



International Day  
of Clean Air  
for blue skies

# The fourth International Day of Clean Air for blue skies

September 7, 2023



The Fourth International Day of Clean Air for blue skies was held on 7 September 2023, under the theme of “Together For Clean Air, emphasizing the need for stronger partnerships, investment and shared responsibility.

We all have a responsibility to protect our atmosphere and ensure healthy air for everyone. The 2023 theme, accordingly, highlighted shared responsibility, increased investment and the urgent need for stronger partnerships for overcoming air pollution.



Governments, development organizations, the private sector, civil society and individuals all have the responsibility and opportunity to reduce air pollution and leverage finance and investments towards air quality measures and solutions.

**#TogetherForCleanAir** encouraged collaboration across borders and boundaries, between sectors, and beyond silos.

Air pollution is the biggest environmental health risk of our time. Exposure **to polluted air can lead to stroke**, heart and lung disease, pneumonia, cancer and more. It causes approximately **6.7 million** premature deaths per year, and is responsible for **US\$8.1 trillion** in healthcare costs, equivalent to 6.1 per cent of global GDP.



Air pollutants can travel across borders and impact the air quality and ecosystems across geographical boundaries, not just where they originate. That is why strengthening international and regional cooperation is critical to improving air quality.



## Secretary General's message for 2023

Air pollution is a global emergency. Ninety-nine per cent of humanity breathes air laced with soot, sulphur and other toxic chemicals, with low- and middle-income countries suffering the highest exposures. Every year, seven million people die prematurely as a result, and air pollution is intimately linked to global heating.

Air pollution knows no borders, travelling thousands of kilometres, spreading contaminants with the wind. And the climate crisis is having devastating and growing impacts on every continent on Earth.

Global problems require global solutions. We must act together for clean air – the theme of this year's International Day of Clean Air for Blue Skies.

Together, we must accelerate a just and equitable transition away from fossil fuels, particularly coal, towards clean renewable energy, while ensuring that no one is left behind.



To help achieve this, I have proposed a Climate Solidarity Pact in which all big emitters make extra efforts to cut emissions, and wealthier countries mobilize financial and technical resources to support emerging economies to do so. And I have proposed an Acceleration Agenda to super-charge these efforts. I urge all countries to put both into effect.

We must also support the transition to clean cooking and electric vehicles. We must encourage walking and cycling in cities, and put in place systems to make responsible waste management second nature. And we must act on the pledge to reduce methane emissions.

Our air is a common good and a common responsibility. Let's work together to clean it up, protect our health, and leave a healthy planet for generations to come.

**Global problems require global solutions. We must act together for clean air – the theme of this year's International Day of Clean Air for Blue Skies.**

**Together, we must accelerate a just and equitable transition away from fossil fuels, particularly coal, towards clean renewable energy, while ensuring that no one is left behind.**

**Antonio Guterres**

Secretary General of the United Nations

**Air pollution kills, causing millions of premature deaths each year and air pollution is linked to climate change as the sources are often the same.**

**So we must cut these sources. Replace fossil fuels with renewable energy. Reform agriculture to reduce methane and black carbon emissions and help vulnerable households access clean heating and cooking fuels and reduce open burning of waste, and of course, invest in nature to keep cities cool and filter the air.**

**Inger Anderson**

Executive Director of UNEP





# The Theme

## #TOGETHERFORCLEANAIR

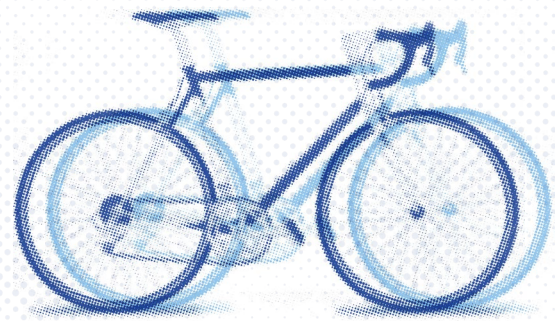
The theme for the 2023 observance focused on our shared responsibility to overcome air pollution, the need for strong partnerships across key sectors and levels of government, and increased investments.

