

ASIA PACIFIC COMMEMORATION OF THE 5th INTERNATIONAL DAY OF CLEAN AIR FOR BLUE SKIES

Invest in #CleanAirNow

6 September 2024 (09:00-12:00, UTC+7)

Conference Room 4, United Nations Conference Centre, Bangkok, Thailand (Hybrid)

Tentative Programme

BACKGROUND

Air pollution remains the primary environmental health risk globally, leading to premature deaths and widespread health issues. The most recent State of Global Air report shows that Air pollution accounted for ¹8.1 million deaths globally in 2021, becoming the second leading risk factor for death, including for children under five years. In 2021, more than 700,000 deaths in children under five years were linked to air pollution; this represents ²15% of all global deaths in children under five.

99% of the world's population is exposed to harmful levels of PM 2.5. Especially, countries in Asia, Africa, and the Middle East continue to experience the highest levels of ambient PM2.5. In addition, air pollution exacerbates climate change, posing a threat to the health and livelihoods of current and future generations. Therefore, reducing air pollution is vital for achieving the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

Despite the critical nature of the issue, clean air interventions and other air quality management elements have not been financed to their full potential. Between 2015 and 2021, ³less than 1 per cent of international development funding was committed to outdoor air pollution, with most committed funding going to just a handful of countries. This calls for urgent and amplified action. It is crucial to recognise air pollution's indiscriminate nature and its impact on every individual, collective and cooperative effort. This includes the involvement of governments, international organizations, businesses, and civil society in addressing this challenge.

The United Nations General Assembly's resolution on 26 November 2019 established the 7th of September as the "International Day of Clean Air for blue skies," highlighting the need for increased public awareness and coordinated action to enhance air quality. The United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) has been tasked with overseeing this observance, drawing

¹ Institute for Health Metrics and Evaluation (IHME). *Global Burden of Disease 2021: Findings from the GBD 2021 Study*. Seattle, WA: IHME, 2024

² Health Effects Institute. *2024. State of Global Air 2024. Special Report*. Boston, MA: Health Effects Institute.

³ Clean Air Fund. *The State of Global Air Quality Funding 2023*

global attention under varying themes since 2020, such as "Clean Air for All," "Healthy Air, Healthy Planet," "The Air We Share," and "Together for Clean Air."

For 2024, the theme "Invest in #CleanAirNow" emphasizes the economic, environmental, and health benefits of investing in clean air and aims to engage governments, industries, corporations, financial institutions, international organizations, and actors of civil society. Despite the significant harm air pollution causes to our economies, our planet and our health, clean air efforts remain chronically underfunded. There is a critical need for investment, robust policies, legislation, and climate action to combat air pollution. Clean Air is an asset. Therefore, we must invest in it to save and improve millions of lives, help tackle climate change, build fairer societies, and strengthen economies. By committing to investing in clean air, we can help prevent far greater economic, environmental, and health-related expenses down the line.

EVENT OBJECTIVE

The objective of the session is to commemorate the fifth International Day of Clean Air for blue skies in Asia and the Pacific region.

Specifically, the event will aim to:

- Discuss the direct linkages between investments in air quality and economic, environmental, and health benefits
- Facilitate the sharing of good practices by showcasing successful investments at national and local levels that have led to significant improvements in air quality.
- Share perspectives on how regional collaboration and pooled financial resources can address air pollution more effectively in Asia and the Pacific.
- Highlight the health impacts of air pollution on children and address the importance of child-focused action to reduce air pollution and protect children's health.

By focusing on these objectives, the event aspires to drive increased investment and collaborative efforts towards ensuring cleaner air for all.

TARGET AUDIENCE

The event will emphasize the necessity of increased investment in initiatives aimed at improving air quality and will spotlight international support and tangible actions taken towards this goal. The event is intended to catalyze action from government entities, the private sector, and civil society. Specifically, the target audience will include national and local government officials, investors and financial institutions, experts, private sector representatives, civil society organizations, and international organizations as well as youth representing future generations. By engaging this diverse audience, the event aims to foster a multifaceted and cohesive approach to investing in clean air, ensuring a broad spectrum of participation and commitment.

