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WELCOMING ADDRESS  
REGIONAL WORKSHOP

REDUCING VEHICLE EMISSIONS FROM 2-3 WHEELERS

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Mr. Nguyen Viet Tien, Vice Minister for Transport  
Ladies and Gentlemen,

Good Morning

I am pleased to welcome you to our second regional workshop for Reducing Vehicle Emissions organized by the Asian Development Bank. In early May, a workshop in New Delhi, India, addressed the issue of fuel qualities and alternative fuels. This time we focus on two and three-wheeled vehicles.

Vehicles and the roads they use have an important role in the life of modern societies. In the Asia and Pacific Region motor vehicle fleets are growing at two to three times the rate of population, and motor vehicle usage is increasing even faster.

The exceptionally high growth of motorized two- and three- wheelers is another aspect of motorization especially in Asia. In many countries two- and three-wheelers make up over half of the total motor vehicle fleet.

We all know that the rapid growth in the number of vehicles in the Region has contributed to economic development and welfare of the people. It is clear however that the growth of traffic presents people and their surroundings with three main problems.

- Firstly: congestion – although the per capita ownership levels are at present only one third of those in the developed world, city roads in Asia are now increasingly congested. Some people spend many hours each day getting to and from work and home.
- Secondly: vehicle emissions - vehicular traffic contributes significantly to air pollution. Congestion makes things worse. Asian cities are among the worst in terms of air quality in the world. And cities and emissions are both getting larger.
- Thirdly: road safety: the Asian and Pacific Region accounts for almost half of all road accident deaths in the world.

These problems have a negative impact on the economic and social development of countries in the region. They result in large numbers of injuries and premature deaths, billions of dollars in medical costs and lost productivity. In addition, we now have the added concern that vehicle emissions may be having a substantial impact on greenhouse gas effects and climate change, with greater global environment implications.

To tackle problems of air pollution from road traffic a comprehensive approach is required. Policies, enforcement, and legislation need to be strengthened. Institutional coordination should be improved. Better monitoring systems are required. In many cases there is a need for more and better-qualified staff.

ADB is involved in activities to improve air quality. In a number of countries, like the Philippines and Bangladesh, ADB is already implementing large air quality management projects. To assist its Developing Member Countries, ADB has also started the implementation of a Regional Technical Assistance of which this workshop is a part. The Technical Assistance aims to deepen the understanding of air pollution caused by vehicles, and the possible solutions to reduce such pollution.

I have already mentioned the regional workshop on fuel quality and alternative fuels that was held in New Delhi in May of this year. A report of workshop findings has been submitted to all participants and policymakers regarding the use of alternative fuels, the improvement of fuel quality, the development of vehicle technology and standards, and the role of private sector and non-government organizations. We are currently drafting a summary of the important measures to consider in implementing a cleaner fuels program. It will also identify what to avoid when preparing such programs. It is our intention that summary reports will be prepared following each of the workshops under the Technical Assistance, to provide guidance and examples of best practice.

In November a third workshop will be held in Chongqing in China on the topic of Inspection and Maintenance of vehicles. A fourth and final workshop will be held in Manila, Philippines in February of next year where we will discuss the possibilities of reducing greenhouse effects through the implementation of transport planning and traffic management measures.

The main output of these activities will be a set of Action Plans. The final workshop in February will also review 4 Action Plans currently being formulated in Indonesia, India, Peoples Republic of China, and here in Viet Nam.

There is a lack of current and comprehensive online references on air quality issues. A website will be launched following this workshop to serve as a primary source of online data about mobile sources of air pollution in Asia. It will also act as an information repository for projects, initiatives, activities, and best practices, as well as facilitate communication among decision-makers, practitioners, and other stakeholders in the DMCs.

ADB is very keen to support its member countries in the implementation of actions that will actually reduce pollution. We believe that exchange of information through events like this workshop is important, but at the same time we all must realize that workshops do not reduce pollution. Actions such as the banning of leaded gasoline, or the improved control of smoke belching busses, do. It is for that reason I am especially pleased to be here in Hanoi. The rapid progress in the drafting of the Action Plan for Viet Nam gives me confidence that decision makers in Viet Nam are committed to reduce pollution and improve the life of the people.

The Clean Air Initiative for Asian Cities was launched in February 2001. ADB has taken the lead together with the World Bank to set up this important initiative. A coordination meeting will follow this workshop. The Clean Air Initiative will help with information exchange on air quality management, and will also help to galvanize cities in Asia into further action.

Already, there are success stories of air quality management. The elimination of lead in gasoline in the majority of Asian countries is saving thousands of lives every year. Most of the cars sold now in Asia produce less emissions than the cars sold 10 years ago because of better technology. Several countries and cities now have large numbers of buses and cars which run on Compressed Natural Gas, which, when used properly, is a much cleaner fuel than the diesel that it replaces. We want to build on these successes.

ADB has considerable experience in the formulation and implementation of environmental projects. We have learned that environmental problems, such as air pollution, cannot be tackled by the government on its own. Active involvement is required from both national and local government agencies. NGOs and other civil society organizations can help in lobbying for policy reform, and the implementation of awareness raising campaigns. Private sector involvement can bring management and finance. For these reasons, we have invited representatives from all sectors in society to this workshop. We have also set up, together with the respective governments, multi-sectoral action plan groups in all four countries where action plans are being formulated.

Finally, I would like to come back to the topic of this workshop. Reduction of pollution from two- and three-wheelers. In several Asian countries, including Viet Nam, these vehicles form the largest part of the vehicle fleet. Motor cycles are the most rapidly growing segment. Ho Chi Minh City has now two million motor cycles and it is expected that next year it will be 2.4 million. Bangkok follows the same trend. Several cities have about 300 motorcycles per 1000 persons. It is projected that there will be 70 million motorcycles in China alone by 2015. The Region is expected to continue to experience a very high rate of motor vehicle population growth for some years to come.

These vehicles are used in large numbers in crowded areas. As the most affordable form of motorized transport, they are used in many small business endeavors as well as for family travel. And they bring their pollution close to the homes of poorer people. If we are not able to reign in pollution from two- and three-wheelers, we will not succeed in our efforts to improve the quality of life of the majority of the people living in the cities of Asia.

Actions speak louder than words. We can expect many words in the next three days, but what can we expect in terms of actions? At the end of this workshop we should know more clearly what to do to reduce vehicle emissions from two- and three-wheelers. We should also be able to calculate what it will cost, and how it can be financed.

I would like to thank all workshop participants and speakers for their upcoming inputs. Many thanks also to our partners for supporting this workshop - the Vietnam Register, US-ASIA Environmental Partnership (US-AEP), and the Clean Air Initiative for Asian Cities (CAI).

I look forward to a productive and successful workshop.

Thank you.