

Unlocking and Future-Proofing Air Quality Management in Asia

Multi-stakeholder consultation workshop for improved multilateral and international cooperation on air pollution

27-29 May 2024 | Conference Room 4, UN Conference Centre, Bangkok, Thailand

DRAFT CONCEPT NOTE

Background

Air pollution is one of the most pressing environmental health crises globally. It is responsible for more than 6.5 million deaths annually, the bulk of which – 70 percent – occur in the Asia Pacific. In addition to health hazards, air pollution threatens the region’s economy, food and water security, and climate systems. This hampers the region’s efforts to grow sustainably and alleviate poverty. Urbanization has been identified as one of the main drivers of environmental change¹ with many cities having seen high – and in some areas, rising – levels of air pollution over the past decade.² Everyone is affected, but women, children, the elderly, and people living in poverty are bearing the brunt of its impact. It is infringing on the right to a clean, healthy, and sustainable environment.³

Many efforts and initiatives have been implemented over the past decades to tackle air pollution but have not been able to fully address the problem and need to be responsive to emerging global and regional challenges. At the Sixth Session of the United Nations Environment Assembly (UNEA-6) in February 2024 in Nairobi, Kenya, member states underscored the need to elevate efforts on addressing the significant impacts of air pollution, in line with the Sustainable Development Goals, and adopted a new resolution on *Promoting regional cooperation on air pollution to improve air quality globally*.

Application of foresight and futures thinking in addressing air pollution could help improve approaches for air quality management. UNEP is putting in place an institutionalized approach to strategic foresight and horizon scanning to develop anticipatory and future-oriented culture and to help navigate current and future uncertainty to strengthen the delivery of its mandate.⁴

Within the context of this workshop, futureproofing refers to anticipating future challenges that will impact air quality management and identify solutions, for example, weather and meteorological conditions driving frequency of forest and wildfires, or increasing dust and sandstorms, driving haze and severe air pollution episodes. Unlocking refers to examining and identifying key policies and solutions leading to measurable improvement on air quality.

These can help inform implementation of the new resolution which requests UNEP to “form and facilitate a cooperation network on air quality” working with relevant stakeholders and regional initiatives such as the Acid Deposition Monitoring Network in East Asia (EANET), the Malé Declaration, the Association of Southeast Asian Nations Agreement on Transboundary Haze Pollution, the Asia-Pacific Clean Air Partnership (APCAP), North-East Asia Clean Air Partnership (NEACAP) and the Thematic Working Group on Air Quality and Health.

¹ <https://www.unep.org/resources/report/geo-cities-towards-green-and-just-cities>

² <https://www.stateofglobalair.org/sites/default/files/documents/2022-08/2022-soga-cities-report.pdf>

³ <https://www.unep.org/news-and-stories/story/landmark-un-resolution-confirms-healthy-environment-human-right>

⁴ <https://www.unep.org/ocs/strategicforesightatunep>

The resolution also requests UNEP to provide an “updated global online platform for network-wide information sharing and communication”. At the regional level, after the adoption of the Regional Action Programme on Air Pollution (RAPAP) in 2022, ESCAP is initiating the development of an online RAPAP Partnership and Coordination Platform. The Platform aims to facilitate complementarities among multilateral and multi-stakeholder cooperation mechanisms as well as countries to provide a repository of collaborative work and scale up the impact of joint actions.

Objective

This workshop is jointly organized by UNEP, ESCAP, and EANET to support regional implementation of the UNEA resolution on promoting regional cooperation on air pollution to improve air quality globally and support discussions to “unlock” and “future-proof” air quality management in the region.

This workshop serves as EANET’s Regional Awareness Workshop in 2024 to inform its Participating Countries on the key challenges and emerging issues on air quality management and provide inputs to its Medium-Term Plan for 2026-2030. This workshop also serves as an important opportunity for ESCAP to inform stakeholders about the development of the RAPAP Partnership and Coordination Platform, map out activities of potential partners, and obtain feedback and suggestions on the Platform as a shared resource for information exchange and coordination, thus facilitating multilateral and international cooperation in support of RAPAP.

About Acid Deposition Monitoring Network in East Asia (EANET)

The [Acid Deposition Monitoring Network in East Asia \(EANET\)](#) was established in 2001 as an intergovernmental initiative to create a common understanding on the state of acid deposition and air pollution in East Asia, provide useful inputs for decision making, and promote cooperation among countries.

About the Regional Action Programme on Air Pollution (RAPAP)

The [Regional Action Programme on Air Pollution \(RAPAP\)](#) was adopted in 2022 during ESCAP’s Seventh Session of the Committee on Environment and Development as the first region-wide action programme negotiated and agreed by Member States.

About the Asia Pacific Clean Air Partnership (APCAP)

The [Asia Pacific Clean Air Partnership \(APCAP\)](#) is a voluntary partnership launched by UNEP and partners in 2015 as a response to the call for action on air quality at the First Session of UNEA in 2014 (Resolution 1/7 on Air Quality) and 2017 (Resolution on Preventing and Reducing Air pollution).

