,000 people died in Africa from outdoor air pollution.

A study for the OECD Development Centre released in July 2016, estimated the economic cost of premature deaths from outdoor air pollution in Africa at approximately USD 215 billion (2013).

In Ghana, the study estimated that close to 7,000 premature deaths were attributable to outdoor air pollution in 2013, and the economic cost of premature deaths at USD 5 billion.

Diesel emissions from urban buses pose a significant health risk, and can constitute up to 70 percent of the risk of exposure to air toxics.

Urban residents are at risk from emissions entering the bus cabin, exposure at bus stops or along urban transit corridors. The health risks of exposure to diesel exhaust provide clear justification to focus on cleaner diesel bus fleets in urban areas.

Urban buses are also large sources of black carbon emissions, the second largest contributor to human induced climate warming, and account for 25% of transportation-related black carbon emissions. Buses are estimated to emit 250 times or more black carbon than a gasoline passenger vehicle traveling the same distance, not taking into account that buses will travel more times.

Buses also run for 20 years or more, so poor emissions performance among new buses today can persist for decades.

Ladies and gentlemen, this therefore calls for urgent action. Diesel emissions can fall dramatically through changes in vehicle engines and fuels. A city with access to 50 ppm diesel fuel sulphur can operate a Euro IV or V engine which will reduce black carbon emissions by 75 percent compared to a Euro III vehicle.

A city with access to 10 ppm diesel fuel sulfur can leapfrog to Euro VI emission levels that offer an additional 98 percent reduction in diesel black carbon emissions compared to a Euro V or older engine.

These soot free diesel engines utilize high-efficiency diesel particulate filters that provide up to a 99% reduction of small particles that are harmful to human health. Other soot-free engines include those that utilize compressed natural gas, electricity, biodiesel or others that comply with the European standard.

Cities can rapidly eliminate diesel emissions by requiring engines that are the cleanest allowed by currently available fuels, and by shifting to soot-free engines designed to meet the most stringent standards for particulate matter.

Hon. Ministers, Ladies and gentlemen, I am glad that Ghana is on its way to becoming the first Western and Central African country to introduce low sulphur fuels. This is a key milestone as it will support the introduction of cleaner vehicle and bus technologies that will significantly reduce emissions from the transport sector.

We look forward to the outcomes of the study on soot free buses options for Accra and wish to assure Ghana of UN Environment's continue support. We also call for wider engagement of the stakeholders present today to share their experiences and lessons learnt in moving towards soot free buses and sustainable public transportation.

Thank you