

## **Japan's Ministry of Environment and UNEP announce cooperation to tackle air pollution in the Asia-Pacific**

**Bangkok, 24 July 2014** – Over 70% of the estimated seven million air pollution-related premature deaths each year occur in Asia and the Pacific, with the majority in low and middle income countries of Southeast Asia and Western Pacific.

At the inaugural session of the UN Environmental Assembly (UNEA) last month attended by over 100 ministers and vice ministers, air pollution was identified as top priority that requires immediate action by the international community and the governments. The Resolution on air pollution, adopted by the UNEA, calls Governments to “formulate action plans and establish and implement nationally determined ambient air quality standards,....and to establish emissions standards for their significant sources of air pollution”.

Responding to this regional crisis and the call to action from the UNEA, today, Japan's Ministry of Environment and UNEP announced a cooperation to tackle air pollution in the region. The Asia Pacific Clean Air Partnership will bring together the multiple regional initiatives to provide clear policy options based on the best science to support action on air pollution across the region.

Asia and the Pacific region contain some of the world's most polluted cities. In some of the cities, particulate matter less than 2.5 micron in diameter ( PM2.5), which is considered as the most harmful to health, is four times higher than the safe limit (25 microgram per cubic meter). Emissions of air pollutants including CO<sub>2</sub> and black carbon, is expected to rise as economies continue to grow and energy use escalates. Increasing reliance on fossil fuels, coal-fired power plants, cars and the use of biomass for cooking and heating are identified as main causes of the spread of air pollution in this region.

“Environmental problems caused by unrestrained growth are becoming so severe that they are threatening to diminish development gains. Nowhere is this more clearly seen than with air pollution and the serious health and economic costs it is imposing on the people of this region,” said Kaveh Zahedi, UNEP Regional Director & Representative for Asia and the Pacific.

Reinforcing air quality assessments that help determine gaps in countries' capacity to address air pollution are one of the aims of this cooperation. A science panel will be established to

develop a science-policy synthesis report on air pollution with data segregated at sub-regional, and regional levels.

A Joint Forum will also be established comprising of various initiatives on air pollution to provide a platform for sharing latest scientific data, internationally agreed guidelines and relevant information on atmospheric science to assist policy makers in setting targets to improve air quality in the region.

“Japan has been supporting air pollution related networks and science research for many years. Through this partnership we hope to encourage greater collaboration between the many regional initiatives and support information exchange between scientists throughout the region,” said Mr. Shinji Inoue, Senior Vice Minister, Ministry of Environment Japan.

The Asia Pacific Clean Air Partnership is an initiative launched by the UNEP Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific in cooperation with Japan’s Ministry of Environment. It will help the countries in the region manage air pollution, bringing with it multiple benefits from improved health, to food and water security, as well as climate change mitigation.

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