

## Comments on the manuscript

“Changes in particulate matter physical properties during Saharan advections over Rome (Italy): a four-year study, 2001 - 2004”

by G.P. Gobbi, F. Angelini, F. Barnaba, F. Costabile, J.M. Baldasano, S. Basart, R. Sozzi, and A. Bolignano.

The present study deals with the analysis of the contribution of Saharan desert dust to PM<sub>10</sub> surface aerosol concentrations in Rome, Italy. This is an experimental study based on a relatively large number of lidar measurements (703 days) in Rome and daily PM<sub>10</sub> measurements in three monitoring sites during the four-year period 2001 – 2004. In addition, the authors analyzed the capability of the BSC-DREAM8b regional dust model to predict dust events having the presence of dust near the surface. This was carried out by comparing modeled dust concentrations with lidar measurements in Rome. The impact of desert dust on PM<sub>10</sub> records was estimated as the exceedance of PM<sub>10</sub> measurements on dusty days over PM<sub>10</sub> measurements on non-dusty days. The paper is clearly presented. The obtained results are interesting. Specifically, the current study has shown that the combined use of modeled dust forecasts with lidar measurements is important to effectively monitor desert dust presence and to estimate its contribution to PM levels. The authors have suggested an improved approach for estimating background PM<sub>10</sub> concentrations. I recommend the manuscript for publication.

The authors may consider the following critical aspects:

1. With respect to the percentage of dusty days and dust ground contacts, the correspondence between modeled dust forecasts and lidar observations was noticeably better during the first three individual years 2001/2002/2003 than in the last year 2004 (Table 2). It is worth discussing possible causal factors for the large discrepancy in 2004.
2. The authors studied seasonal variations of dust contribution to PM<sub>10</sub> concentration (Fig. 3). Did they find any seasonal variation in the discrepancy between modeled dust forecasts and lidar observations, with respect to the percentage of dusty days and dust ground contacts?
3. According to Fig. 3, one can see that the number of dust events in summer is higher than in winter. It is worth discussing possible reasons why the average dust contribution to PM<sub>10</sub> in summer is lower than in other seasons?