
Translation of Article Published in El Ahram El Eqtesady on 22.01.2007

The Ministry of Environment Fulfills Past Year's Cleaner Production Agenda

The Ministry of State for Environmental Affairs (MSEA) succeeded in fulfilling past year's Agenda for Cleaner Production (CP).

Eng. Magued George, State Minister of Environmental Affairs, declared that the abatement of industrial pollution constitutes one of the high priorities of the MSEA. To this end, the MSEA – in coordination with the concerned ministries – has prepared a Cleaner Production Strategy Manifesto that aims at the more effective enactment of the environmental laws, and at assisting the industrial enterprises in achieving environmental compliance.

Eng. George added that the cornerstone of the CP technology is the cooperation with the Egyptian industry stakeholders by the implementation of CP technologies and provision of low-cost means to limit industrial pollution.

The Minister confirmed that Sustainable Development must be pursued by all levels of the state: legislative and executive – with the target of preserving the life of the Egyptian Citizens by providing a healthy environment that enables them to actively contribute to achieving development; therefore, technological development and the import of clean technology are important to preserve the environment.

Eng. George pointed out that the past year, CP has been applied in small, medium, and large-sized enterprises. CP includes a number of activities and procedures an enterprise undertakes to limit pollution; CP is also a powerful tool in merging quality management systems (QMS) with environmental management systems (EMS) – especially with the increasing global trend of incorporating environmental considerations into all development activities. Adoption of an environmental policy and the development of an integral environmental action plan are the starting point for an enterprise wishing to comply with environmental industry standards.

For these reasons, the Environmental Compliance Office – ECO – was assigned with a big responsibility to contribute in materializing this strategy. Dr. Sherif El Gabaly – Head of the ECO Steering Committee and the EEAA-FEI Committee President – stated that the office has succeeded in supporting the sustainable application of CP and energy conservation to increase the productivity of the Egyptian Industry and reduce the risks and hazards to humans and environment.

He pointed out that this is conducted by encouraging the industrial compliance with the environmental legislations, encouraging environment-related investment, improving occupational health and safety conditions in industrial enterprises, and generating investment and export potential. To achieve these targets, ECO provides consultancy services to industrial enterprises, contributes to capacity building, and is a factor in creating the framework necessary to support CP, energy conservation, and EMS. ECO has thus succeeded in becoming a center of excellence for CP activities, EMS, and energy conservation in diverse industrial sectors.

For his part, Eng. Ahmed Kamal – Acting Manager, ECO, explained that there is a diversity of the services provided by ECO to achieve CP goals including Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA), assessment of enterprise for CP options and good house-keeping (providing low-and no-cost solutions), and the supply of the ACI (Achieving Compliance in Industry) project component options. This is done through a series of screening, pre-assessment, assessment, and full-assessment processes. In addition, ECO provides access to Best Available Techniques (BAT), assistance in the equipment specification and procurement, food safety assessment, training-needs assessment for executive, managerial, and technical staff, capacity building through the organization and holding of workshops for executive, managerial, and technical staff, organization of study tours, and training of trainers (TOT).

Noteworthy is that a cooperation agreement has been signed between the Federation of Egyptian Industries (FEI) and the Egyptian Environmental Affairs Association (EEAA) on one side, and the National Bank of Egypt (NBE) on the other on 20.12.2005 whereby the NBE manages the loan disbursement for the ACI project component.

This comes as part as the protocol signed between the Royal Danish Government and the Egyptian Government whereby a grant of the value of DKK 69 million is allocated to support the environmental sector in Egypt.

ECO also offers soft loans to fund the purchase of industrial equipment for the implementation of CP at a maximum value of L.E. 3 million per loan payable at a payback period of one to five years including a one-year grace-period at lean interest rate of 2.5% per annum.