

WHO's 2nd global conference on air pollution and health

High-level commitments – clean air for all: Time to commit & act

March 27, 2025

16:30

Centro de Convenciones Cartagena de Indias

Cartagena, Colombia

The closing session of WHO's 2nd Global Conference on Air Pollution and Health, moderated by Femi Oke, showcased bold commitments from member states, UN agencies, donors, academia, civil society, and key stakeholders to advance clean air action for the benefit of health and the planet. As the conference concluded, leaders presented their commitments under the conference pledge and outlined strategies to tackle air pollution, reinforcing the urgent need for collective action to protect health. This marked a pivotal moment to turn ambition into action and drive tangible progress toward a future where everyone can breathe clean air.

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Brazil

Ministry of Environment and Climate Change & Ministry of Health

Good afternoon,

The Brazilian Ministry of Environment and Climate Change, together with the Ministry of Health, highlights the importance and success of strengthening interministerial cooperation during the Second Global Conference on Air Pollution and Health.

This collaboration has been instrumental in advancing several key initiatives, including the establishment of the National Air Quality Policy, the updating of air quality standards based on WHO guidelines as a legal framework, and the monitoring of impact in reducing mortality due to exposure to air pollution.

Furthermore, we are developing our intersectoral National Climate Plan, with a strong emphasis on equity and a just transition as a transversal basis.

In addition, several new initiatives will be implemented through partnerships and technical cooperation with PAHO and WHO, among other strategic partners.

We extend our sincere gratitude to the WHO for its dedication to this collective effort for clean air.

Thank you very much.

China
National Health Commission

China thanks the WHO and the Government of Colombia for organizing this important conference.

We have made great progress in reducing air pollution and protecting public health. As a large and responsible nation, China supports the WHO's clean air efforts and is actively taking action through our national strategies: Healthy China, Beautiful China, and our dual-carbon strategies.

Our efforts include strengthening air quality standards, developing smarter health protection systems, and enhancing international cooperation.

We remain committed to achieving our national goals for 2030, 2050, and 2060, and we are also ready to share our clean air experiences with the world to help build a better future for all.

Thank you.

Colombia
Ministry of Environment and Sustainable Development

Good afternoon, everybody,

Thank you so much for being with us during this dialogue session today, and many thanks to the organizing committee. I want to thank Dr. Maria Neira, Director of Environment, Climate Change at the WHO; Gina Tambini, the representative from PAHO/WHO here in Colombia; and our moderator during this session — thank you, Femi Oke.

To all the representatives from governments, international organizations, and experts in health and environment from the 75 countries represented, to the academic community of Cartagena, the media, ladies and gentlemen — thank you.

We will now begin by reading the commitments we have made here in Colombia regarding air contamination, which, of course, requires a high level of commitment from various stakeholders and sectors, considering the urgent need to reduce its impact on health and the financial burden caused by treating respiratory diseases.

The Second Global Conference on Air Pollution and Health represents a key opportunity for Colombia to strengthen intersectoral efforts — both domestically and regionally — in order to implement actions that reduce the health effects of air pollution and contribute to achieving sustainable development objectives. In this way, Colombia reaffirms its commitment to the progressive improvement of air quality, which will positively impact public health, the environment, and the overall quality of life of our population.

That is why, as a country, we commit to:

First, joining efforts across various sectors and stakeholders to carry out actions aimed at reducing air pollution — especially those related to public health surveillance — to help mitigate the impacts of this phenomenon.

Second, fostering actions that will strengthen impact analyses related to health issues caused by both external and internal air pollution, at the international level and within our own territory, along with their economic assessments.

Third, promoting a fair energy transition through the adoption of clean technologies in key sectors such as industry and transportation, ensuring high-quality standards that reduce environmental and health impacts.

Fourth, developing early warning systems for the prevention and mitigation of wildfires, considering their contribution to air pollution and their effects on public health.

Fifth, promoting scenarios — in line with the national government's priorities — that explore mechanisms for compensating external debt in exchange for the execution of climate actions.

Thank you very much.

Cuba
Ministry of Health

Cuba is committed, at this conference, to continuing with the Environmental Policy as a fundamental part of our development plan, called Live Task, which includes five strategic

actions. We are aiming for 24% of our energy transition to come from renewable sources by 2030, and 100% by 2050.

At the same time, we will continue working to enhance and improve emissions from sugarcane plants and facilities. We will also focus on policies related to transportation and organic compounds, while organizing efforts across the medium and health sectors to monitor the toxic effects on health.

Our goal is to ensure that the population in Cuba will enjoy a better quality of life.

Thank you so much.

France
Santé Publique France

Thank you, WHO, the Government of Colombia, and all those involved in organizing this conference.

I represent a public health institution in France, and to achieve our ambitious goals, we recognize the responsibility we have. We collect data and epidemiological evidence to guide decision-making. While action may sometimes feel insufficient, as representatives and institutions concerned with these matters, it is our duty to ensure that air pollution receives the resources and attention it deserves for the future.

For over 30 years, we have worked in cooperation with WHO, supporting quantitative assessment methods to ensure that air pollution remains a key global challenge. The planet is facing interconnected challenges, including climate change, chemical pollution, and biodiversity loss. Addressing these issues requires comprehensive action, especially when it comes to air pollution.

Multidisciplinary approaches are essential. As public health professionals, we need to collaborate with environmental specialists who understand the data and methodologies related to pollution. Without this partnership, accurate and successful solutions will be impossible. We must also engage with human sciences, social sciences, and economics to estimate the costs of inaction and demonstrate how investing in solutions will lead to long-term benefits.

Additionally, we commit to reinforcing our advocacy efforts. Public health agencies must be trained to accelerate the energy transition and explore intersectoral opportunities.

Thank you so much.

Germany
Federal Ministry for the Environment, Nature Conservation, Nuclear Safety and Consumer Protection

Excellencies, organizers, ladies and gentlemen,

For many decades, the WHO has been dedicated to combating air pollution, with great success. One key accomplishment is the WHO Air Quality Guidelines, which form an essential basis for the further development of our European and national policies for clean air.

I would like to express my sincere thanks to the World Health Organization for its important work and pledge our full support, especially in today's challenging times.

