FIRST WHO GLOBAL CONFERENCE ON AIR POLLUTION AND HEALTH

IMPROVING AIR QUALITY, COMBATTING CLIMATE CHANGE – SAVING LIVES

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WHO headquarters, Geneva, Switzerland

Dr Maria Neira
Conference summary report – Geneva Action Plan
WHO has developed this document to highlight a range of issues presented during the Conference. This document does not reflect intergovernmental agreement or consensus, nor decisions reached by the attendees.

The outcomes of the conference call for enhanced action on a number of points.
The conference participants considered the scientific evidence on air pollution and health, and emphasized the following:

- Air pollution – both ambient and household – is estimated to cause 7 million deaths per year.
- Effective interventions are feasible.
- There is sufficient evidence to trigger high-level support and citizen’s demand for clean air.
- Reducing exposure to air pollution is especially important to protect children’s health.
- Actions to tackle air pollution and mitigate climate change can result in combined and therefore substantially greater benefits.
Participants at the conference recognized the need for a world free of air pollution and recommended an aspirational goal of reducing the number of deaths from air pollution by two thirds by 2030.

- Reaching the recommended goal can result in significant reductions in global health care spending every year. Effective interventions are feasible.

- To reach the goal and avoid this health crisis, bold and prompt action is needed.

- Engagement of the global health community, particularly the health authorities, is key to reduce the burden of disease from air pollution.

- Addressing air pollution requires multisectoral efforts that build upon synergies between human health, climate change and growth priorities.

- Reduction of air pollutants will lead to reductions in the concentrations of short-lived climate pollutants such as black carbon, contributing to climate change mitigation.

- For ministries of finance, dealing with air pollution can create opportunities for increased revenues, for example through the use of environmental fiscal instruments, and reduction of healthcare expenditures.
In order to reach the goal, the following elements of the Geneva Action Agenda to Combat Air Pollution were identified (I):

- Scale up efforts and **mobilize action globally** – scale up BreatheLife campaign.
- Massively implement solutions to **burn less** in any form – reduce open burning, fuel burning in transport, cooking and heating and other processes.
- Strengthen action to **protect the most vulnerable populations**, in particular children.
- Greatly increase access to **clean energy and technologies in Africa** and other populations in greatest need.
- Support cities for improving urban air quality.
- **Enhance education** – target children, medical professions, patients, and the general population.
- **Strengthen Universal Health Coverage** to engage and implement actions that prevent air pollution.
In order to reach the goal, the following elements of the Geneva Action Agenda to Combat Air Pollution were identified (II):

- Enhance joint action between finance, health and environmental sectors, and other key sectors.
- Protect additional at-risk populations: The elderly, people with medical conditions, workers at high exposures.
- Make voluntary commitments.
- Enhance gender equity through access to clean fuels and technologies in homes. Improving access to clean fuels will greatly boost gender equity.
- Monitor, not only air pollution, but also actions and progress towards improvement.
- Continue building the evidence, in particular on costs-saving and cost-effective solutions.
- Build key partnerships for shared global response and efficient local action.