#TogetherforCleanAir built upon the 2022 theme of #TheAirWeShare, which focused on the transboundary nature of air pollution and stressed the need for collective accountability and action and stressed for shared responsibility to protect the Earth's atmosphere and ensure healthy air for everyone, across borders and boundaries, between sectors and beyond silos.

**Air pollution doesn't recognise borders or boundaries, and collective efforts are necessary to combat its effects**

The theme called upon governments, development organizations, the private sector, civil society organizations and individuals to fulfil their shared responsibility and capitalise on available opportunities to reduce air pollution and leverage finance and investments towards air quality measures and solutions.

The theme served as a rallying cry for change, driving enduring and revolutionary transformations to secure clean air for generations to come.



## A web of information

The **website** was enriched with additional content and updated information, especially in line with the theme of the Day. This included information on **report launches, events, communication material**, as well as **featured updates** from partners and media across the world.

Furthermore, significant enhancements were made to the **Pollution Action Note**, spearheaded by the **Climate and Clean Air Coalition (CCAC)** together with **UNEP**. These updates provide a more comprehensive view of regional agreements and their impact on air quality, contributing to a deeper understanding of regional air pollution progress.

**Everything you need to know about  
#WorldCleanAirDay 2023**

## BUILDING THE GLOBAL MOVEMENT

The Day generated a buzz with wide scale participation and engagement seen from across the world. This included:



Over **32,000 page views** during the month of September with nearly **85,000 downloads of different content**.

The most popular topical pages on site were the **Practical Guide**, and the **Causes of Air Pollution**.

The most engaged audience groups were between the ages of 18 and 34 years, which is reflective of increasing interest amongst the youth and their drive for change.

## TELLING THE STORY

Numerous articles and stories were produced before and on the actual Day to spotlight the discussion about air pollution, especially focusing on its theme, bringing it to the forefront of attention.

A total of **6 stories** were published on the Day's **official website**.

**A total of 19** associated events were observed by UNEP or UN organisations, in addition to 40 events organized by partner organisations.

All content was produced in multiple languages, including English, French, Spanish, Arabic, Chinese, Russian, Kiswahili, Portuguese, Bahasa Indonesia, Thai and Vietnamese

## ENGAGING TOGETHER FOR A BREATHABLE TOMORROW

During the Day, people from various backgrounds worldwide came together for the global observance, including government bodies, non-profit organizations, businesses, and individuals at large. As part of the observance, a range of interactive materials was launched, such as the **Quiz**, an air pollution **FAQ**, an Interactive **Practical Guide**, and an updated **Pollution Action Note**.

In addition, UNEP released a **Public Service Announcement** video aimed at inspiring individuals, businesses, governments, and organizations to take action against air pollution. The video underscores the significance of fostering stronger partnerships, increasing investments, and collectively shouldering the responsibility to improve air quality. Notably, the video has already garnered an impressive audience, reaching over 80,000 viewers across UNEP's online and **social media** channels.



### **THE STATE OF GLOBAL AIR: THE POLLUTION ACTION NOTE.**

The **Pollution Action Note**, which was first launched in 2021, is further updated to include the most current data and made in line with the new air quality guidelines from the World Health Organization, as well as the latest policy actions.

### **DATA YOU NEED TO KNOW**

Air pollution causes approximately **6.7 million** premature deaths per year.

Exposure to fine particle outdoor air pollution is the largest environmental risk factor for premature death globally. Air pollution exposure contributes to a number of key illnesses globally, but its contribution is not borne equally across the world.

Despite being one of the biggest health threats worldwide, air pollution still accounts for less than 1 per cent of total global aid spending. Given its negative impact on our health, economies and environment, there is no sound financial or political argument for this underinvestment.



Since its launch, the **Pollution Action Note** has been referenced at the world's leading environmental agencies and new media outlets, and now, as the latest addition, it includes a new visualization showing regional agreements.

From Southeast Asia to the African continent and even the Arctic, more and more regions are addressing this shared emergency, particularly by integrating monitoring, reporting, and knowledge sharing of experience and good practices. Still, more must be done to ensure that these agreements are implemented effectively and that all countries have the resources to develop knowledge, tools, ground-based observations, and data to reduce air pollution.

See how air pollution is impacting individual countries today and the actions they are taking to achieve clean air.

