

Side-Event “Solutions towards an Air-Pollution Free Planet”

12:30-13:30, Thursday, 7 September 2017*

Conference Room 4, United Nations Conference Centre

Air pollution is the world’s largest environmental health risk. According to the World Health Organization (WHO), exposure to air pollution costs the lives of 7 million people each year. Bulk of the burden is happening in the Asia Pacific region, where there are 3.3 million deaths linked to indoor air pollution and 2.6 million deaths related to outdoor air pollution (2012 estimates). Besides its health impacts, air pollution also poses a threat to the region’s economy, in terms of the lost labour income and welfare losses, food and water security, and climate system, thereby undermining poverty alleviation and achievement of sustainable development goals.

Of primary concern is emissions exposure from old and unmaintained diesel engines, industries, open burning, construction, among others, which adversely affect the environment, health and quality of life in cities. Several of these air pollution sources also contribute to global warming, such as diesel emissions which contain black carbon, a short-lived climate pollutant (SLCP). SLCPs are agents that have relatively short lifetime in the atmosphere and a warming influence on climate.

Air pollution levels have been worsening in recent years mostly due to rapid economic growth and urbanization, increasing energy consumption patterns, and intensified industrialization observed in the region. Between 2008 and 2013, the highest urban air pollution levels (as PM_{10} and $PM_{2.5}$) were experienced in low-and middle-income countries in WHO South-East Asia Regions, with annual mean levels often exceeding 5-10 times WHO limits, followed by low-income cities in WHO Western Pacific Region.

Urgent action to improve air quality is needed in the Asia Pacific. At the historic Environment Assembly in 2014, air pollution was identified as a top priority that requires immediate and coordinated action. Action should be well informed with strong scientific understanding to ensure that the measures undertaken are effective and are responsive to the local context. Best practices and experience on solutions can be valuable as the region works towards reducing air pollution and improving quality of life.

This side event will focus on highlighting existing effective solutions in the form of regulations, policies, economic instruments, and technologies to improve air quality within a broader context of sustainable development. This will also provide opportunities to discuss concrete steps on how to scale-up and increase uptake of existing solutions in the Asia-Pacific region.

Sustainable lunch is provided to participants in front of Conference Room 4 (available from 12.00PM), organized by the Resource Efficiency team of UN Environment

Programme

A short video on Breathelife Campaign	
Opening	
Welcome Remarks by Dr Ramon Paje, Vice President for Asia Pacific, United Nations Environment Assembly	
Panel discussion: Solutions towards an Air-Pollution Free Planet	
Setting the scene Status, sources and impacts of air pollution in Asia Pacific	Dr Supat Wangwongwatana CCAC Science Advisory Panel member Former Director General of the Pollution Control Department, Thailand
Panelists: Each panelist will share examples of successful solutions to improve air quality; and then discussion on success factors, how to scale up and increase uptake of these good practices in the region	
Government representative	Singapore Ministry of Environment and Water Resources (to discuss Singapore 2020 air quality targets and priority measures developed and being implemented to achieve them) (to be confirmed)
City representative	Metropolitan Electricity Authority of Bangkok Mr. Jumpote Himacharoen, Research and Development Department (to share plan to increase share of electric vehicles in fleet and anticipated benefits in terms of air pollution and GHG reduction and fuel savings)
Private sector representative	Thai Solar Energy Public Company Dr. Cathleen Maleenont, CEO (to share company technology, trend of solar energy market, challenges and state policy support to enhance clean energy market) Vera Automotive Co. Ltd Mr. Wanchai Meesiri, Engineering and Service Director (to share electric car manufacturing technology, the market trend in Thailand, challenge and the state policy support needed to enhance the clean technology market)
CSO representative	Clean Air Asia Mr. Alan Silayan, Program Director
Research institute representative	Institute for Global Environmental Strategies Hideyuki Mori, President (to share potential use of tools in analyzing air quality and climate protection benefits of solutions in the transport and waste sector)
Development bank representative	Asian Development Bank (to be confirmed) Bernard Woods, Director (to share perspectives in financing clean air programs)
Closing	
Summary of main messages from panel discussion	

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