WHO’s First Global Conference on Air Pollution and Health

The Global Conference on Air Pollution and Health is the first-ever global event to focus on both air pollution and health. As a contribution towards achieving the Sustainable Development Goals, the Conference will feature a “Call for Urgent Action” where delegates will reach agreement on a target for 2030 to reduce the 7 million deaths caused by air pollution each year. Countries, urban mayors and civil society will be invited to make commitments to the global advocacy campaign www.BreatheLife2030.org to meet WHO Air Quality Guidelines and reduce climate emissions. The Conference will underline the links between air pollution and the global epidemic of noncommunicable diseases (NCDs), and position the health sector to catalyse actions for health-wise policies on clean household energy, transport and waste.

The Global Conference on Air Pollution and Health, 30 October – 1 November 2018 will be organized at WHO headquarters in Geneva. Click here for regular updates.

UK New Clean Air Strategy

United Kingdom (UK) Environment Secretary Michael Gove has published a Clean Air Strategy that aims to cut air pollution and save lives, and is backed up by recent primary legislation. Air pollution is the fourth largest threat to public health after cancer, obesity and heart disease. It is estimated that the actions set out will reduce the costs of air pollution to society by an estimated £1 billion per year by 2020, rising to £2.5 billion per year from 2030. The Strategy also sets out actions to improve public access to the air quality forecast and help individuals and organizations reduce their contribution to air pollution, demonstrating how this could help them protect their families, colleagues and neighbours. After the City of London joined the #BreatheLife Campaign, WHO acknowledges and appreciates further actions taken by the UK government to protect its citizens from this silent killer.

International Lead Poisoning Prevention Week of Action

For the 6th consecutive year, WHO will mark the International Lead Poisoning Prevention Week of Action on 21–27 October 2018. The aim is to raise awareness worldwide about lead poisoning and encourage all countries to eliminate the use of lead in paint by 2020. To date, 70 countries have legally binding controls relating to lead paint. WHO, UN Environment Programme (UNEP) and the Global Alliance to Eliminate Lead Paint are calling on every country to ensure national actions are implemented to eliminate the use of lead paint. During the week and throughout the year, governments, academia, industry and civil society work together to promote all efforts that prevent childhood lead poisoning, and more specifically laws to eliminate lead in paint. While many countries have long-established bans on lead paint, it is still legal to sell lead paint for use in homes, schools and other buildings in more than one third of the world’s countries. Lead affects brain development in children, resulting in reduced IQ, behavioural changes such as a shortened attention span and increased antisocial behaviour, and reduced educational attainment. Frequently, these effects are irreversible. Updated 2018 material will be available mid-August.
High-Level Political Forum 2018

The 2018 theme of the High-Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development will be "Transformation towards sustainable and resilient societies". The following set of goals will be reviewed in depth, and include “Goal 17. Strengthen the means of implementation and revitalize the Global Partnership for Sustainable Development”, which is considered each year:

Goal 6. Ensure availability and sustainable management of water and sanitation for all
Goal 7. Ensure access to affordable, reliable, sustainable and modern energy for all
Goal 11. Make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable
Goal 12. Ensure sustainable consumption and production patterns
Goal 15. Protect, restore and promote sustainable use of terrestrial ecosystems, sustainably manage forests, combat desertification, and halt and reverse land degradation and halt biodiversity loss.

The meeting is convened under the auspices of the United Nations Economic and Social Council will be held from 9–18 July 2018; including the three-day ministerial meeting of the forum from 16–18 July 2018.

WHO BioDoseNet to Support Response to Radiation Emergencies

The 5th Coordination Meeting of the WHO BioDoseNet (BDN), which also marked the network’s 10th anniversary, showcased BDN’s capacity for dose assessment in the event of radiation emergencies worldwide. In addition to the benefit of fostering collaboration between laboratories involved in response to radiation emergencies, this global network also contributes to scientific exchange, research and development worldwide in the field of radiation biology and better understanding of the effects of ionizing radiation. The 5th BDN Coordination Meeting brought together more than 50 specialists in biological dosimetry (cytogenetic, bioassay and electron paramagnetic resonance (EPR) dosimetry) from 19 countries. Participants reported on their relevant activities and discussed the challenges and future plans to enhance the capacity of the network and cooperation among the BDN members.

The meeting was hosted by the Federal Office for Radiation Protection (BfS), Munich, Germany on 11 June 2018 as a satellite event for the international EPRBioDose 2018 International Conference. For more information, click here.

Health in All Policies – The case of air pollution, urban health and sustainability

WHO concluded the successful Health in All Policies (HiAP) Workshop: The case of air pollution, urban health and sustainability. This was the 21st workshop in the Global WHO Training and Capacity Building Programme on HiAP. The workshop was convened as a result of collaboration between WHO and the Association of Schools and Programs of Public Health (ASPPH) and the National Environmental Health Association (NEHA) and was attended by 23 professionals in the United States from health and other disciplines, working in public and environmental health, who wanted to learn more about how to integrate HiAP approaches in both academic and practical settings. The participants developed action plans aimed at incorporating different aspects of HiAP approaches, thereby introducing and addressing air pollution issues into their academic curricula as well as their implementation work as environmental or HiAP officers and other public health roles.

Facts and Figures: Household air pollution

Around 3 billion people cook using polluting open fires or simple stoves fueled by kerosene, biomass (wood, animal dung and crop waste) and coal. Each year, close to 4 million people die prematurely from illness attributable to household air pollution from inefficient cooking practices using polluting stoves paired with solid fuels and kerosene.

Household air pollution causes NCDs including stroke, ischaemic heart disease, chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD) and lung cancer.

Close to half the deaths due to pneumonia among children under five years of age are caused by particulate matter (soot) inhaled from household air pollution.

Click here for the full fact sheet.