## LET'S TALK ABOUT IT:

An exciting lineup of communication content including infographics, social media filters, and videos were produced and events from all over the world were curated for the Day.

Content created for the Day was shared across UNEP's corporate communication channels including social media platforms, i.e., **X (formerly Twitter), Facebook, LinkedIn** and **Instagram**.

The two hashtags were intertwined, i.e., **#WorldCleanAirDay** and **#TogetherForCleanAir**: mentioned at least **17,000 times**

The campaign reached **8 million users with 70,000 users** directly engaging with the content across all channels in all languages.

The best performing content was the carousel, followed by infographics.

**Twitter/X**: the **Interactive practical guide** with 84,616 impressions and nearly 100,000 views, followed by an **illustrative infographic post**, with **42,447 impressions** and **1.7 million views**.

**Instagram**: the **carousel of infographics** gained **202,539 reach** followed by the air pollution knows no borders post with **130,813 reach**.

**LinkedIn**: the **carousel post** gained **136,258 impressions**.

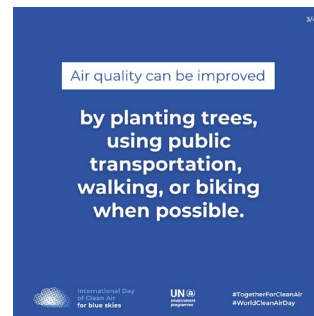
**Facebook**: the infographic on 99% of people breathing polluted air post gained **18,733 reach** followed by the **infographic about air pollution and health risks** with **14,896 reach**.



## KEY INFLUENTIAL VOICES LEND THEIR SUPPORT

Several influential figures and organizations joined the community of action to amplify **#WorldCleanAirDay** messages. Key voices included UNEP's Goodwill Ambassadors **Aidan Gallagher** and **Dia Mirza**, Formula E-Ambassador **Lucas di Grassi**, UN High Commissioner for Human Rights **Volker Türk**; all lending their substantial reach to the need of coming **#TogetherForCleanAir**. In addition, **the Virtual Human Chain** organized by the Indian Clean Air Collective, saw over 1,000 participants sharing selfies, with Dia Mirza among them.

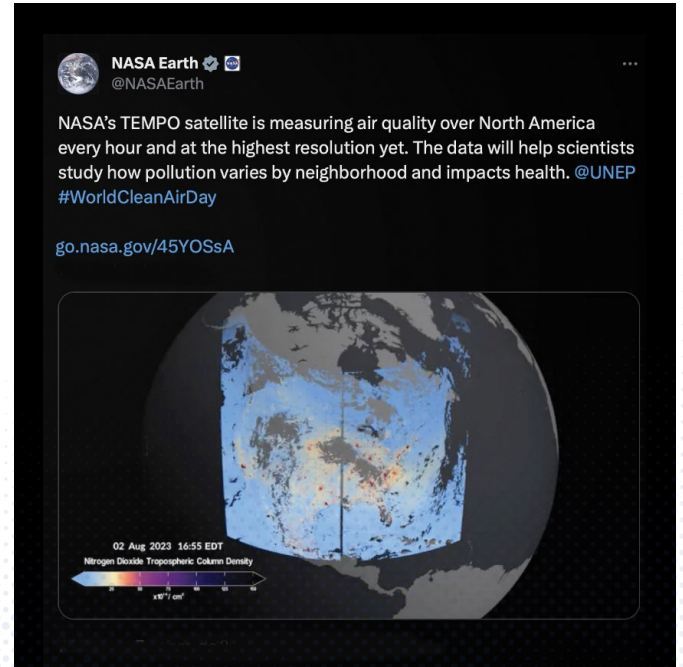
In terms of engagement, Aidan Gallagher's post received an impressive 90,000 likes, closely followed by United Nations Children's Fund, Dia Mirza, and the UN Secretary-General. Notably, support was also received from institutions and organizations such as **Greenpeace, World Bank, NASA Earth, C40 Cities**, and from various UN accounts - **FAO, WHO, UNICEF**, and OHCHR.



