ASIA-PACIFIC COMMEMORATION OF THE 4th INTERNATIONAL DAY OF CLEAN AIR FOR BLUE SKIES

Operationalizing the Regional Action Programme on Air Pollution

Draft Terms of Reference of the Open-Ended Working Group on Data

Objective:

The latest update of the WHO Air Quality Guidelines (2021) states that 7 million people worldwide annually die prematurely of cardiovascular and respiratory diseases that are attributable to ambient and household air pollution. The greatest number (two-thirds) of these premature deaths occurred in the South-East Asian and Western Pacific regions (as defined by the WHO), which can be attributed to the rapid economical and industrial and urban growth in these areas.

The development of air quality management policies, where they are not in place, and their continual improvement, must be supported by robust air quality data and monitoring and science-based approaches. Sharing of open data on air pollution will strengthen the ability of Governments to further develop science-based policies.

Satellite-based air quality monitoring could generate complementary data on air pollution and the dynamics of trends with regard to transboundary air pollution. The use of stationary and mobile air quality monitoring technologies, as agreed by interested members and associate members, can support regional and subregional solutions to combat air pollution. Scientific research and pilot projects examining such technologies and the dissemination of reliable results may contribute meaningfully to cooperation among members and associate members. National monitoring, data processing and reporting systems on air quality may add value if attention is paid to differences in exposure and vulnerability to air pollution among socially and economically diverse populations.

To overcome some of these barriers, ESCAP member States have adopted the Asia-Pacific Regional Action Programme on Air Pollution (RAPAP), which incorporates various components of cooperation on air quality monitoring, data and standards as well as best practices and policies including through leveraging subregional, multistakeholder initiatives. The long-term success of the action programme is dependent upon building a strong evidence base and effectively linking existing initiatives and their relevant scientific committees.

In this context, an open-ended the Working Group on Air Quality Data will be established to facilitate operationalizing Section 3 of the RAPAP: “Facilitation of air quality monitoring and sharing of open data related to air quality…”. The working group will convene two virtual meetings during 2023 and 2024, respectively.

Membership and roles:

Membership in the working group is open-ended through the period of its work in 2023-2024, based on the invitation by ESCAP. Members are expected to provide technical guidance on operationalizing the RAPAP and support the collection and analysis of relevant national information pertinent to air quality standards. Furthermore Individual experts may join in the preparation of the substantive outputs as specified in the work programme based on their specializations and availability. .

Substantive Focus :

The working group will focus on the following substantive themes related to Section 3 of the Regional Action Programme:

a. Strengthening the capacity of interested members and associate members, upon their request, to develop national and subnational inventories of air pollutants as an input to prioritize sectors and activities to further promote measures to improve air quality;
b. Facilitating cooperation and information-sharing among interested members and associate members and relevant organizations working to reduce air pollution, on a voluntary basis and on mutually agreed terms;
c. Encouraging the sharing of data and information, as appropriate, on a voluntary basis and on mutually agreed terms, by collaborating with regional and subregional entities, as appropriate, to support the analysis of pollutants and their sources at regional and subregional levels;
d. Encouraging interested members and associate members to develop additional digital platforms for sharing open air quality monitoring data, building capacity and providing technical support;
e. Encouraging the sharing of good practices on air quality monitoring, building upon the information provided by members and associate members, as appropriate;
f. Upon request from interested members and associate members, improving national capacities regarding atmospheric chemistry, air pollutant inventories and air quality modelling, and facilitating the regional sharing of tools and open data related to atmospheric chemistry and air quality monitoring;
g. Enhancing air quality management systems to improve the implementation of disaster risk reduction strategies and, if needed, their international components, which will be determined by members and associated members, as appropriate.

Outputs:

As a result of the deliberations in the inception meeting, the members of the working group will determine their work programe and outputs with regard to the elements of Section 3 of the RAPAP and taking into account other relevant elements.

This working group, together with the working group on air quality standards, will draft a policy brief on enhancing the region's Air Quality standards and Data availability. The policy brief will draw on the review of data and policies across the region, identifying variations in air quality standards and recommendations to strengthen air quality standards (input and peer review by WGs).