DATE, VENUE, FORMAT

This event will be held on 6 September 2024 in a hybrid format – hosted in-person in Conference Room 4, United Nations Conference Centre and available virtually. The main programme will be three hours, from 09.30 to 12.00 (150 minutes), and lunch will be provided from 12.00 to 13.30 (UTC+7).

DRAFT PROGRAMME (09.00-12.00 UTC+7)

Time	Agenda
09.00 – 09.30 (30')	Registration
09.30 – 09.45 (15')	Opening Remarks <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ms. Inger Andersen, Executive Director, UNEP (Video Message) • Ms. Armida Salsiah Alisjahbana, Executive Secretary, ESCAP (TBC) • H.E. Mr. Yongmin Park, Ambassador of the Republic of Korea to Thailand (TBC)
09.45 – 10.05 (20')	High-Level Statements (In-person/ Video Message) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Ministers of Environment (TBC)</i> • <i>Ministers of Foreign Affairs (TBC)</i> • <i>Ambassadors of the member states (TBC)</i>
10.05 – 10.35 (30')	Voices from the Youth (UNICEF Thailand/ UNICEF EAPRO) <i>Moderator: (TBC)</i> Youth panel discussion <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Youth panelists: (TBC)</i>
10.35 - 10.55 (20')	Coffee and Networking
10.55 – 11.55 (60')	Invest in #CleanAirNow: Exploring Financial Strategies and Multi-Dimensional Benefits of Clean Air Investments <i>Moderator: UNESCAP (TBC)</i> Framing presentation: The Importance of financing and collaboration for broad economic, social, and health benefits (10 minutes) <i>Presenter: Clean Air Fund (TBC)</i> Panel discussion: (40 minutes) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Member states: Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment of Thailand (TBC) • Major groups and stakeholders: Foundation for Climate Protection and Carbon Offset (TBC)

Time	Agenda
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • International organization: Asian Development Bank, United States Agency for International Development (TBC) • Youth representative: (TBC) <p><u>Panelists will be requested to:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Emphasize the economic, social, and health co-benefits of investing in clean air solutions. This includes improved public health outcomes, job creation, and economic growth. Panelists should share data and case studies that showcase how clean air investments lead to broader societal gains and contribute to sustainable development. • Provide concrete examples of innovative financing or investment strategies implemented at the local, national, or regional level that have been successful in providing economic, social or health impact. Discuss the mechanisms and detailed outcomes of investment strategies in order to describe their effectiveness. • Explore the role of public and private sector collaboration in scaling up investments for clean air. Panelists should reflect on how enhanced cooperation among different stakeholders, including governments, industries, corporations, financial institutions, international organizations, and civil society, can mobilize resources and create synergies for better air quality management. • Particularly address how clean air investments can improve public health outcomes for vulnerable populations, such as children. Panelists should discuss specific strategies and measures that have effectively protected these groups and ensured equitable benefits from clean air initiatives. <p>Open discussion (Q&A) and reflections from the floor (10 minutes)</p>
11.55 – 12.00 (05')	<p>Closing Remarks Ms. Dechen Tsering, UNEP Regional Director and Representative for Asia and the Pacific (TBC)</p>
12.00 – 13.30 (90')	<p>Reception</p>

Associated events:

Together with the main programme, several related events will be held during this week of September. The listing of these specific events includes:

September 5th (Thu):

- **Commemorative event with schools of Thailand:** ROK embassy and KOICA office in Thailand (TBC)

- **Session on cities:** exploring best practices to improve air quality through long-term and large-scale of funding plans – Clean Air Asia (CAA) (TBC)
- **Session on open burning:** financial mechanisms and policies to eliminate open burning of biomass and agricultural crop residue – Hub of Talents on Air Pollution and Climate (HTAPC) of Thammasat University (TBC)