I'm particularly pleased with the WHO's ambitious target of lowering the number of deaths associated with particulate matter by 50% by 2040, compared to 2015 levels. To meet this target, it will be especially important to continue our push to move away from fossil fuels and provide clean, sustainable energy.

In Germany, many measures are helping to improve air quality. These include phasing out the use of coal for power generation and introducing new exhaust emission standards for vehicles. Additionally, the EU Ambient Air Quality Directive has been amended, setting ambitious new limits for air pollutants from 2030 onwards. This paves the way for the gradual alignment with WHO recommendations.

It is also important to continue raising awareness of the dangers of polluted air, particularly regarding how it affects vulnerable groups such as children and the elderly.

Air pollution does not stop at national borders. This is the very reason why the WHO's work and today's conference are so important in further strengthening international cooperation.

All the best from Berlin to everyone in Cartagena. Thank you.

India

Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change & The Ministry of Health and Family Welfare

Good evening, everyone.

The Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change, India, has set a target under India's National Clean Air Programme 1.0 to reduce particulate matter levels by 40% from the 2017 baseline by 2026. Even if this target is delayed, we are likely to progress toward a 35% reduction by 2035, as was discussed during this conference.

We, in the health sector, are committed to supporting this direction by working toward a reduction in the baseline prevalence of non-communicable diseases. Our air pollution and NCD surveillance systems will contribute significantly to this effort.

We will continue to support the greater uptake of cleaner energy options for cooking through our health IEC outreach, particularly targeting vulnerable women. We also plan to work with clinicians to provide appropriate personal protection options to their patients, especially those who are vulnerable due to pre-existing health conditions.

With all these measures, we in India believe we can make great progress in reducing the health impacts of air pollution by 2040.

Thank you.

Mexico

Secretariat of Environment and Natural Resources

Good afternoon.

In Mexico, we have worked on health and environmental issues to protect the health of the entire population. In the case of SEMARNAT, the institution I represent, we have made several commitments.

First, we are focused on air quality assessment. We want to promote and drive air quality monitoring across our country. We aim to expand from monitoring areas with 500 inhabitants to cities with 200 citizens, in order to be more protective of health. We are committed to having an air quality index that can be published periodically and to having early alert systems for high pollution events, which will help us protect citizens when pollutant levels reach critical thresholds.

Second, regarding emission reductions, we have a clear commitment to continuously updating national regulations on pollutant emissions and setting limits for industries. Some sectors and processes are still not fully regulated, and we aim to establish the most restrictive regulations, particularly regarding vehicles. This year, we will move forward with stricter regulations for diesel vehicles, focusing on particle emissions, not only PM 2.5 but also black carbon.

Finally, we are working on regulations to promote and advocate for better standards for light, medium, and heavy vehicles. We are also committed to continuing collaboration with different sectors, including industry, academia, health, and economics, to foster the reduction of pollutants. There is a strong commitment to working together to build a better environmental culture, to educate children from an early age about the importance of environmental health and air quality control.

Thank you all for your attention.

Mexico

Ministry of Health

On behalf of all the authorities in the healthcare sector of Mexico, I would like to express my sincere gratitude for the invitation to be here. A special thanks to the WHO and PAHO teams for organizing this important event.

After three days of hard work and insightful discussions, we would like to reiterate Mexico's commitment from the healthcare sector to join the global health movement. We are fully aligned with strategies that strengthen governance and leadership in addressing healthcare and environmental issues. We are also activating our working team for climate change and environmental health to directly and cross-sectorally address these challenges.

In particular, we are focused on strategies and specific actions to mitigate and reduce the negative effects of climate change, air pollution, and environmental pollution on health. We will implement a One Health approach, ensuring that the intersection of human, animal, and environmental health is taken into account.

We aim to strengthen essential public health tasks, particularly through enhancing epidemiological and health surveillance to monitor environmental threats, exposures, and health risks in Mexico. We will continue to build on this system to assess the damage caused by air pollution, water pollution, and waste, and to identify the health impacts they cause.

We are committed to fostering research and generating new knowledge in environmental healthcare, involving the entire medical community. This will include formulating policies and implementing legislation to protect the population from environmental health risks. We also prioritize communication and advocacy efforts to raise awareness about these risks.

Furthermore, we will enhance monitoring and early warning systems for environmental health emergencies. We are dedicated to collecting evidence on health damages caused by environmental contamination and will collaborate with academia and other sectors to conduct research focused on the health impacts of pollution and develop strategies to mitigate them.

From the Mexican government, particularly from the healthcare sector, we are joining this great global call to action.

Thank you.

Mongolia
Ministry of Health

Hello, good day to everyone.

I am the head of the Department for Non-Communicable Disease Prevention at the Ministry of Health of Mongolia, and I will be reading this statement on behalf of Mongolia. However, I would like to clarify that I am not a government representative myself.

The commitment:

Air quality is a pressing public health concern in Mongolia. The government prioritizes tackling this crisis to protect the health and well-being of our population, particularly children and older adults. The Ministry of Health and the Ministry of Environment and Climate Change of Mongolia wish to express sincere appreciation for the opportunity to participate in the Second Global Conference on Air Pollution and Health.

We will continue and enhance our efforts to reduce air pollution in the following ways:

1. Embed air quality aspects in the National Action Plan for Non-Communicable Disease Reduction for the period of 2025 to 2028.
2. Renew the national ambient and indoor air quality standards, taking into account the WHO Air Quality Guidelines, and incrementally improve enforcement capacity and expand the monitoring network in the capital city and other settlements.
3. Implement the National Action Plan for the Reduction of Air and Environmental Pollution through cross-sectoral coordination.
4. Incorporate air quality and health into undergraduate and postgraduate curricula for medical training and conduct awareness-raising and training activities for health personnel and the wider community.

Thank you.

Norway
Ministry of International Development

Excellencies, ladies and gentlemen, dear friends,

We thank the Government of Colombia for hosting the Global Conference on Air Pollution and Health, and we commend the World Health Organization for its leadership and for drawing our attention to the devastating effects of air pollution on health and the planet.