Preliminary Agenda

27 May 2024 – Day 1

Time (ICT)	Agenda	Proposed Speaker/s
Opening session		
9.00 – 9.15	Opening remarks	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • UNEP • ESCAP • EANET
9.15 – 9.35	Keynote presentation: Using strategic foresight for improving air quality	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • UNEP
Horizon scanning for air quality management		
9.35 – 10.40	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Impact of extreme weather and changing climate on air quality (could include wildfires, etc.) • Emerging challenges on air quality and health (could include linkages to One Health, ageing population, etc.) • Harnessing digital technologies for air quality management • Applying human rights-based approach for air quality management 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • World Meteorological Organization • World Health Organization • TBD • Stockholm Environment Institute
10.40 – 11.00	<i>Coffee and networking</i>	
Panel discussion on understanding the transboundary haze issue		
11.00 – 12.00	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Roadmap for haze-free Southeast Asia • Agricultural waste burning • Air quality forecasting and information systems 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Representative from ASEAN Member State • Thailand Environment Institute • WMO/University of Copenhagen • Food and Agriculture Organization
12.00 – 13.00	<i>Lunch and networking</i>	
Unlocking finance for clean air in cities		
13.00 – 13.20	Financing for clean air	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • UNEP • Clean Air Fund
13.20 – 13.25	Video: Achieving clean air for blue skies in Seoul, Incheon and Gyeonggi, Republic of Korea	
13.25 – 14.25	Panel discussion	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Representative from Seoul, Incheon, or Gyeonggi • Representative from Ulaanbaatar city • Representative from Ministry of Environment Republic of Korea • Representative from World Bank • Representative from Massive Earth Foundation
14.25 – 14.40	Q&A and discussion	Interventions (proposed) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Representative from Cambodia MoE • Representative from Japan MoE (climate finance/JCM) • Representative from Indian city

Time (ICT)	Agenda	Proposed Speaker/s
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Representative from NAIR
14.40 – 15.00	<i>Coffee and networking</i>	
Open discussion on sectoral interventions		
15.00 – 16.00	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reducing emissions from energy, transport, industries and land use 	
Panel discussion on future challenges and solutions on air quality management		
16.00 – 17:00	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Challenges in implementing current policies • Developing solutions to address future challenges 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Representatives from National and Local Governments • Climate and Clean Air Coalition • ESCAP
17:00 – 17:30	Launch of the 2024 LowCarbon.Earth Accelerator	
17:30 – 18:30	Reception	

28 May 2024 – Day 2

Time (ICT)	Agenda	Proposed Speaker/s
9.00 – 9.10	Summary of first day and overview of second day	
9.10 – 9.30	Video on RAPAP Overview of RAPAP Partnership and Coordination Platform	ESCAP
RAPAP as a Collective Action Programme		
9.30 – 10.30	(a) Air Quality Management Presentations Q&A	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • GIZ (Integrated Approaches for Air Quality Management in Southeast Asia) • Energy Foundation (Cooperation on air quality management) • IGES (Asian Co-benefits Partnership) • Country participant
10.30 – 10.50	<i>Coffee and networking</i>	
10.50 – 11.50	(b) Air Quality Monitoring and Data Sharing Presentations Q&A	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ASEAN Specialised Meteorological Centre (Monitoring and data sharing on transboundary haze) • ADPC (Mekong Air Quality Explorer) • ICIMOD (Atmospheric Watch Initiative) • National Institute of Environmental Research, Republic of Korea (Pandora Asia Network) • EANET (Long-term air quality and meteorological data sets)
11.50 – 12.30	(c) Exchange of Best Practices and Outreach Presentations Q&A	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Clean Air Asia (Better Air Quality) • UNEP (Asia Pacific Clean Air Partnership) • International Union of Air Pollution Prevention and Environmental

Time (ICT)	Agenda	Proposed Speaker/s
		Protection Associations (Information exchange and advocacy for clean air)
12.30 – 13.30	Lunch	
13.30 – 14.30	(d) Capacity Building and Technical Support for National Action Presentations Q&A	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ADB (Asia Clean Blue Skies Program) • USAID (SERVIR-Southeast Asia) • JICA (Technical Support for Air Quality Management in Asia) • FHI360 (Data-driven solutions to address air pollution) • Country participant
14.30 – 15.30	Moderated discussion on RAPAP Partnership and Coordination Platform: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What are the key partnership and coordination gaps? • How can the Platform help fill these gaps? • How can the Platform enhance participation of national stakeholders in multilateral initiatives? • What can be the modalities to optimize information sharing through the Platform? 	Moderators: ESCAP and UNEP
15.30 – 15.50	<i>Coffee and networking</i>	
Catalyzing Action		
15.50 – 16.50	Opportunities for technical cooperation: Presentations Moderated discussion	Presenter and Moderator: ESCAP
16.50 – 17.00	Summary	ESCAP and UNEP

29 May 2024 – Day 3

- EANET Session on Medium-Term Plan 2026-2030 preparation, 9.00 – 12.30 (by invitation only - for EANET Participating Countries, Meeting Room B, UNCC)
- EANET Southeast Asia Emissions Inventory / Source Apportionment Project Meeting, 13:30-17:00 (by invitation only, Meeting Room B, UNCC)