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INTERNATIONAL DAY OF CLEAN AIR FOR BLUE SKIES

STATEMENT BY THE ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AGENCY, GHANA

Air is an essential resource for human well-being and vital for the survival of the entire ecosystem. Unfortunately, factors such as population growth, rapid urbanization, and emissions from industrial and human activities are rapidly degrading air quality and contributing to climate change, particularly in urban areas.

Major contributors to air pollution from anthropogenic sources or human activities in Ghana include transport, industry and human settlement (open burning of electronic/solid waste, use of woodfuels in cooking, etc.)

Air pollution poses significant environmental and health risks, including cardiovascular and respiratory diseases, birth defects, damage to the nervous system, harm to the liver, spleen & blood, cancer, and premature death.

According to the World Health Organization (WHO):

- In 2019, 99% of the world's population lived in areas where WHO air quality guidelines were not met.
- The combined effects of ambient air pollution and household air pollution result in 6.7 million premature deaths annually.
- Outdoor air pollution alone was responsible for an estimated 4.2 million premature deaths worldwide in 2019.

In the particular case of Ghana, available data indicates that :

- More than 28,000 people die in Ghana from exposure to air pollution every year (WHO, 2020). This number is projected to increase if no action is taken to tackle the issues
- Lower Respiratory tract infections ranked 2nd to malaria among the top 10 diseases (GHS, 2018)
- 3,000 children under five years died from exposure to Household Air Pollution (GSS 2010)

The Environmental Protection Agency has over the years implemented several initiatives and programmes to combat air pollution and its impacts. Some of the ongoing efforts by the Agency to improve air quality include:

- Development of Regulations to enforce the national Ghana Standard for Environment and Health Protection – Requirements for Ambient Air Quality and Point Source Emissions (GS:12362019) and the Ghana Standard for Health Protection – Requirements for Motor Vehicle Emission (GS1219:2018) that was developed in collaboration with the Ghana Standards Authority and other stakeholders.

- Regulation of air emissions from industry through the Environmental assessment procedure
- Training of Actors in the electronic waste management value chain on proper management and recycling practices to prevent burning in line with the Hazardous and Electronic Waste Control and Management Act, 2016 (Act 917) & the Hazardous, Electronic and Other Wastes (Classification) and Management Regulations, 2016 (LI 2250) for the control, management and disposal of hazardous, electronic and other wastes
- Development of the Air Quality Management Plan (AQMP) for the Greater Accra Region to identify and implement critical interventions to reduce air pollution and the associated health burden on the public
- Establishment of air quality monitoring networks in Accra, Tema and some regional capitals including Ho, Tamale, Kumasi and Sekodi-Takoradi.
- Organising/supporting training programmes aimed at building the capacity of Metropolitan, Municipal and District Assemblies to manage air quality at the local level.
- Partnership with the private sector to promote the use of real time air quality monitoring systems to collect environmental quality in real time.

As we join the international community in celebrating the International Day of Clean Air for Blue Skies under the theme "Together for Clean Air," we call for stronger partnerships, increased investment, and shared responsibility to combat air pollution. Air pollution knows no boundaries, necessitating urgent collective action. Every stakeholder, including government, corporations, individuals, traditional authorities, civil society organizations, academia, the private sector, and the media, plays a crucial role in improving air quality. To achieve this, we can:

- Reduce emissions from industrial and commercial activities.
- Eliminate open burning of waste and hazardous materials.
- Promote responsible chemical usage.
- Adopt clean fuels and improved cookstoves for cooking.
- Plant trees and maintain green spaces.
- Build sustainable partnerships to fight air pollution.
- Reduce emissions from industrial and commercial activities through application of best practices and best technologies.
- Build capacities of all actors/stakeholders to take action.
- Increase investment in clean energy and sustainable transportation solutions
- Increase efforts in awareness creation on air pollution and its impacts.

Together, we can work towards clean air, ensuring a healthier environment for future generations.

The time for action is now!!!

Protecting the environment; Our collective responsibility!!!

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