We need to find more efficient solutions, and we need to find them fast. Cleaner cities and a just, inclusive energy transition are part of that solution, as this conference so timely underlines. Air pollution knows no borders, and international coordination is essential.

Norway has ratified the UN Convention on Long-Range Transboundary Air Pollution and the EU Directive on Ambient Air Quality, as part of our efforts to clean up air for Europe.

Friends, air pollution damages human health, undermines food security, hinders economic development, contributes to climate change, and degrades our ecosystems.

As a nation, we must continue to address these interconnected challenges at the highest political level. We must take collective actions to prevent further harm to our people and to the planet.

You can count on Norway's continued support.

Pakistan
Ministry of Health

Greetings from Pakistan, and a very warm welcome to all the delegates from across the world present at the Second Global Conference on Air Pollution, organized by WHO in Cartagena, Colombia.

Unfortunately, I could not be there in person, but I would like to share a few key messages from Pakistan.

Pakistan continues to grapple with air pollution, with some of our major cities ranking among the most polluted in the world. This crisis has compelled local and provincial governments to enforce lockdowns in some major cities. Schools, universities, and workplaces have been closed, and hospitals remain on high alert.

Air pollution is a major public health concern. Anecdotal evidence suggests that the average lifespan in Pakistan is reduced by four years due to elevated levels of particulate matter, particularly PM 2.5, with AQI levels dangerously hovering between 1900 and 2000 in some cities.

This alarming situation has prompted the Government of Pakistan to take significant measures. We have launched the National Clean Air Policy, a document focusing on national-scale actions aimed at improving air quality across Pakistan. These policies will be implemented at the provincial level, and the framework is grounded in the constitutional right to life and human dignity. It was developed with input from stakeholders across the country.

Through this document, we aim to address key contributors to air pollution, including transport, industry, agriculture, biomass burning, solid waste, and the residential and building sectors.

Air quality is a tragedy of the commons, and tackling it requires both regional cooperation and international collaboration. We believe that, through mutual understanding of the global challenges we face, we can identify conclusive and collective actions to help our cities breathe again—making them more habitable for future generations and safeguarding the health of our most vulnerable communities.

Thank you all.

Philippines
Department of Health

Thank you and good afternoon.

Recognizing the severe health impacts of air pollution on the health of Filipinos — in terms of additional burden on mortality and morbidity, and their economic repercussions — and its disproportionate impact on vulnerable groups, the Philippines is committed to undertaking actions to contribute to the global roadmap on reducing the health impacts of air pollution.

We shall link air pollution with our climate change and universal healthcare initiatives to make a more lasting impact on the health and well-being of Filipinos. We will do this through sustained collaboration with key stakeholders, the conduct of thorough assessments and studies on the health risks of air pollution, the use of innovation and technology, and the mobilization of resources and finances to implement our initiatives.

While we acknowledge that there are gaps to be addressed, we stand confident that with the support of our stakeholders and partners — including the World Health Organization and others represented here — we shall move closer to achieving our common goals: clean air as a matter of social justice and as a fundamental human right of all Filipinos, now and in the generations to come.

Thank you, and we look forward to our continued collaboration.

Somalia
Ministry of Health and Human Services

I would like to take this opportunity to extend my heartfelt thanks to the World Health Organization and the Government of Colombia, as well as their people, for hosting us and facilitating this important event.

I also speak on behalf of the Minister of Health of Somalia, with whom I have communicated. In line with Somalia's National Transformation Plan for 2025-2029, the Federal Government of Somalia is committed to reducing its reliance on diesel and fossil fuels for energy sources in healthcare facilities.

Our goal is to ensure that by 2029, 50% of all healthcare facilities in Somalia will transition to cleaner energy solutions. Additionally, the Minister of Health will work collaboratively with various organizations to ensure that 75% of Somali households switch to clean cooking solutions.

Thank you very much for your attention and support.

Spain
Ministry of Health

Thank you very much.

Speaking from the Ministry of Health in Spain, and from the perspective of environmental healthcare, we would like to highlight five key commitments:

First, we will continue to maintain air quality standards that are aligned with the WHO guidelines. This commitment is reflected in the implementation of the recently approved Air Quality Directive by the European Union.

Second, we are committed to investing adequately and appropriately in the development of information systems related to healthcare and environmental data. This is why we are continuing to develop surveillance systems for environmental health.

Third, we will ensure the routine collection and analysis of data on health risks associated with environmental contamination and pollution. Importantly, we aim to stratify and contextualize this data to reflect the lived realities of patients.

Fourth, we will strengthen and maintain intersectoral mechanisms of cooperation across multiple levels — involving not only the Ministry of Health and the Ministry for Ecological Transition, but also all other relevant ministries affected by these issues.

Finally, we are committed to reducing greenhouse gas emissions — particularly those connected to the healthcare sector. In this regard, we pledge to continue our efforts so that, by 2050, Spain's public healthcare system will be climate-neutral at the global level.

That will be all. Thank you very much.

United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland

Thank you. And thank you, Femi. Thanks to everyone.

On behalf of the UK, I'd like to congratulate the WHO and the Government of Colombia, as well as the city of Cartagena, for hosting us — it's been fantastic.

Just a few key points:

The UK has long been a leader in tackling air pollution, going back as far as the Clean Air Act of 1956. We continue to lead today and will remain co-chair of the Forum for International Cooperation on Air Pollution, alongside the Government of Sweden. We also support the Climate and Clean Air Coalition's Air Quality Management Exchange Platform.

Domestically, we've made significant progress. We've set health-based targets to reduce people's exposure to fine particulate matter — the most harmful pollutant. We've also introduced an innovative exposure reduction target for PM2.5, along with an ambitious concentration target, and we're making good progress toward achieving it.

This summer, we will outline new measures to further improve air quality through our Environmental Improvement Plan. These measures aim to reduce pollution emissions even further to protect and enhance public health. We are also developing a new Air Quality Strategy to drive long-term change — re-evaluating our targets to continue raising standards and lowering pollution levels. This includes boosting local democracy by giving communities a real say in how air quality is improved in their areas, and improving communication to inform people — especially vulnerable groups — about pollution levels and how they can protect themselves.

We are committed to reducing emissions in order to halve the health impacts of air pollution by 2040. We also continue working toward achieving the WHO air quality guideline levels across the UK.

