



Press release 7 September 2020

## **Achieving Africa's development in a way that limits air pollution and climate change**

**Nairobi, 7 September 2020 – As the world celebrates the first International Day of Clean Air for blue skies, a new assessment is being developed to illustrate how Africa can achieve key development goals, provide clean air for its people, and help the global fight against climate change. The assessment aims to inform decision making for sustainable economic development in Africa.**

Air pollution and climate change threaten Africa's development because of their negative impacts on human health, well-being and productivity. Air pollution and climate change reduce agricultural productivity, for example, with implications for food and nutritional security. Urgent, large-scale action is needed at all levels of government. This new assessment, the first of its kind for Africa, will support evidence-based policy across the continent and can underpin effective action.

Led by the Climate and Clean Air Coalition (CCAC) in partnership with UN Environment Programme (UNEP) and the Stockholm Environment Institute (SEI), this first regional African assessment of air pollution and climate change, brings together scientists, policy leaders and practitioners working across Africa to consider the continent's rapid development, and the associated air pollution challenges and climate risks.

The assessment will also promote capacity building and action geared towards reducing emissions among governments and stakeholders in Africa. While development is a priority for Africa to achieve the 'Africa we want', as outlined in the African Union's Agenda 2063, this does not have to be at the expense of the environment or people's health.

Helena Molin Valdés, Head of the Climate and Clean Air Coalition Secretariat said: "This assessment is important because it identifies development priorities and actions that can both reduce high levels of air pollution over the next decade while also reducing climate forcing emissions in line with global commitments and the Paris Agreement."

The assessment includes a focus on Short-Lived Climate Pollutants (SLCPs) – air pollutants that warm the atmosphere, whose mitigation play an important role in slowing the rate of global warming. The assessment will also highlight strategies that simultaneously reduce emissions of air pollutants and long-lived greenhouse gases (GHGs).

### **Two big challenges: data and capacity**

Two of the biggest issues for African countries are the lack of data on the emissions causing air pollution and climate change, and inadequate policy and implementation capacity. Countries need this data to plan policies that can reduce air pollution and deliver national development priorities and climate goals. The assessment aims to fill some of these gaps and increase local knowledge and institutional capacity so governments can integrate and implement air pollution and climate change policies.

By increasing local capacity for action, the assessment aims to build on the existing community of practice among African scientists, policy makers and practitioners, to amplify the role and potential of emission mitigation strategies to support sustainable development in Africa.

Philip Osano, Centre Director of Stockholm Environment Institute in Nairobi, said: “The African regional assessment will determine how development in Africa can proceed at the same time as limiting air pollution and its negative impacts on health, agriculture, environment, forestry, and livelihoods.”

The assessment will also seek to understand the potential for limiting climate change, and implications for adaptation to climate change in Africa. It will focus on identifying coherent strategies that can give multiple air quality and climate benefits.

Internationally recognised scientists from African institutions and global science organisations will be leading the assessment under the guidance of three co-chairs; Alice Akinyi Kaudia, former Environment Secretary at the Ministry of Environment and Forestry, Kenya, Youba Sokona, Vice-Chair of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), and Brian Mantlana, Impact Area Manager: Holistic Climate Change, Smart Places Cluster, Council for Scientific and Industrial Research (CSIR). The co-chairs are responsible for the strategic decisions in the assessment process.

### **Tackling the inequalities of air pollution and climate change**

Juliette Biao Koudenoukpo the Director and Regional Representative of the Africa Office at UN Environment Programme said: “In the face of growing inequality on pollution a significant burden of air pollution-related deaths occurs in Africa, yet we lack accurate timely information hindering progress in mitigating the increasing harmful effects of air pollution to human health, regional climate and crop yield.”

“To fill this gap, it is important to prioritize creating awareness, invest in contextualizing the progress made and the unique challenges and solutions in monitoring air pollution in Africa and in assessing the impacts. Through this Africa assessment significant progress has been made reaching out to stakeholders and embedding the assessment process in the region,” she continued.

The importance of the assessment to African policy makers was noted by the African Ministerial Conference on Environment (AMCEN) in Decision 17/2 acknowledging the importance of SLCPs and the ‘need for an assessment of the linkage between policies to address air pollution and policies to address climate change’ during its 17th Session in Durban, South Africa.

The findings of the assessment will inform the decisions of the African Union Commission regarding the air quality and climate implications of the ‘Agenda 2063’ of the African Union and achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals.

Alice Kaudia, one of the Co-Chairs guiding the assessment said: “Air pollution in all its forms endangers the quality of human life in many ways. That millions of people suffer premature deaths due to air pollution signals the need for urgent action. In Africa, the situation is acute with the most vulnerable segment of Africa’s population – women and children – being at higher risk of susceptibility to chronic respiratory diseases because of exposure to indoor air pollution arising from the use of biomass fuels for cooking and paraffin for lighting. In addition, exposure to out-door air pollution from open burning of waste, especially plastics at open dumpsites and open burning of agricultural residues worsens the situation. The Assessment is timely, and the results will inform policy and strategic action for impactful change to development practices and investment decisions in Africa for global good. “

The Assessment will hold its first Author’s meeting remotely in early October and encourages wide participation, especially from early career researchers. A series of internet-based seminars will also be launched in September

2020. Through these seminars, the assessment process, supporting modelling approaches and target outputs will be discussed with African stakeholders.

The CCAC Secretariat is seeking reviewers. To express interest and contribute, get in touch on:  
[Africa-Assessment@sei.org](mailto:Africa-Assessment@sei.org)

Join us on 7th September 2020 twitter stream: #reduced air pollution for blue skies, and well-being;  
#reduced air pollution action for development in Africa

### **For interviews, please contact:**

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### **Further information**

Join us on 7 September 2020 for the webinar at 3 pm BST: [Building back better: why we must address air pollution to tackle public health and climate change](#)

Read the SEI policy brief '[Air pollution and its impact on human health: an important driver for achieving the 1.5°C goal of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change](#)'

Read the perspective '[How to enhance NDCs, reduce air pollution and improve human health](#)'

### **International Day of Clean Air for blue skies**

The United Nations General Assembly adopted the [Resolution to hold an International Day of Clean Air for blue skies](#) on December 19, 2019, during its 74th session and invited the [United Nations Environment Programme \(UNEP\)](#) to facilitate the observance of the International Day, in collaboration with other relevant organisations. The resolution stresses the importance of and urgent need to raise public awareness at all levels and to promote and facilitate actions to improve air quality.

**[Stockholm Environment Institute \(SEI\)](#)** is an international non-profit research and policy organization that tackles environment and development challenges. We connect science and decision-making to develop solutions for a sustainable future for all. Across our eight centres in Europe, Asia, Africa and the Americas, we engage with policy processes, development action and business practice throughout the world. @SEIresearch @SEIclimate

**[The Climate & Clean Air Coalition \(CCAC\)](#)** is the only global effort that unites governments, civil society and private sector, committed to improving air quality and protecting the climate in next few decades by reducing short-lived climate pollutants across sectors. Complementary to mitigating CO2 emissions, the Coalition acts as a catalyst to create, implement and share immediate solutions addressing near-term climate change to improve people's lives rapidly, and to ensure sustainable development for future generations.

**The United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP)** is the leading global environmental authority that sets the global environmental agenda, promotes the coherent implementation of the environmental dimension of sustainable development within the United Nations system, and serves as an authoritative advocate for the global environment.