

Minutes of the First Meeting of the Smog Commission

The first meeting of the Smog Commission was held at Hassan & Hassan (Advocates), 7D Kashmir Egerton Road, Lahore, at 11:00 AM on 5 January 2018. The following attended:

1. Dr Parvez Hassan, Chair
2. Saif Anjum, Secretary, EPD
3. Anwaar Hussain, Additional Advocate General
4. Barrister Sara Bilal
5. Ali Habib, Managing Partner, HIMA Verte
6. Sheraz Zaka
7. Barrister Harris Ramzan (representing Secretary Health)
8. Tauqueer Ahmed, Director EPA (assisting Secretary EPD)

1. Welcome by Chair and Organizational Matters

(1) The Chair welcomed the participants and pointed out that the first meeting of the Commission was being held pursuant to the orders of the Lahore High Court.

(2) It was decided that the Secretary EPD will be the Secretary of the Commission. Mr. Tauqueer Ahmed, Director EPA will assist the Secretary EPD for the purposes of the Commission.

(3) Meeting started with the introduction of participants.

(4) Mr. Anwaar Hussain, Additional Advocate General, apprised the participants of raison d'être of the formation of the Commission. He informed that the Honorable Court order dated 14.11.2017 mandates certain actions which are to be taken by the Government in response of concentrations of particulate matter finer than 2.5 micron (PM2.5) in ambient air. He also said that the said actions were based on an initial draft of the Smog Policy of Government of the Punjab but which were not included in the policy approved by the Environmental Protection Council. He said that on the next date of hearing, Secretary EPD, based on available data and meetings with experts from US EPA, etc. apprised the Honorable Court of the difficulties in implementing carrying out the mandated actions. Hence, the Honorable Court constituted this Commission to look into the issues and come up with a workable plan.

2. Presentation by Secretary EPD

Mr. Saif Anjum, Secretary EPD, presented the following facts before the Commission:

(1) The air pollution issues, the province is facing, is a world-wide problem.

(2) It is not possible that a given ambient air quality standard is complied with all the time and throughout the year. For example, there are non-attainable areas with respect to each criterial pollutant even in the United States, which are published in a voluminous Green Book by the US EPA.

(3) Air pollution is both a world-wide and a regional issue; the dust storm originating in Iraq and Iran caused high PM2.5 concentrations in the country on 28.12.2017.

(4) The data collected by EPD from different sources, including SUPARCO and NASA Satellite data, reveal that high concentration levels of PM2.5 persist throughout the year; they become visible on the onset of winters when mercury drops and humidity increases.

(5) The 24-hour average standard for PM2.5 concentrations in ambient air for the province is 35 $\mu\text{g}/\text{m}^3$, which is simply the erstwhile National Environmental Quality Standard. In comparison, the standard for the same pollutant in India and China is 65 and 70, respectively.

(6) The background concentrations are generally high in the province. Also, not all the constituents of PM_{2.5} are anthropogenic; there are natural constituents, such as gases, pollens, etc. emitted by trees (termed as biogenic).

(7) The measures mandated by the Honorable Court need to be taken if there is a forecast of high concentration of PM_{2.5}. Currently, EPA Punjab has limited capacity for measuring and reporting averages for the last 24-hours.

(8) Any efficient policy measure also need source apportionment of pollutants (for example through receptor modeling) and for which there no capacity locally available.

(9) There is need that responses to high concentrations of pollutants in ambient air are designed in such a manner that not only take into account the impact of air pollution on human health and well being but also take into consideration their social and economic impacts such that the delicate balance between the two is judiciously maintained.

3. Discussion

(1) The following emerged from the discussion of the members of the Commission:

- (a) Smog is a fact of life.
- (b) There is need to devise a policy to deal with it; to minimize, if not eliminate, its adverse health impacts.
- (c) There is also need to take immediate actions, for example, controlling emission of pollutants from high polluting industry.

(2) Dr Parvez Hassan summarized the proceedings of the first meeting of the Commission as:

- (a) All the participants benefited from the discussion.
- (b) Environment is to be protected not only for ourselves but also for our posterity.
- (c) The best guide for the Commission is its Terms of Reference mandated by the Honorable Court.
- (d) The report of the Commission must point out root-causes – waste burning, vehicular emissions, etc. – of the high concentrations of pollutants in air.
- (e) The report must also discuss how can short-term, medium-term and long-term measures be introduced to reduce concentration of pollutants in air.
- (f) Being a regional phenomenon, the problem can only be resolved through a collaborative effort at regional level and the Commission should also assess and recommend measures for a regional pact.
- (g) Forecasting of episodes of extremely high concentrations of pollutions should also be a part of the recommendations.

4. Co-option of Additional Members

The Chair requested all members of the Commission to identify other experts and members at the next meeting whose association might be useful for the Commission.

5. Next Meeting

The time, venue, and agenda for the next meeting was decided as follows:

(1) Second meeting of the Commission will be held in the Committee Room of Environment Protection Department, National Hockey Stadium, Lahore at 11:00 am, on Saturday, the 13th of January 2018.

(2) Agenda for the next meeting will be:

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- (a) Approval of the minutes of the first meeting of the Commission.
- (b) Cooption of additional members/experts to assist the Commission.
- (c) Visit of Central Laboratory of EPA Punjab.
- (d) Formation of sub-committees.

☐ (3) The meeting ended with vote of thanks by the Chair for the participants.

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