



UNITED NATIONS

ENVIRONMENT MANAGEMENT GROUP

**EMG**

## **Concept Note – Nexus Dialogue 4 on Cities, Pollution and Health (3rd December, 2017)**

According to the World Health Organization (2012), ambient – outdoor – air pollution alone kills around 3 million people each year<sup>1</sup>. Moreover, global urban air pollution levels have increased by eight percent between 2008 and 2013, and this is expected to rise given the increasing levels of migration to urban areas. At the same time, rapid urbanisation has continued at an unprecedented pace. The United Nations Human Settlements Programme (2016) estimates that just over half of the world’s population resides in urban areas, whilst cities are responsible for more than 70 percent of global carbon dioxide emissions<sup>2</sup>. A decrease in air quality is associated with many health problems such as non-communicable diseases; notably cardiovascular diseases, stroke, chronic obstructive pulmonary disease, respiratory infections and lung cancer due to long-term exposure to nitrogen oxides and smog<sup>3</sup>. These problems are an impediment to national sustainable development due to the effects on economic growth, worker productivity and healthcare costs.

The diverse nexus between pollution and the environment, and pollution and human health in urban settings, is recognised as a pressing issue on the agenda of policy makers in cities, in national government and at the global level. The issue of pollution affecting the state of the environment and human health, is the topic of discussion at the 3<sup>rd</sup> United Nations Environment Assembly, held in Nairobi from 4<sup>th</sup> to 6<sup>th</sup> December, 2017. In the margins of the Assembly, the United Nations Environment Management Group is organizing its fourth Nexus Dialogue. In collaboration with the World Health Organization, the United Nations Human Settlements Programme and UN Environment, the Dialogue will allow participants to discuss the importance of tackling health risks from air, water and solid waste pollution through multi-sectoral approaches, and at different geographic levels.

During the Dialogue, experiences will be shared on how to integrate both the environment and pollution agendas into local, national and global urban policies, so as to address adverse health effects and promote strategies to deliver the Sustainable Development Goals. Panellists, presenters and participants, including mayors, will highlight best practices and lessons learned, as well as describe the efforts that national and local government, international organisations and the private sector have taken to promote solutions that reduce risk to both the environment and

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<sup>1</sup> World Health Organization (2012) Ambient Air Pollution: a global assessment of exposure and burden of disease

<sup>2</sup> UN-Habitat (2016) Urbanization and Development: Emerging Futures

<sup>3</sup> How Air Quality & Pollution Impact Public Health - <http://www.climate-nexus.org/climate-issues/air-quality>

human health. The Dialogue will also demonstrate the importance of partnerships in creating conditions for cross-sectoral reductions in air pollution.

For a detailed overview on the concept behind the EMG Nexus Dialogues, on implementing the environmental dimension of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, please click [here](#).

It is hoped that the interactive fourth Dialogue will highlight successful, integrated and synergistic policies and programmes at the city, national and global levels, that have already started to transform cities. As such, the Dialogue is designed to show the cases studies already in place, in priority areas such as air pollution, water and sanitation, energy, waste, urban spaces, mobility and climate change.

At the global level, several collaborative efforts already exist including the [Climate & Clean Air Coalition](#), the [Greener Cities Partnership](#) between UN Environment and the United Nations Human Settlements Programme, and the [BreatheLife Campaign](#). In 2008, an Inter-Ministerial Conference for Health and Environment in Gabon, was organised by the World Health Organization and UN Environment, in collaboration with the Government of Gabon. Subsequently, ministers of health, and ministers of environment, of 52 African countries, adopted the [Libreville Declaration on Health and Environment in Africa](#).

The objectives of the 2017 Nexus Dialogue include the following:

- Strengthening the existing pathways of dialogue and collaboration among UN partners
- Exploring practical ways of improved collaboration at existing points of interaction and technical collaboration to build synergies
- Identifying opportunities of collaboration in areas currently unexplored

The Dialogue will comprise a Technical Segment in the morning and a High Level Segment after a light networking lunch. Throughout the Technical Segment, presentations, discussions, and questions and answers are expected to focus on three thematic areas.

These will cover the following:

- Integrating environmental and health policy/decision-making, examples of solutions with a focus on urban settings
- Interlinkages between the environmental and health agendas in the SDGs in addressing urban pollution
- Integrated decision-making and policy solutions at the city, national and global levels on the themes of air, water and solid waste pollution

As part of the High Level Segment, a panel discussion will build upon the outcomes of the presentations and technical discussions, to explore partnerships for integrating the environmental and health agendas into policies for urban settings. The panellists will share their perspectives on issues requiring further action.

An e-discussion platform is available online until December 4<sup>th</sup>. The purpose of hosting online consultations is to enhance the content and discussion of each event in the Nexus Dialogue series. This consultation enables the Environment Management Group to invite participants to contribute to the dialogue who are not able to attend in person, thus enriching the discussion through a wider base of input. Inputs are used to bring new ideas, questions and experiences to the events, and to grow the analysis.

Participants who attend the Dialogue, both in-person and via the [home page](#) live stream, should gain a clear understanding of the nexus issues relating to cities, pollution and health. Moreover, it is hoped that policy-makers will identify lessons learned, and the opportunities and the challenges in finding local, national and global solutions in addressing these nexus issues. As a result of the panel discussion, it is envisaged that these policy-makers will identify possible avenues for joint strategies or actions to which key entities might contribute or from which they might benefit. For each Dialogue, a summary report of the meetings is made available on the Environment Management Group website.