Air pollution: Clean air for Europe CAFE programme, air quality

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PURPOSE : to present a communication on the "Clean Air for Europe" (CAFE) Programme which will provide the framework within which new air quality standards and national emission ceilings will be set. CONTENT : this Clean Air for Europe (CAFE) programme will lead to an integrated strategy to effectively combat air pollution by 2004. This is also the first of the thematic strategies announced in the Commission's proposals for the 6th Environmental Action Programme. Recent studies, such as the ones carried out under the Auto-Oil II Programme finalised last year, have revealed the considerable success that air quality policy has already had in reducing emissions to the benefit of human health and the environment, but more needs to be done. The new programme aims to integrate the work being done at several levels in an over-arching strategy. Many of the existing air quality directives come up for revision by 2004, and the Commission considers that an integrated programme is the best way to prepare for this, and it is in this context that it is launching the CAFE Programme in order to tackle these challenges in the most efficient way. To be more specific, the CAFE programme will focus especially on particular matter (emitted directly into the atmosphere from a variety of stationary and mobile sources, but particles also form in the atmosphere from gaseous pollutants such as volatile organic compounds (VOCs), nitrogen oxides (NOx), sulphur oxides (SOx) and (NH3) and ground-level ozone (formed in the atmosphere by the reaction of pollutants such as NOx and VOCs in the presence of sunlight). In addition, CAFE will need to address remaining problems relating to acidification, eutrophication and damage to buildings. Its specific objectives will be: - to develop, collect and validate scientific information relating to the effects of ambient, i.e. outdoor air pollution, emission inventories, air quality assessment, emission and air quality projections, cost-effectiveness studies and integrated assessment modelling, leading to the development and updating of air quality and deposition objectives and indicators and identification of the measures required to reduce emissions; - to support the implementation and review the effectiveness of existing legislation, in particular the air quality daughter directives, the decision on exchange of information, and national emission ceilings as set out in recent legislation, to contribute to the review of international protocols, and to develop new proposals as and when necessary; - to ensure that the measures that will be needed to achieve air quality and deposition objectives cost-effectively are taken at the relevant level through the development of effective structural links with the relevant policy areas; - to determine an overall, integrated strategy at regular intervals which defines appropriate air quality objectives for the future and cost-effective measures for meeting those objectives; - to disseminate widely the technical and policy information arising from implementation of the programme. Finally, CAFE will co-operate closely with other international programmes involved in the fight against air pollution, notably the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe's Conventionon Long-Range Transboundary Air Pollution (UN/ECE CLRTAP).