Our strong commitment to international action on air pollution is why, just this year, the UK has taken on the co-chair role of the Climate and Clean Air Coalition, alongside the Government of Brazil.

And today, I'm pleased to announce an additional £700,000 in UK funding to the CCAC for the development of the Africa Clean Air Programme, which we've heard more about this week — a landmark initiative that will serve as a vital platform for regional cooperation.

Chair, the UK stands fully behind the WHO in its efforts to tackle air pollution, and we are strongly supportive of the global target to reduce the health impacts of air pollution by 50% by 2040.

Thank you.

Vietnam
Ministry of Health

Good afternoon, distinguished colleagues, air quality and health champions, and friends,

The Ministry of Health of Vietnam expresses great appreciation to the WHO for its strong leadership in organizing this important conference. The Ministry of Health of Vietnam has joined the Flag of Actions for Clean Air for All and is committed to translating into action the knowledge, insights, and innovative ideas gathered from this conference.

We are committed to taking the following actions:

First, in close collaboration with the Ministry of Agriculture and Environment, we will take measures to revise national standards and regulations to align with WHO Air Quality Guidelines, and we will upgrade and strengthen our air quality monitoring system.

Second, we will enhance the capacity for Health Impact Assessment and link air quality data with health surveillance.

Third, we will further strengthen multisectoral coordination and partnerships by placing health at the core of sectoral actions.

Thank you, WHO. Thank you all.

Sub-national governments

London, UK
on behalf of the co-chairs of C40 cities

Thank you very much, Femi.

Your Excellencies, distinguished delegates, esteemed colleagues —

As Mayors of London and Freetown, and as co-chairs of C40 Cities, we represent the world's largest cities on the front line of the air pollution and climate crisis.

C40 Cities is a network of nearly 100 world-leading cities working together to take urgent action on the climate emergency and to improve air quality for over 650 million people.

We are committed to addressing the air pollution crisis — a crisis that claims over 8 million lives annually and disproportionately affects the most vulnerable.

We welcome the World Health Organization's updated roadmap to address the health impacts of air pollution, which targets a 50% reduction in pollution-related deaths by 2040. Achieving this goal will save millions of lives, reduce the burden on healthcare systems, and improve the livability of our urban environments.

Our cities are proving that evidence-based action delivers results. Through C40's Clean Air Accelerator, 50 cities have set ambitious targets, implemented bold policies, and reported annual progress since 2019. Our latest report highlights that cities prioritizing clean air are expanding zero-emission transport, establishing clean air zones, supporting active mobility, and improving waste management.

Our flagship initiative, Breathe Cities — a partnership between C40, the Clean Air Fund, and Bloomberg Philanthropies — is working with 14 cities to cut air pollution and emissions by 30% by 2030. Cities are already leading the way around the world:

- London's Clean Air Zone has reduced nitrogen dioxide by over 50% in central London and by 25% in outer London.
- Warsaw has reduced PM2.5 levels by 33% between 2017 and 2023 through cleaner heating practices.
- Bogotá is deploying a 100% electric bus fleet, improving air quality for 35,000 residents and promoting gender inclusion in transit jobs.

Breathing clean air is a fundamental human right. Air pollution is not only a public health emergency — it is also a matter of justice. Marginalized communities, children, older adults, and outdoor workers bear the brunt of toxic air, worsening health disparities and straining public health systems.

Prioritizing clean air policies protects those most at risk and helps create healthier, fairer cities.

However, we recognize that cities cannot do this alone. That's why we urge national governments to act now — by scaling up financial support, strengthening air quality monitoring, and enhancing collaboration between cities and national governments.

We also welcome the health sector's vital role in making the economic case for clean air — as the benefits will first be felt by patients and in reduced healthcare costs.

Through C40's Clean Air Accelerator and Breathe Cities, we will continue aligning city-led action with WHO air quality guidelines, and we urge more cities to join us.

Cities are stepping up to tackle toxic air pollution — and we invite more to join this fight.

We are committed to working with national governments and global institutions to build healthier, fairer, and more livable cities for all.

Clean air is not a privilege. It is a fundamental right.

Together, we can make this vision a reality.

Thank you.

Mendoza, Argentina

We want to thank Cartagena City and the WHO for making sure that small cities can have a voice — so we can share the experiences we are working on, even in such an adverse context as

the one Argentina is currently facing, with a national government that does not believe in climate change and was on the verge of withdrawing from the WHO.

We want to say clearly that there are more than 2,000 cities in Argentina working for climate action — committed cities that are, every day, working in our communities to make this action real.

As part of this commitment, we want to highlight the Climate Change Network in Argentina and SITCOM (the Argentine Network of Municipalities Facing Climate Change), and reaffirm our support for the Global Covenant of Mayors for Climate and Energy — which I represent in Latin America — with more than 733 cities committed to continuing on this roadmap led by the WHO: to reduce 50% of emissions and to put women and children at the center of our actions.

Because the climate crisis must be addressed with a health-centered, people-centered approach, we are convinced that transformation happens from local to global.

So I encourage and motivate all of you to work together — as a community — with the WHO, with universities, and with the private sector. Because this transformation, which we are all a part of, is possible.

Thank you so much.

UN agencies

Climate and Clean Air Coalition

Hello. I'm here today, but it's not just me—I'm representing over 200 partners. So, I don't come alone; we are a partnership that brings together governments, NGOs, and IGOs. We apply three key strengths in our work: the commitment to building political will, focusing on advocacy, and driving action.

A key component of this effort is the BreatheLife campaign, where we bridge across health, environment, and finance to create a unified narrative that drives action from all the necessary angles. We are also rolling out a Clean Air flagship initiative. Our work includes building the economic case for clean air, providing additional arguments for taking action.

We've put our scientific advisory panel to work and have an annual budget of \$26 million. Earlier today, we heard about a contribution from the UK. This trust fund operates at the intersection of climate and clean air for health outcomes.

Thank you.

United Nations Development Programme

Ladies and gentlemen,

The air we breathe should sustain life, not threaten it. Yet, air pollution claims over 7 million lives every year, with nine out of ten of these premature deaths occurring in low- and middle-income countries. This is not just a health issue; it is intricately linked to development.

