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São Paulo State's Initiatives Towards Achieving Sustainable Growth Through Cleaner Production

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Since the time of its inception, almost forty years ago, CETESB – Companhia de Tecnologia de Saneamento Ambiental [São Paulo State's Environmental Agency] has always adopted a strategic vision aimed at implementing the most up-to-date environmental policies possible to achieve its mission of safeguarding the State's environmental quality. In this way, the most modern approaches available have been periodically introduced, once its adaptability to the local conditions was acknowledged.

Thus, there was a first phase in which CETESB had to opt for a heavy emphasis on Command and Control actions, in order to be able to cope with a scenario of high regional environmental degradation levels, stemming from São Paulo State's haphazard industrial and populational growth process taking place along the early 20th Century. Today, certain names such as “Operação Branca” (Operation White-out), “Caça-fumaça” (Smoke Busters) or “Projeto Cubatão” (The Cubatão Project) are considered as important landmarks in the history of Brazil's environmental initiatives, having achieved outstanding results. Meanwhile, it is also becoming obvious the Command and Control framework presents some limitations, be it regarding to the high costs involved, the tendency to just concentrating or transferring pollutants among the different media (solid liquid or gaseous), to bring increased resource wastage, or due to its potential for causing serious conflicts among its several stakeholders. Additionally, it may also occur instances in which the application of those methods alone are not being deemed effective enough to safeguard environmental quality.

Following this rationale, from the 1990's on, the State Government (through CETESB) started to show increased interest on Cleaner Production (CP) initiatives as an effective and non-regulatory way to promote environmental sustainability, to be used in



scenarios or situations in which the traditional approach alone would not yield satisfactory results. In this way, several important initiatives took place during 1996, including the institution of a dedicated CP unit within its structure, and cooperation agreements with the USEPA and with the Canadian Government involving staff training on the theme. From the program's inception on, its philosophy has always been towards cooperation with the productive sectors, be they industrial or otherwise. One of the main strategies used has been the direct work with trade associations of those sectors deemed most important for contributing to improve the State's environmental conditions.

Another important step has been the founding of the São Paulo Cleaner Production Roundtable. In just about five years, the Roundtable has been serving as an important forum for discussions and information exchange on the theme. The validity and legitimacy of its initiatives are ensured by its condition of being an assembly of multidisciplinary stakeholders, permeating all the society sectors involved on this issue.

Important achievement milestones have been the enactment of the São Paulo Letter on Pollution Prevention/Cleaner Production – which functions as an important incentive to sustainable development initiatives – as well as the sponsorship of numerous meetings, workshops and conferences that during the last few years, which have helped disseminate the CP themes and concepts throughout the State's society.

The São Paulo Cleaner Production Roundtable is now on the threshold of a whole new phase in its development, since the accomplishment of its mission is currently requiring some degree of structural and institutional changes, which will serve to optimize its functioning. This is going to include its effective formalization process and the official consolidation of its operational rules, which – as expected – is going to greatly improve the scope of its services to society.



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A retrospective analysis on this last decade clearly shows the progress achieved in terms of posture changes of several of the Brazilian industrial sectors, which are now much more proactively searching for ways to manage their environmental issues. They have understood that effective resource management strategies are the key to the improvement of their image to several strategic consumer markets. In this way, it is now possible for us to watch the onset of numerous valuable CP initiatives, either individually or through joint ventures, be they industrial sector-to-government or partnerships between two sectors, or even between industrial sectors and NGO's. Today are becoming commonplace such activities as joint CP Programs, waste exchange markets, etc.

It is also now very easy to see an increasing number of businesses whose environmental policies are clearly aimed at an environmentally excellent condition, going much beyond the requirements stipulated on the environmental legislation. The NGO's also tell us about victorious environmental initiatives, the result of work by many young organizations whose work has actively contributed towards the increased conscience about the importance of the Sustainable Production and Consumption concept.

Taking into account this scenario, the State authorities – cognizant about its role to foster environmental improvement – are currently being challenged to fully incorporate CP as an environmental policy instrument.

The first step in this way has been the enactment of legislation to incorporate CP requirements to the environmental permitting process. According to that stipulated on State Decrees #47397/2002 and #47400/2002, which rule on renewable environmental permitting activities in São Paulo State, the verified application of CP measures to an industry's processes (when checked with environmental performance evaluation indicators) may qualify that industrial unit for grants of extended permits. This is going to serve as an important incentive for businesses to revise their



environmental policies in order to include even more conservation practices. In this way, it is expected there is going to be an ample revision of the State permitting process, with the implementation of the “Unified Environmental Permitting Process” (as stipulated on SMA Resol. #22, of 05/16/2007) and the adoption of the “Simplified Environmental Permitting System” (SILIS). It is expected the use of those new simplified procedures will eventually become a very healthy habit. In retrospect, CP initiatives such as those discussed along this Conference clearly vindicate the concept; together, concepts like CP and Sustainable Consumption are but two facets of a same process that in time may lead to São Paulo State's sustainable development.