Side event: Transboundary air pollution and health – the value of international cooperation

(Wednesday, 31 October 2018, 13.30-14.30; Salle C)

This side event will present the regional mechanisms for cooperation to address transboundary air pollution and its impacts on human health, such as the UNECE Convention on Long-Range Transboundary Air Pollution and the Joint Task Force on the Health Aspects of Air Pollution, as well as the Asia-Pacific Regional Forum on Health and Environment. It will highlight the opportunities and needs for international cooperation to tackle transboundary air pollution, improve air quality and save lives.

Background

Air pollution is an issue of common concern worldwide, not respecting country borders, and affecting all of us, whether rich or poor. Over 90% of people live in urban areas, where air quality does not comply with the WHO air quality guideline values. Some air pollutants can travel hundreds and thousands of kilometers and undergo transformation in the atmosphere, affecting the health of people and the ecosystems far from the sources of their emission.

To respond to this challenge, air pollution has been put high on the agenda of several international fora. In this regard, countries have benefited from identifying their shared needs in terms of the capacities for forecasting, monitoring, mitigating and understanding the science underpinning different policy and regulatory approaches.

Recognizing the growing need of many countries to address transboundary air pollution and its impacts, this side event will discuss different mechanisms of cooperation, taking into account some of the common needs of countries at different stages of development. Regional examples will be presented, namely the UNECE Convention on Long-Range Transboundary Air Pollution (CLRTAP) including the Joint WHO/UNECE CLRTAP Task Force on the Health Aspects of Air Pollution (TFH), as well as those in Asia and the Pacific such as the Asia–Pacific Regional Forum on Health and Environment. The TFH, a well-established intersectoral platform, chaired by the WHO European Centre for Environment and Health in Bonn, has been instrumental in evaluating the risks to health from air pollution and identifying the benefits associated with effective implementation of the Convention, while the Asia-Pacific Regional Forum on Health and Environment has focused on capacity-building among both ministries of health and environment. These examples will provide an introduction and prompt the discussion on the opportunities for international cooperation needed to improve air quality and save lives.
First WHO Global Conference on Air Pollution and Health
Improving Air Quality, Combatting Climate Change – Saving Lives
30 October – 1 November 2018, WHO Headquarter, Geneva, Switzerland

Programme

- Welcome and introduction

- Panel discussion on transboundary air pollution: lessons learnt and the way forward on international cooperation
  - Ms Anna Engleryd, Chair of the Executive Body, UNECE Convention on Long-Range Transboundary Air Pollution: Lessons learnt from the Convention on Long-Range Transboundary Air Pollution
  - Mr Markus Amann, Director, Air Quality and Greenhouse Gases Program, International Institute for Applied Systems Analysis (IIASA): Experiences and lessons from the Joint Task force on the Health Aspects of Air Pollution
  - Mr Yun-Chul Hong, Co-Chair of the Thematic Working Group on Air Quality of the Asia-Pacific Regional Forum on Health and Environment: Experiences and lessons learnt from the Regional Forum

- Discussion of country experiences and needs

- Questions and comments from the audience

- Wrap-up & key messages from the workshop

Moderator: Mr Michal Krzyzanowski