WHO and CCAC launch new report on health benefits from reducing Short-lived Climate Pollutants

Geneva, October 22, 2015: The World Health Organization (WHO) in collaboration with the Climate and Clean Air Coalition (CCAC) today launched a new report for policy makers on the wide-ranging global health benefits from reducing short-lived climate pollutants (SLCPs) including black carbon, tropospheric ozone, and methane. It is the first scoping review of its kind commissioned by WHO and was peer-reviewed by nearly 2 dozen experts worldwide.

The report examines more than 19 available and affordable SLCP mitigation actions, and identifies measures that have a potentially “high” probability of both significantly improving health and reducing near-term climate change.

Many of the health and climate benefits from SLCP emissions reduction are realized locally and within 20 years – two features that make SLCP mitigation measures particularly attractive to policy-makers. Some of the most health-enhancing strategies for reducing SLCP emissions can also lead to substantial reductions in carbon dioxide (CO₂) emissions, and therefore help mitigate both near and longer-term climate change.

The SLCPs of greatest health relevance include black carbon, a common component of fine particulate matter (PM₂.₅), which is the air pollutant most associated with premature death and morbidity, as well as tropospheric ozone, which has significant adverse impacts on respiratory health. Methane, another SLCP, contributes to formation of tropospheric ozone.

Helena Molin Valdés, Head of the CCAC Secretariat, said that by outlining specific cross cutting actions that can most significantly improve health and protect the climate the report gives policy makers and health professionals a solid range of options for fast action.

“Many of the suggested pathways are practical and technically feasible and the multiple benefits they deliver should provide decision makers with the impetus to act,” Ms. Molin Valdés said. “The CCAC has a number of initiatives already being implemented that can deliver high benefits to health and climate and we welcome interested parties to join and learn from them.”

CCAC initiatives that have some of the highest benefits to health and climate include: improving cook-stoves and fuels in households, which has the potential to reduce household air pollution – the leading environmental factor for ill-health, responsible for approximately
4.3 million deaths annually; and clean transport that aims to reduce emissions from heavy duty diesel vehicles and emissions, a major source of outdoor air pollution.

Activities by the CCAC brick initiative have helped the Bangladesh government improve health and air quality by working with the industry to reduce black carbon pollution from the 7,000 brick kilns in the country through awareness raising, the setting up of regional networks, developing strategies to engage small producers, and create more formal policies for the sector. This ultimately led to investments by the Asian Development Bank, the World Bank, and the UN Development Programme to help modernize the Bangladesh brick sector.

The CCAC is also active in other areas highlighted as beneficial to health and climate including, agriculture, and waste management.

Bringing together knowledge from the health and climate domains will form the foundation for the WHO/CCAC global awareness raising campaign “Breathe Life”, as well as to support the health sector and urban decision makers through the CCAC’s Urban Health Initiative.

More than 50% of the world’s population now resides in urban areas, up from less than 30% in 1950. Every day the urban population grows by an estimated 200,000 people, and the expansion in terms of land cover is even faster. Cities provide an opportunity to implement multiple SLCP mitigation actions simultaneously and to benefit from potential synergies.

Reducing SLCPs has the potential to save millions of lives each year and, together with deep and lasting cuts to CO₂, help reduce the impacts of climate change, making the planet safer for all life.

CONTACT
Sandra Cavalieri, CCAC Health Initiative Coordinator: Sandra.Cavalieri@unep.org
Tiy Chung, CCAC Communications Officer: Tiy.Chung@unep.org, +33 1 44 37 14 21

RESOURCES
FAQs can be found here