

**THE IMPACT OF AIR POLLUTION ON HEALTH AND CLIMATE:
IMMEDIATE ACTION NOW REQUIRED**

**JOINT STATEMENT BY THE INTERNATIONAL UNION OF AIR POLLUTION
PREVENTION ASSOCIATIONS AND CLEAN AIR ASIA**

'Clean Air for Cities', the International Conference convened by IUAPPA and CAA comes to a close today. Its aim has been to help fashion an effective response to the challenge presented by recent evidence on the impact of air pollution on health and on global warming, dramatically highlighted by the deadly smogs that have repeatedly enveloped major Asian cities in recent years.

1000 delegates, 500 significant research papers, review reports, and numerous new initiatives at the conference can provide the stimulus for a significant step forward in atmospheric science and policy, and their conclusions and implications will be assessed and followed up in the coming months, for instance at Habitat III in Quito which will adopt the New Urban Agenda and localize the Sustainable Development Goals. Meanwhile, amid the wealth of evidence, the central conclusions on health and climate impacts of air pollution - summarised here – need to be urgently recognised and acted upon.

Reducing the toll of premature and unnecessary deaths

The figure of 7 million premature deaths from air pollution annually reported by the WHO has been further substantiated. Other work, discussed at the Conference, pointed to a broadly similar conclusion. It also emphasised that it is not just China that faces a formidable problem but other Asian countries also. The largest potential for deteriorating air quality is now in India, while Pakistan, Bangladesh, Indonesia and Vietnam are also high on the list of countries where premature mortality attributable to air pollution is growing rapidly.

Further, for at least another generation, through to 2030, the current level of premature mortality will continue to rise as a result of the age structure of the population. Mitigation policies, such as those now being developed by China and some other countries, can reduce the rising toll but, until 2030, not below current levels.

In the course of the Conference, the World Health Organisation, the International Energy Agency, the Climate and Clean Air Coalition and others joined in urging early and more radical action by countries in Asia and across the world. Evidence from them and others made clear that the large potential social and economic benefits from reduction of emissions of the pollutants that cause health damage, and the variety of sectors in which cost-effective and technically feasible mitigation measures can be found, make arguments against pursuing transformative action unsustainable. However, to be successful, such action must be based on a holistic approach, ensure community engagement, and mindful of the potential harmful unintended effects of simplistic solutions to this complex problem.

Keeping open the possibility of achieving climate mitigation targets

Latest scientific evidence presented at the conference also indicates that without immediate action on short-lived climate pollutants – predominantly the same pollutants that damage human health – it will be impossible to hold global average temperature rise to well below 2 degrees Celsius above pre-industrial levels, as proposed in the Paris Accord. In the face of increasing frequency of extreme weather events, including wild fires, floods, heat waves and droughts, and the fact that the first 7 months of 2016 place it on course to be the hottest year on record, we are already getting perilously close to the 1.5 degree aspiration in the Accord.

There is already wide recognition of the potential benefits of reducing emissions of short-lived climate pollutants including methane, black carbon, tropospheric ozone and hydrofluorocarbons, for implementing the Paris Accord and achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) by the 2030 target date (including the goals on health, agriculture, energy, poverty, gender equality, sustainable cities, clean water and sanitation).

What this meeting has made clear is that urgent action to secure the early benefits of SLCP mitigation is now essential rather than optional for achieving longer-term international climate targets.

Global action on black carbon and methane could help slow expected warming in 2050 by up to 0.5 degree Celsius, while the phasing down of HFCs could avoid a further 0.1 degree Celsius by 2050 and up to 0.5 degree Celsius by 2100. By mitigating the emission of short-lived climate pollutants, about 2.4 million annual premature deaths and 52 million tonnes of annual crop loss can be avoided by 2030.

The International Union and Clean Air Asia now therefore call for the adoption of a two-pronged approach which emphasises reducing the near-term rate of warming as well as keeping the long-term peak below dangerous levels in order to achieve climate targets and the sustainable development goals at the local, regional and global levels. Such an approach would appropriately reflect the multiple benefits associated with quick action to mitigate both short-lived climate pollutants and long-lived greenhouse gases.

It is important that countries now commit to scale-up action urgently. We must not wait until new strategies and formal targets are negotiated before we take action. International negotiations take time. The time to act is now. Countries and cities need to recognise the scale of the contribution required from SLCPs to deliver climate mitigation goals, and how they can most effectively be delivered. This can be secured by active engagement with the initiatives of the Climate and Clean Air Coalition and other cooperative programmes, and the engagement of civil society, the private sector and other stakeholders, which Clean Air Asia and the International Union will continue to assist in any way they can.

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