As part of the United Nations family, the United Nations Development Program (UNDP) is committed to supporting development pathways that address air pollution and advance global efforts towards healthier, more sustainable futures for all.

At the core of our efforts is our support to over 140 countries through initiatives such as the Climate Promise. This program helps countries integrate action on air pollution and black carbon into their climate pledges, supported by the Clean Air Fund.

We are also addressing the issue at the household level. Clean cooking solutions are particularly benefiting women and children by improving air quality. In Angola, for example, our solar kitchen initiative has provided clean energy to hundreds of families, improving both food security and income generation. This simple yet powerful initiative shows how progress can be made at the grassroots level.

Furthermore, the energy transition is a central focus of our work. Since 2022, UNDP has supported nearly 400 clean energy projects in 128 countries, directly reaching almost 80 million people. In Zimbabwe, for instance, 60% of health facilities now run on solar power, ensuring uninterrupted energy access for delivering life-saving services while significantly reducing diesel emissions. This has been made possible thanks to support from the Global Fund.

Innovation is another key facet of our efforts. In India, for example, the UNDP Accelerator Lab used geospatial data and artificial intelligence to map nearly 50,000 air-polluting brick kilns. This mapping helped improve monitoring and enforcement, and as a result, nearly 4,000 brick kilns transitioned to greener solutions.

Looking ahead, UNDP has pledged to assist 100 countries in advancing the right to a clean, healthy, and sustainable environment by 2030. We recognize that air pollution spans multiple sectors and ministries but often lacks clear ownership. That's why we are fostering systems approaches and advancing innovative partnerships. One such partnership is the Common Air Initiative, supported by the European Union, which has already helped develop an air pollution toolkit that has been piloted in countries such as Ethiopia and Mongolia.

Dear colleagues, clean air is a human right, a universal need, and a shared responsibility. This objective, which lies at the heart of the Global Goals, requires us to rely on the World Health Organization's critical role in setting robust health standards, driving meaningful change, and fostering the global cooperation needed. Just as air connects us all, so too must our collective determination to protect it for today and for generations to come.

Thank you.

United Nations Environment Programme

So—air quality, we know, is not a dream. Air quality is truly an obligation for all of us.

The United Nations Environment Programme is committed in a threefold manner:

First, through outreach and awareness. We are co-founders of the BreatheLife initiative, and we are not only committed to revitalizing it, but also to connecting and continuing this awareness-raising journey with all of you.

Second, our commitment lies in the global network that our Assembly asked us to manage, to create, and to consolidate. That's the spirit of collaboration. This is the moment not just to share, but to act. The launch happened this Monday—many of you were part of it—and now, we need all of you to help make it a success.

And third, our commitment is to capacity development. We are fully engaged and committed to continue this work through the AQMX platform, which aims to showcase different opportunities and capabilities, to be a space for sharing, and to act as the connector we all need.

So—not a check, and not a billion dollars—but count us in.

Thank you. Thank you.

United Nations Economic Commission for Europe

Excellencies, distinguished colleagues, ladies and gentlemen,

It is an honor to join you at this critical gathering to address the devastating health impacts of air pollution. The United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE) recognizes the interconnected nature of air pollution and health. For over 40 years, the UNECE Convention on Long-range Transboundary Air Pollution has been instrumental in reducing major pollutants in the region. This framework exemplifies evidence-based policymaking and regional collaboration.

The Convention's Task Force on Health, under the leadership of the WHO, has uniquely facilitated informed decision-making. Despite these successes, air pollution continues to impact health systems and economies. As a result, the parties to the Convention have committed to redoubling efforts under the Gothenburg Protocol to further reduce air pollution.

At UNECE, we advocate for an integrated approach linking climate action, sustainable energy, transport, and health outcomes in line with the Paris Agreement and the Sustainable

Development Goals. UNECE co-hosts the Transport, Health, and Environment Pan-European Program (THE PEP) with WHO. This program promotes the integration of environmental and health aspects into transport policies. Additionally, we work on standards for cleaner vehicles and fuels, while promoting sustainable energy solutions.

The health impacts of air pollution demand bold, coordinated, and science-driven action across governments, international organizations, civil society, and the private sector. UNECE stands ready to provide platforms for countries to exchange best practices, set ambitious targets, and align policies for better air quality and human health.

Clean air is a fundamental human right, and we must ensure that it is also a shared priority. Let this conference unite us in decisive action to combat air pollution, safeguard public health, and build a sustainable future.

Thank you.

United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific

Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is my pleasure to address this global conference aimed at tackling air pollution and health. I congratulate the World Health Organization and the Government of Colombia for organizing such an important gathering.

The interconnected priorities of air pollution and health are felt acutely in the Asia-Pacific region. Contaminants in both indoor and outdoor air contribute to an increased frequency of birth defects, cardiovascular diseases, and early mortality. The greatest risks are posed to children, the elderly, and pregnant women. Air pollution is a silent killer, leading to nearly 116 deaths per 100,000 people in our region. More than 1.1 billion people are exposed to indoor air pollution from cooking and the use of polluting fuels and technologies. In 2019, an estimated 2.4 million people in the region died prematurely from illnesses related to the use of solid fuels and kerosene for cooking. When considering the joint effects of indoor and ambient air pollution, that figure approaches 4.9 million across the region. In major cities, nearly everyone experiences air quality well below the WHO-recommended guidelines.

Many locations have seen a deterioration in air quality from both local and remote sources. However, great strides have been made by countries in raising awareness of these risks and providing critical information to citizens. At the same time, there are solutions available. Renewable energy generation, electric mobility, improved agricultural practices, and clean cooking technologies address multiple objectives, including expanding energy access, reducing air pollution, and mitigating climate change.

Clean cooking technologies, such as electric cookstoves, are gaining traction. These technologies ensure clean air while also providing energy and emission-saving benefits. The

ESCAP has supported countries like Bhutan, Lao PDR, and Nepal in deploying and adapting these technologies to local environments.