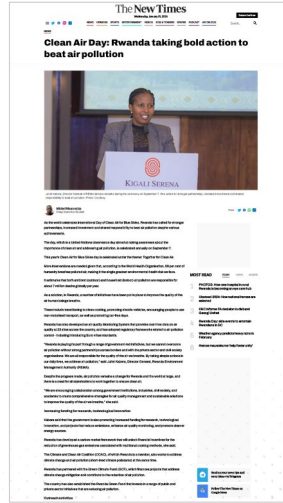
## IN THE NEWS

There's been an overall increase in the media coverage: in terms of articles published, and as per the Day's coverage by number of media outlets, countries and languages.

- Over **1,194 articles** on clean air
- Published in **870 media outlets**
- Across **91 countries worldwide** and in **28 languages**
- Highest media coverage was observed in the US, India, China, Russia, Venezuela and Mexico.







**ON AIR!**

**Live and online events** were held across the world: from New York and Amman, passing by Geneva, Bangkok, Nakuru, Belgrade or Port of Spain. Governments, cities, businesses, NGOs, academia, civil society and individuals participated actively.



## Together For Clean Air around the World

### ASIA AND THE PACIFIC

Commemorative activities were held across the Asia and the Pacific region in over 25 countries and more than 116 key stakeholders, reaching about 13 million people through social media channels.

This year, UNEP and UNESCAP celebrated the day with a co-organized event, held from 5 to 8 September 2023 in Bangkok. The event was sponsored by the **Ministry of Environment of the Republic of Korea and supported by the Embassy of the Republic of Korea to Thailand**. Around 100 participants joined the event on-site from related agencies in addition to online participants who joined via YouTube livestream.

In addition, four associated events were held in the Asia and the Pacific region as part of the overall Commemoration:

- **Online Expert Group Meeting: Review of National Assessment Draft Studies on the Use of Remote Sensing for Air Pollution Action in the Asia Pacific Region** on 5 September;
- **Operationalizing the Regional Action Programme on Air Pollution: Inception Meetings of the Open-Ended Working Groups on Air Quality Standards and Data** on 6 September;
- **Round Table: Pan-Asia Partnership for Geospatial Air Pollution Information** on 7 September;
- **Together for Clean Air: Air Pollution and Climate Solutions in Southeast Asia** on 8 September.

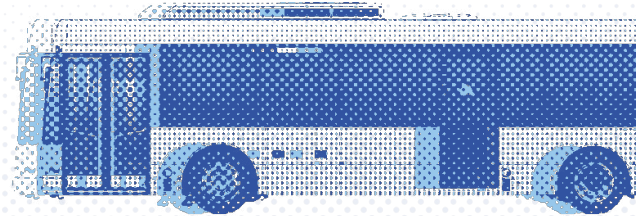


Asia Pacific Commemoration of the 4th International Day of Clean Air for blue skies



Agenda of the 2023 Clean Air International Forum in Suwon

Korea also took the lead in organizing the **2023 Clean Air International Forum** together with UNEP in Suwon. The forum discussed the management of urban air pollutants, air pollution and carbon neutrality, and air pollution management technology and data analysis techniques. It also included public participation sessions.



## EUROPE AND CENTRAL ASIA

UNEP Europe Office organized four official events in Geneva, Almaty, Belgrade, and Tashkent as part of the Day's initiative, which emphasized the importance of cooperation with various stakeholders, including UN member states, development organizations, private sector, and civil society, to reduce pollution and enhance air quality. These events also highlighted UNEP's influential partner networks and its role in driving action on air quality in the Pan-European region through collaboration with diverse stakeholders.

**In Geneva,** UNECE and UNEP organized an event alongside the Air Convention's Working Group meeting. The UNEP Europe Office Director gave the opening remarks, with participation from delegates from many UNECE Air Convention member countries. Notably, they unveiled a new collaborative project between UNECE and UNEP focused on promoting clean air policies in Azerbaijan, Armenia, Georgia, Moldova, and Ukraine.

