



environmental affairs

Department:
Environmental Affairs
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

Ref:02/1/5/2

NATIONAL ASSEMBLY

(For written reply)

QUESTION NO. 2294 {NW2532E}

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Dr S S Thembekwayo (EFF) to ask the Minister of Environmental Affairs:

- (1) Has there been any improvement in air quality since the declaration of the three air quality priority areas in the Vaal Triangle, Highveld and Waterberg-Bojanala in terms of the National Environmental Management: Air Quality Act, 2004 (Act No. 39 of 2004); if not, what steps will the National Air Quality Officer take (a) to address the matter and (b) by what date;
- (2) what are the details in relation to each (a) of the three priority areas from the date of the area's declaration up until the latest specified date and (b) pollutant measured in each of the three priority areas from the date of the area's declaration up until the latest specified date?

2294. THE MINISTER OF ENVIRONMENTAL AFFAIRS REPLIES:

- 1) (a) and (b)

I have declared 3 National Priority Areas to address the problem of air pollution where there is a clear threat to the well-being of our people. The first in this regard is the Vaal Triangle-Airshed Priority Area (VTAPA), which was declared in 2006. There have been improvements in the ambient air quality over the years, even though these improvements have not resulted in compliance with the National Ambient Air Quality Standards. Secondly, I declared the Highveld Priority Area (HPA) in 2007. There has not been the same improvements as observed in the VTAPA in the Highveld Priority Area, while with the Waterberg-Bojanala Priority Area (WBPA), which I declared in 2012 (the implementation of the Air Quality Management Plan {AQMP} promulgated in 2015), has only just been initiated and it is too early to measure any impact.

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Across all three priority areas, the Department of Environmental Affairs, together with relevant stakeholders, are currently implementing the respective Air Quality Management Plans (AQMPs) under the leadership of the National Air Quality Officer, on my behalf as the Minister responsible for Environmental Affairs. The AQMPs have short-term and long-term goals and objectives aimed at improving the air quality in the respective priority areas. Overall, there are slight improvements in air quality, and we have built capacity in local government to address these problems of air pollution. Colleagues will recall that we have inherited these problems from the apartheid government which had ineffective legislation relating to the protection of our people from environmental hazards. Also note that although we are working hard to resolve same air pollution problems, it is not a short-term task, as these problems were created over a 40-50 year time-frame, where industry used to develop, using archaic technologies, no regard for residential areas and people. They are now required to retrofit and use new technology thus necessitating timed incremental changes rather than closures for retrofitting and possibly loosing jobs on the other hand

These Air Quality Management Plans I am referring to are reviewed on a regular basis to assess their effectiveness in achieving the goal of bringing the air quality in these areas into compliance with the national ambient air quality standards. We started with a mid-review of the Vaal plan, and now the Highveld plan's mid-term review has just been completed. We have initiated the full review of the Vaal Plan, which will result in the revision of the Air Quality Management Plan. This Plan will, for the first time, be informed by the results of the source apportionment study which will identify the type of sources that are main contributors to air pollution in the area from the receptor side. I believe that the revised AQMP will provide a more targeted approach to air quality management in the priority area.

2) (a) and (b)

There are six (6) ambient air quality monitoring stations in the Vaal Priority Areas, placed at Diepkloof, Kliprivier, Sebokeng, Sharpeville, Three Rivers and Zamdela.

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There are five (5) in the Highveld Priority Area, placed at Ermelo, Hendrina, Middelburg, Secunda and Emalahleni/Witbank.

And there are 4 stations in the Waterberg-Bojanala Priority Area, placed at Lephalale, Mokopane and Thabazimbi.

All these stations are monitoring sulphur dioxides, oxides of nitrogen, ozone, carbon monoxide, benzene, and particulate matter and black carbon; and all stations are operational and reporting data to the South African Air Quality Information System (SAAQIS), which is hosted by the South African Weather Service on behalf of the Department.

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