The ESCAP Regional Action Program on Air Pollution is a framework designed to enhance air quality management. It facilitates the exchange of information on clean air cooperation, identifies key areas for collaboration, and recommends actions to strengthen stakeholder contributions. We support our member states by developing guidance on ambient air quality legislation to help policymakers establish effective standards.

Regional cooperation is also promoted through platforms like the Asia Pacific Clean Air Partnership, focusing on knowledge sharing, capacity building, and joint research projects to improve air quality.

In closing, I wish you all the best in your deliberations and reiterate our commitment as a firm partner in our collective efforts to combat air pollution and climate change.

Thank you very much.

World Meteorological Organization

Excellencies and distinguished delegates,

On behalf of the World Meteorological Organization, it is an honor to address you at this crucial moment in our campaign for cleaner air and healthier communities.

I also want to recognize the leadership and commitment of the World Health Organization Director-General in tackling air pollution and its devastating impacts on health and climate.

Air pollution remains one of the greatest environmental threats to human health, causing millions of premature deaths each year. No country is immune. Rising temperatures and environmental change exacerbate the risks—extreme heat, more frequent wildfires, and recurring sand and dust storms are all worsening air pollution.

This exposes communities—especially the most vulnerable—to severe health risks, disrupts economic sectors, and harms ecosystems.

Protecting human health and saving lives is central to the mission of the World Meteorological Organization.

This year, we commemorate 75 years as the United Nations agency for weather, water, and climate.

Donors

Clean Air Fund

Thanks, Femi.

I love that we have this target. Thank you to the WHO for getting us all behind the same target, and thank you to the committers for committing to it. I also hope that we can track our progress. I can see that civil society groups are already recording what they're hearing, and I hope that the WHO will bring us together at the next conference, so we can say, "This is what we have achieved together."

The Clean Air Fund commits to continuing to work with the WHO on their essential programs to reduce air pollution. We commit to continuing to track funding for air quality and to push to increase it, especially in line with this new WHO target.

The Clean Air Fund spent 110 million in the last five years on reducing pollution, and so we commit — we've already done that. But what we commit to now is spending a further 90 million over the next two years. This funding will support researchers, grassroots groups, and governments working together to achieve cleaner air.

Thank you.

Academia

International Federation of Medical Students' Associations

First of all, thank you to the World Health Organization and the Government of Colombia for organizing this incredibly important event.

The International Federation of Medical Students' Associations (IFMSA) is the world's largest student-led health organization, representing over 1.5 million medical students across 123 countries. As air pollution and the climate crisis continue to escalate, the IFMSA calls on all stakeholders to match the urgency of health science with the courage for political change.

This is not new for the IFMSA, as we have been advocating for clean air for more than 35 years, and we will continue to lead with purpose and action.

The IFMSA remains committed to:

1. Advocating for the full integration of air pollution and planetary health into medical curricula, clinical guidelines, and national health systems.
2. Developing tools to equip medical students with the skills to engage effectively with policymakers and bridge the gap between academia, clinical practice, and policymaking in advancing clean air solutions.

3. Building the capacity of future healthcare professionals worldwide to understand and address the health impacts of air pollution through education, research, and advocacy.
4. Promoting WHO's air quality guidelines and the air pollution training toolkit to ensure healthcare workers are equipped with the knowledge and tools to address air pollution as a public health emergency.
5. Standing in solidarity with all stakeholders, because we are not alone in this fight for clean air, ensuring no voice is left unheard in this essential struggle.

We reaffirm our commitment to planetary health, intergenerational equity, and a future where clean air is a guaranteed right—and no one dies from the air we breathe.

Thank you.

Permian Health Lung Institute, Gambia

Thank you very much to the World Health Organization and the Government of Colombia for organizing this event.

I speak here in my capacity as the founder of the Lung Institute in The Gambia. We have three key commitments to make today:

1. We commit to maintaining and keeping the data from the National Ambient Air Quality Network in The Gambia fully open and transparent. We will continue to support the government of The Gambia in measuring air quality on an ongoing basis. We believe that open data is essential for fostering collaboration to address the complex issue of air pollution.
2. We commit to being fierce advocates for the patients and communities we serve. We will ensure they have a seat at the table and a voice in the discussions surrounding air quality monitoring and air pollution. Additionally, we will continue to train healthcare professionals in The Gambia to connect the dots between air pollution and health, so that healthcare practices align with the latest scientific findings.
3. Finally, we commit to continuing to advocate and support the National Environment Agency and the Ministry of Health to ensure that we establish national air quality standards based on the WHO guidelines in The Gambia.

Thank you.

Non governmental organizations

Emerging leaders for clean air forum

We, the participants of the Emerging Leaders for Clean Air Forum—a collective of early-career researchers, youth advocates, health professionals, climate activists, and educators from across

all regions—join the pledge to commit to decisive action for clean air at the Second Global Conference on Air Pollution and Health.

The air pollution crisis is also a leadership crisis. As emerging leaders, we have the opportunity to change the landscape of governance and push it toward empathy, equity, and integrity.

In this regard, we commit to leading differently—to let science and facts be the voices of reason, not politics or economic interests.

We commit to breaking down silos; cross-sectoral, interdisciplinary coordination is the only way to bring about clean air and a healthy environment for all.

We commit to working together and to advocating for institutional change that fosters greater collaboration and creativity.

Most importantly, we commit to never staying silent in the face of the injustice of air pollution. We will continue to fight in our diverse spheres of work and experience. We will not give up until we see the day when clean air is no longer a privilege, but a fundamental human right.

Thank you.

European Lung Foundation

Thanks everybody. We've been so inspired by the stories we've heard this week—especially from mothers, parents, and grandparents.

The European Lung Foundation commits to continuing to inform and amplify the voices of the 2.73 billion people globally living with chronic lung disease and their families, and to empower them to advocate for clean air policies that will directly benefit their health, the health of all our children, and help prevent future lung disease.

We will urge politicians not only to listen to these stories, but also to act upon them.

We also commit to support the WHO in accessing and harnessing the patient voice and support for clean air, ensuring that the WHO's vital work is strengthened through storytelling and passionate activism.

We commit to continue delivering our global awareness campaign, Healthy Lungs for Life, making sure that as many people as possible around the world understand that air pollution is a health issue that affects us all.