In Belgrade, Serbia, a joint UNEP and UNRC event was held at the UN House, in collaboration with the UNCT Result Group on Green Transformation, and gathered representatives from UN agencies, government, and civil society. The event discussed findings from a UNEP report on landfill fire-related air pollution in Serbia, highlighting the need for better waste management. The event also



Joint UNEP and UNRC event in Belgrade

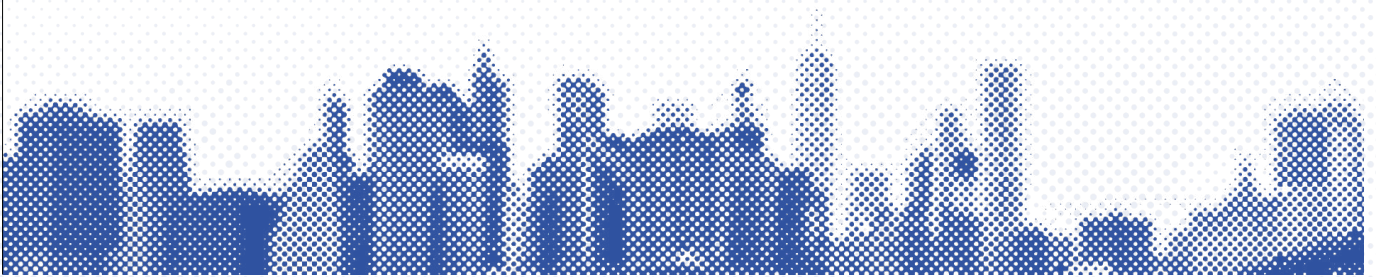


UNEP and UNECE joint Air Convention in Geneva

introduced a joint effort by UNCT and UNEP to address residential heating-related air pollution.

In Almaty, Kazakhstan, UNEP and the Air Quality Central Asia (AQCA) Platform held an event at the UN Plazato share results from an air quality monitoring project in Kyrgyzstan and announced plans for the 3rd AQCA platform conference in Tajikistan. UNEP also discussed its collaboration in the Development Partners Coordination Council's Subgroup on Air Quality in Kyrgyzstan, co-led with the Asian Development Bank, which was attended by representatives of various international organizations, academia, and diplomatic missions.

In Tashkent, Uzbekistan, a joint event by the ZAMIN Foundation and UNEP celebrated Clean Air Day and announced a new Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) for collaboration on air quality and related issues. The event involved the Head of UNEP Central Asia Office, Uzbek ministries, and UzHydromet, focusing on urban air pollution sources, their impact on public health, and the development of legislation concerning PM 10 and PM 2.5 levels in the atmosphere.



## NORTH AMERICA

UNEP North America Office marked the observation of the Day with expert discussions on air pollution's effects, new "ground-breaking" NASA TEMPO satellite data, measured air quality, and educated the public. A youth social media campaign and an Instagram Live interview with UNEP Deputy Executive Director, Elizabeth Mrema, underscored the day's significance.

At the flagship **Ozone Bioindicator Garden event**, organized by UNEP and the CCAC in the DC area, experts from various institutions including NASA, the Smithsonian Institute, and the U.S. Department of Energy shared insights on the environmental and health impacts of air pollution, particularly in disadvantaged communities. The event's highlight was the groundbreaking pollution data from NASA's TEMPO satellite, offering detailed air quality information for North American cities from space. The day featured engaging air quality equipment demonstrations in the Ozone Bioindicator Garden and included virtual participation from the U.S. national ozone garden network.

UNEP North America joined the Connect4Climate **"Kids Ask Climate Questions"** for an in-person and online event. Eleven-year-old Max asked UNEP Communications Officer, Laura Fuller, "Is air pollution the same everywhere in the world?" Fuller unpacked

and explained the vital question to over 4,000 current viewers with the number still growing.

Additionally, at the GEF assembly in Vancouver, **UNEP North America** and **United Nations Association (UNA) Canada** designed a youth social media outreach campaign with video messages promoting #TogetherForCleanAir." UNA Canada sat down with UNEP Deputy Executive Director, Elizabeth Mrema, for an **Instagram Live** interview where she reflected on her own experiences, and the importance of Clean Air Day, and the linkages between air pollution and climate change.



"Kids Ask Climate Questions" episode



Regional Cooperation for Better Air Quality for West Asia consultation workshop in Jordan

## WEST ASIA

Marking the international day for Clean Air and recognizing the need for a coordinated approach in the region, the **UNEP Regional Office for West Asia** in collaboration with WHO organized the “Regional Cooperation for Better Air Quality in West Asia” consultation **workshop in Jordan** on 3 and 4 September and brought together representatives from ministries of environment and health from the region.

