



**CLIMATE &
CLEAN AIR
COALITION**
TO REDUCE SHORT-LIVED
CLIMATE POLLUTANTS

PRESS RELEASE

Air Pollution a Bigger Health Problem than Previously Thought, WHO Says

Geneva, 25 March 2014 – The World Health Organization (WHO) announced today that air pollution is now the world’s largest single environmental health risk, resulting in 7 million premature deaths in 2012.

The finding doubles previous estimates of the size of the challenge.

“Air pollution is the biggest environmental health problem and is affecting everyone from developing and developed countries, rich and less rich,” said Maria Neira, Director of Public Health and the Environment for WHO.

In new estimates released today, WHO asserted that 4.3 million premature deaths resulted from indoor air pollution, primarily caused by indoor smoke from cooking with biomass fuels and coal. Outdoor air pollution caused 3.7 million deaths. Low- and middle-income countries in South-East Asia and the Western Pacific Region had the largest air pollution-related burden.

“WHO’s new, alarming figures only confirm the urgency to act on this widespread health hazard from both indoor and outdoor air pollution,” said Helena Molin Valdes, Head of the Climate and Clean Air Coalition (CCAC) Secretariat. “Black carbon is one of the most harmful short-lived air pollutants to health and can be addressed with cleaner cooking and heating facilities in households, and cleaner diesel and engines. These measures also help address near-term climate change. It’s time for governments everywhere to step up and address this looming public health tragedy.”

In 2014 the CCAC will launch a campaign to raise the visibility of air pollution as a major health risk. Through a health task force led by Norway and the WHO, the campaign will attempt to demonstrate that short-lived climate pollutants, especially black carbon and methane, are as much of a health problem as they are a climate problem, and that political will is needed to find broad-based solutions. As a partner of the CCAC, WHO provides technical support for harnessing health benefits from actions to reduce short-lived climate pollutants and works to scale up health sector engagement to address such pollutants and improve air quality.

“The role of governments is crucial,” said Carlos Dora, coordinator of the Interventions for Healthy Environments unit of WHO’s Department of Public Health and Environment. “WHO and health sectors have a unique role in translating scientific evidence on air pollution into policies that can deliver impact and improvements that will save lives.”

The Climate and Clean Air Coalition to Reduce Short Lived Climate Pollutants is a partnership of governments, intergovernmental organizations, the private sector, the environmental community, and other members of civil society. The Coalition is government-led but is highly cooperative and voluntary. Short-lived climate pollutants are agents that have a relatively short lifetime in the atmosphere—a few days to a few decades—but also a warming influence on climate as well as, in many cases, detrimental impacts on human health, agriculture and ecosystems.

The Climate and Clean Air Coalition is a voluntary global partnership of governments, intergovernmental organizations, businesses, scientific institutions and civil society committed to catalyzing concrete, substantial action to reduce Short Lived Climate Pollutants (including methane, black carbon and many hydrofluorocarbons). The Coalition has [11 initiatives](#) working to raise awareness, mobilize resources and lead transformative actions in key emitting and cross cutting sectors. SLCP reduction must go hand in hand with deep and persistent cuts to carbon dioxide and other long-lived greenhouse gases if we are to stay under a 2 degrees Celsius warming limit.

ENDS

Contact:

Tiy Chung, CCAC Communications Officer: tiychung@unep.org, (+33) 6 86 30 71 28