We will engage with other disease areas to make sure the campaign is as wide-reaching as possible, and we'll deliver it in cities, parliaments, and communities—wherever it's needed most.

Thank you.

European Respiratory Society

Good afternoon.

The European Respiratory Society would like to thank WHO for this impactful, motivating, and inspiring conference.

We want to renew our commitment to addressing air pollution by empowering our 35,000 healthcare professional members to advocate for cleaner air.

We heard throughout the conference that we are living through difficult and politically challenging times. But one institution that continues to hold public trust is the medical profession—and we intend to use that trust to fight for cleaner air.

We will continue to support education and research on air pollution and climate change, and we will persist in our efforts to engage policymakers and the public on the urgent need to improve air quality.

Thank you very much.

Global Alliance on Health and Pollution

Thank you, and good afternoon, everyone.

It's an honor to represent the Global Alliance on Health and Pollution as Executive Director. Our mission is to support low- and middle-income countries in prioritizing pollution-related issues that impact health, with air quality always being a top concern.

Unfortunately, at this conference in Colombia, we reaffirm our commitment to supporting low- and middle-income countries in implementing the Health and Pollution Action Plan. This multi-stakeholder, country-led initiative makes pollution a policy priority and creates a roadmap to tackle major challenges like air pollution.

To date, we've implemented 13 Health and Pollution Action Plans, and we commit to continuing our support to attract resources for countries to implement these roadmaps. We also commit to advocating for greater awareness of pollution and air quality issues.

Additionally, over the past three years, with UK aid funding, the Global Alliance on Health and Pollution has been working in Vietnam, partnering with local groups to reduce harmful agricultural practices like open burning. We've been researching and promoting sustainable, profitable alternatives to open burning, helping to reduce carbon emissions, improve health and environmental outcomes, and create economic value.

Our model is replicable, but open burning remains a significant challenge. We are committed to continuing and expanding this effort and welcome any collaborations.

Please stay in touch. Thank you.

Global Climate and Health Alliance

For those who may not know, the Global Climate and Health Alliance (GCHA) is an alliance of over 200 health organizations from around the world. We come together to bring a unified health voice into the climate conversation, drive more ambitious climate action, and ensure a healthier future for everyone. As we've seen this week, health professionals can be powerful champions for clean air and climate action. Collectively, GCHA's members and partner organizations represent over 46 million health professionals globally.

We applaud the World Health Organization for your ongoing leadership in addressing the health impacts of climate change and air pollution, as well as the root causes.

Our commitment is as follows: We commit to working in collaboration with all of you—our partners and allies here at this conference—to advocate for a healthy, just, and equitable phase-out of fossil fuels and a full transition to clean, renewable energy for all. Additionally, we commit to advocating for the integration of clean air and health considerations into local, national, and international climate policies, including this year, in the nationally determined contributions under the Paris Agreement.

Italian Association of Epidemiology and the Italian Pediatric Respiratory Society

The global air pollution emergency is deeply interconnected with the climate crisis. Both phenomena are mainly human-driven due to the way human societies produce and use energy, transport people and goods, manage waste, and produce food. Both risk factors have global consequences since air pollution and greenhouse gas emissions, in particular, have no national border; in addition, within a country, they are not limited to a single area but ubiquitous, thereby affecting the entire population.

The year 2024 was the warmest on record (about 1.55°C above pre-industrial levels), continuing an uninterrupted global temperature increase in recent years. In the last two decades, such a rapidly changing climate has doubled exposure to extreme heat and heat waves in some southern and central areas of Europe. The 2024 Lancet Countdown shows that heat-related mortality has increased in 94% of the nearly 1,000 European regions monitored. However, fatal effects represent only the tip of the iceberg since heat-related hospital admissions, emergency visits, drug use, medical visits, and clinical signs and symptoms represent a possibly more significant attributable fraction, especially in more vulnerable population subgroups such as children. Children, mainly infants, are one of the groups most at risk due to the developing pulmonary system and airways, higher ventilation rates, but also limited thermoregulation capacity and higher vulnerability to infections. Furthermore, the rapidly warming climate is

increasing pollen concentrations and extending the flowering season, thus amplifying the health risks for the allergic population. It is also enabling the spread of invasive species like ragweed into new areas with larger sensitive populations. Respiratory ill and allergic patients are most affected by pollens, with children being among the most vulnerable, mainly due to asthma exacerbations.

There is consistent evidence regarding the short and long-term effects of air pollution and acute climate-related risks, such as heat waves with multiple sensitivities in terms of cardiovascular, respiratory, renal, metabolic, mental and neurological diseases, and adverse pregnancy outcomes, grounded on large population-based studies on a variety of health measures (e.g. ambulance transport/call-outs, hospitalisation, emergency room presentations, incidence of cancer).

Evidence on specific vulnerable groups, such as children, is also growing for both air pollution and climate-related risks, with the developing respiratory and neurological systems being more vulnerable in the early stages of life.

There is also an additional risk deriving from interaction and synergies among exposures (e.g. heat, air pollution, pollens) in terms of exacerbations of chronic diseases, such as heart failure, asthma and chronic obstructive pulmonary disease. Air pollution is also worsening due to climate change, as far as some areas may encounter greater risk of peaks for some air pollutants, such as ozone.

Furthermore, local pollution peaks may be triggered by dust storms and wildfires favoured by land degradation and drought conditions in some areas (e.g. southern Europe, including Italy, Spain, Portugal and Greece), with short- and long-term consequences on cardiovascular and respiratory health.

Italy is a hot spot for climate change impacts, especially in terms of heat waves related effects as shown by the Lancet Countdown indicators for Italy, and a large part of the population is exposed to air pollution levels higher than the 2021 WHO Air Quality Guidelines, with impacts related to both acute and chronic health effects in vulnerable groups. Mitigation policies are needed, especially in sectors such as transport and energy industries and agriculture, but also in the health sector (e.g. in terms of production and transport of medical supplies and waste management) to fulfil both the EU Green Deal and the Air Quality goals for year 2030. Especially in urban planning, diet, and transport sectors it is urgent to prioritize policies that have multiple benefits, by promoting healthy lifestyle, and at the same time, mitigating emissions. In the long way to climate neutrality and substantial reduction in pollution levels, adaptation is crucial to counteract the unavoidable actual and future impacts on health and requires multisectoral actions and dedicated resources to strengthen population resilience and minimize impacts of air pollution heat waves and other extreme weather events. In this context, the Italian Adaptation Plan (approved in 2023), which includes heat-health preventive measures (e.g., energy-efficient buildings, heat warnings, and urban green spaces), provides the national framework for adaptation responses, but it urgently needs to be transferred into local actions.