Countries in the West Asia region recommended the establishment of a Regional Air Quality Network for West



Asia and requested UNEP to assess the status of air quality management and identify work priorities for the network as the first phase. Besides emissions from energy, industry, and transportation, the region is significantly affected by natural emissions from sand and dust storms. While individual countries have made efforts to enhance air quality, addressing this challenge necessitates stronger regional and global coordination. This network will work in conjunction with existing networks in Asia, Latin America, Africa, and Europe.

Additionally, the UNEP West Asia Office and CCAC joined forces with the WHO to organize an event commemorating Clean Air Day on October 7th. UNEP's participation played a pivotal role in promoting regional collaboration and raising awareness for mitigating the impact of short-lived climate pollutants.

### LATIN AMERICA AND THE CARIBBEAN

For the first time a joint initiative that combined efforts of **UNEP's Latin America and the Caribbean (LAC)** office and North America offices was carried out: **"Activation across the Americas"** – together with the Pan American Health Organization (PAHO) and the Commission for Environmental Cooperation (CEC).

Academic institutions, governments, and civil society organizations doing citizen science (Canada, Costa Rica, Colombia, **Chile**, Panama, **Mexico**, United States) were invited to make air quality measurements, on September 7, in public places and share their results and measurement technologies in real-time. **Events** were held in Santiago de Chile, with the Universidad del Desarrollo, and were incorporated into a web story. Additionally, air quality monitoring activities in cities in Colombia and Mexico were carried out.

In San Salvador, UNEP, the Central American Commission on Environment and Development



Santiago school utilize low-cost monitoring by Centro de Investigación en Tecnologías para la Sociedad to educate students on air pollution impacts.

(CCAD), the Secretariat of the Council of Ministers of Health of Central America and the Dominican Republic (SE-COMISCA), CCAC and the Clean Air Institute (CAI), celebrated with a **virtual event**.

In Mexico, an online webinar was held featuring experts who discussed the country's strides in air quality. Government officials, UNEP experts, and PAHO representatives participated. To mark the occasion,



**Monitoring the quality of the air we breathe is essential to identifying the presence of pollutants and finding integrated solutions.**

**September 7**  
By taking action **#TogetherForCleanAir** we also defend our right to a healthy environment

Take part, along with your organization, in this **#WorldCleanAirDay!** Share your photos on social media using the tags below.

**LEARN MORE ABOUT THIS ACTIVATION**  
[bit.ly/CleanAirDay2023](https://bit.ly/CleanAirDay2023)

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#WorldCleanAirDay #TogetherForCleanAir  
International Day of Clean Air for blue skies  
CEC CCA CCE  
PAHO  
UN environment

Activation Across the Americas: International Clean Air Day for blue skies 2023

Mexico's Ministry of Environment and Natural Resources released **a blog** on the same day. Online activities, participation in virtual seminars, and the creation of dissemination products - **including a video** prepared by the current Champion of the Earth, **Constantino Auca Chutas** - were also carried out.

Lastly, the UNEP LAC office reached out to **the media** presenting the most relevant milestones of UNEP and the region in terms of air quality and the importance of the Day. Thanks to this approach, up to 18 articles in the region were published on the topic across six countries.

## AFRICA

**UNEP Africa Office** supported a **Clean Air commemoration workshop** that was hosted by the County Government in partnership with Stockholm Environment Institute (SEI) in collaboration with other partners such as Safaricom PLC, Slum Dwellers International-Kenya (SDI-K), Athletics Kenya (AK). Also in attendance were other relevant stakeholders from Kenya Association of Manufacturers (KAM), Nakuru Business Association (NBA), Hunter Supertech, Golden Life Mall, National Environment Management Authority (NEMA), Nakuru City Board and Staff from County Government of Nakuru.

The event aimed to raise awareness about air quality issues in Nakuru County, access air quality data, and strengthen partnerships to scale up efforts in air quality and climate action. The consensus reached by all stakeholders at the meeting was that there was a need to establish legal frameworks for air quality regulation, and the need to empower Nakuru's residents to actively engage with air quality and climate information, enabling them to drive positive changes within their city.



Clean Air commemoration workshop in Nakuru

## NEW YORK

Nearly 60 representatives from Member States participated in the **commemoration of International Day of Clean Air for blue skies** at the UN Headquarters in New York. The commemoration aimed at promoting global and regional cooperation as well as highlighting system-wide responses and strengthening multisectoral partnerships to gain momentum. UN Secretary-General Mr António Guterres delivered a message, as well as WHO Director Mr. Werner Obermeyer and UNEP Executive Director **Ms. Inger Andersen.**



Commemoration of International Day of Clean Air for blue skies at the UN Headquarters in New York

## On the Road to World Clean Air Day: Reports And Publications

UNEP strengthens governments' capacities on clean air by enhancing understanding of air pollution sources and impacts, by producing assessments for informed policy action and by supporting legislation.

UNEP, the Climate and Clean Air Coalition, and its partners, such as the WHO, are constantly updating the science on air pollution and researching new solutions for different stakeholders. Read the reports below to stay informed and drive positive change



### **FULL REPORT: INTEGRATED ASSESSMENT OF AIR POLLUTION AND CLIMATE CHANGE FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT IN AFRICA**

[CLIMATE AND CLEAN AIR COALITION \(CCAC\)](#)  
[UNEP - UN ENVIRONMENT PROGRAMME](#)  
[AFRICAN UNION COMMISSION](#)

The Integrated Assessment of Air Pollution and Climate Change for Sustainable Development in Africa, conducted between 2020 and 2022 in collaboration with the African Union Commission, UN Environment Programme, Climate and Clean Air Coalition, and Stockholm Environment Institute, scientifically examines the role of short-lived climate pollutants (SLCPs) and greenhouse gases in African sustainable development. It evaluates mitigation strategies, policies, and measures to support development and human health over the next four decades, fostering a science-to-policy network.



## Air Pollution Series

### Regulating Air Quality

The first global assessment of air pollution legislation



Achieving **clean air** for blue skies in Seoul, Incheon and Gyeonggi, Republic of Korea

## REGULATING AIR QUALITY: THE FIRST GLOBAL ASSESSMENT OF AIR POLLUTION LEGISLATION

UNEP - UN ENVIRONMENT PROGRAMME

This global study assesses national air quality legislation in 194 States and the European Union (EU) against a model of robust air quality governance developed as part of the research. The model is based on the diversity of air quality laws that exist globally, and the nature of air quality as a collective environmental and social problem that requires certain key features in a comprehensive approach to governance.

## ACHIEVING CLEAN AIR FOR BLUE SKIES IN SEOUL, INCHEON AND GYEONGGI, REPUBLIC OF KOREA

UNEP - UN ENVIRONMENT PROGRAMME

This publication covers 15 years (2005-2020) of air quality in Seoul, Incheon, and Gyeonggi, Republic of Korea. It analyzes pollutants, sources, and health impacts, documenting progress and government initiatives like the Clean Air Conservation Act. Addressing the link between air pollution and climate change, the report recommends actions for future pollution reduction. Serving as a reference for policymakers, researchers, and citizens, it provides insights and recommendations for improving air quality and public health in the Republic of Korea and beyond.

We would like to acknowledge the contribution made by all our partners who supported the observance of the International Day of Clean Air for blue skies.

There was large scale participation across different government bodies, UN agencies and key partners to make this Day a resounding success. Resources were contributed by the Ministry of Environment, Republic of Korea and the Federal Ministry of Environment and the German Federal Ministry of Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ). Coordination for the Day is led by UNEP's Pollution and Health Unit, UNEP's Communication Division and the Climate and Clean Air Coalition.

## Leading Coordinating Partners



## Funding Partners



## Collaborating Agencies



## For further information:

**Atif Butt**

**Chief, Public Advocacy & Communication**

United Nations Environment Programme

atif.butt@un.org

**Soraya Smaoun**

**Coordinator - Air Quality, Pollution and Health Unit**

United Nations Environment Programme

soraya.smaoun@un.org



International Day  
of Clean Air  
for blue skies



Emphasizing the need to make further efforts to improve air quality, including reducing air pollution, to protect human health; acknowledging that improving air quality can enhance climate change mitigation and that climate change mitigation efforts can improve air quality; the United Nations General Assembly decided to designate 7 September as the International Day of Clean Air for blue skies. The inaugural observance was marked in 2020, calling for global action to beat air pollution.