Considering climate change scenarios with expected worsening in risks related to extreme weather events, prolonged pollen season, and air pollution, prevention measures are crucial to protect vulnerable populations, such as children, pregnant women, outdoor workers and patients with chronic diseases, based on high-quality research to minimize health impacts.

Scientific societies such as AIE and SIMRI have a fundamental role in promoting health at the centre of climate adaptation and mitigation policies and responses and in enhancing evidence on actions related to greater health co-benefits, such as active mobility and low-carbon diets.

Multisectoral collaborations among clinicians, epidemiologists, and environmental researchers— demonstrated through scientific society agreements and several projects funded within the Health, Environment, Biodiversity and Climate program of the Ministry of Health National Complementary Plan—along with the involvement of citizen representatives and stakeholders, should become standard practice in planning climate responses in the Country.

In line with WHO indications, AIE and SIMRI are intensely engaged in training new generations of clinicians and researchers, raising awareness, as well as in advocating for promoting research on the health effects of climate change and air pollution, and on mitigation solutions for population and health sector, thereby transferring knowledge into practice to set up new agreements on emission limits both to contain climate emergency and to improve global air quality.

Ride for their lives

Hello, my name is Mark Hayden, and I represent Ride for Their Lives. We are a small but highly enthusiastic group of individuals who believe that problems can be solved by coming together on bikes, helping each other fix a puncture, sharing cake, and so on.

What we commit to is continuing to deliver the messages of experts like the World Health Organization and our relevant Royal Colleges, engaging healthcare clinicians, especially those on the frontlines, to speak the truth to their patients when appropriate, and help them lead healthier lives.

We are also committed to supporting zero carbon and zero pollution emissions. If anyone in the room would like to use cycling as a means to help each other, maintain hope, and work toward these ambitious commitments — no matter how challenging they may seem — we are here to help. It's incredibly inspiring to hear about the bold steps being taken by large countries like China, and most excitingly, Mongolia.

Thank you.

Solar Cookers International

The mission of Solar Cookers International is to improve human health, economic well-being, women's empowerment, and the environment by promoting climate-friendly solar cooking for vulnerable populations worldwide, in alignment with the science-backed World Health Organization guidelines and resources.

Solar Cookers International is committed to accelerating the integration and implementation of solar cooking, reducing air pollution from combustible cooking fuels, increasing household cooking energy independence and security, and expanding multilateral initiatives and collaborations. We are also dedicated to sharing and encouraging the use of resources for advocacy and awareness, as well as assessing the economic impact.

Furthermore, we support open-source design plans, product testing according to International Organization for Standardization (ISO) standards, and best practices such as local production data collection. We emphasize the involvement of local women and solar cooking champions in initiatives, particularly for training and follow-up. Thank you.

UrbanBetter

I am here as the founder of Urban Better, a not-for-profit organization committed to accelerating healthy, sustainable urban development worldwide. Our core mission is to ask: What if health were the central guiding principle of all urban development? And, critically, as the fastest-growing urbanizing continent and the youngest continent, what if Africa led the way, and youth in particular, in shaping cities for cleaner air and healthier public spaces?

Our approach is rooted in precision advocacy, driven by a youth-led movement that uses physical activity and citizen science to connect young people and increase the demand for clean air and healthy public spaces in cities. We aim to enhance meaningful youth participation in decision-making to shape both the present and future of our cities.

Our commitment is to build this participatory infrastructure and support cities by working hand in hand with partners to host citizen hubs. These hubs will empower youth to generate their own data, use evidence to drive advocacy, and push for decision-making that leads to healthier cities.

Specifically, our commitment is to establish 10 citizen hubs across cities globally in the next year, and we hope that Bogota and possibly Qatar will join us in this effort. Over the next decade, we aim to mobilize 100,000 citizens in 30 cities, democratizing knowledge generation and increasing the demand for clean air.

Together, we will make the urban environment better, one breath at a time.

Thank you.

World Organization of Family Doctors

I'm Alan Abelson, sometimes known as Dr. Smog, and I represent the World Organization of Family Doctors. We represent 500,000 family doctors who care for 90% of the global population. Family doctors and other primary healthcare practitioners play a critical role in the movement for clean, healthy air because of the public trust that we have with our patients. We spend the majority of our time in consultation with patients, where time to assess and treat is limited. But our byline is "One minute for the planet."

Our intervention today focuses on training the healthcare workforce. At the first conference in Geneva, we pledged to train 40 healthcare workers in low- and middle-income countries. We exceeded that goal, training 70, and these trained individuals went on to train others, engage in schools, and become involved in policy.

Today, we commit to training more than 100 primary care healthcare practitioners on air pollution and its impact on health, utilizing the WHO toolkit for healthcare workers. This will enable these practitioners to be better clinicians for their patients, more effective advocates for clean, healthy air in their communities, and trainers for other teams of primary healthcare practitioners.

Thank you.

Private sector

Eduardo Kobra

Visuals are important; they are what's most visible and can be easily conveyed to people. However, there is an element that escapes the human eye, yet it is essential—not only for our present life but also for future generations and our planet.

Imagine, each of us breathes in 10,000 liters of air every day—air that is constantly in contact with our bodies, our skin, and our very being. Air is essential for our survival.

As an artist concerned about the future of the planet, and as a father worried about the future of human generations, I feel a growing responsibility to use my talent and time to raise awareness about the need to preserve our environment. This includes, of course, taking better care of the air that we breathe.

It is with great pride that I accept my nomination tonight as an ambassador for this program from the World Health Organization. I hope to use my name, my reputation, and my dedication as an artist to give greater visibility to this cause—a cause that affects the entire planet and is critical for the continuity of human life.

Thank you very much.