Regional Approaches to Reduce Pollution in Transboundary Airsheds: Inception Workshop

13:00-16:00am (BKK Time), 25 June 2024

United Nations Conference Centre and via Video Conferencing

Background

ESCAP is currently implementing a project, entitled *Regional Approaches to Reduce Pollution in Transboundary Airsheds.* The project will be implemented from 2023-2026 and is intended to identify necessary actions and policy interventions at multiple levels to reduce emissions and address sources of pollution contributing to common airsheds based on concentrations of pollutants. It will establish a network and Community of Practice among cities, provinces and member States sharing common airsheds to facilitate the exchange of best practices and outreach. The outcomes of the project will be enhanced regional cooperation to foster better air quality management and reduction of transboundary air pollution through actions and support at local, national, and subregional levels. Thus, the project outcomes will be aligned with the key components of the Asia Pacific Regional Action Programme on Air Pollution, particularly for air quality management and monitoring/sharing of data.

Air pollution is a pressing environmental challenge that has severe transboundary impacts, with sources generated and effects occurring across multiple countries. Addressing this complex, regional public good requires an approach that goes beyond individual country efforts and fosters cooperation among various levels of jurisdiction, including regional, national and subnational authorities.

Sharing data, monitoring systems, and policy approaches across countries can lead to more effective and cost-efficient air pollution management strategies. Coordinated regional actions can maximize the benefits and minimize the costs compared to unilateral efforts. Regional cooperation also facilitates the exchange of scientific knowledge, best practices and technological innovations to tackle this complex challenge. Peer-to-peer learning and joint problem-solving can accelerate progress.

Regional cooperation is essential for several reasons. First, air pollution does not respect national borders, with air masses and pollutants moving across landscapes and influencing the atmospheric composition of wider geographic areas, known as "airsheds". Solutions require a broader, airshed-based approach rather than just country-level capacity building.

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Establishing regional networks and communities of practice can institutionalize sustained cooperation and collective action within shared airsheds, beyond just project-based collaboration. By taking a regional approach focused on common airsheds, this project aims to catalyze the type of international cooperation needed to effectively address the pressing challenge of air pollution in Asia and the Pacific. Multilateral development banks like ESCAP can play a crucial role in facilitating this cooperation through their convening power, technical expertise, and financing capabilities.

Draft Programme

Time	Agenda
13:00-13:05	Opening , UN ESCAP
13:05-13:25	High-Level Segment
13:25-13:30	Virtual Group Photo
13:30-13:40	Project Background and Path Forward • City-Level Action Plans • Communication Protocol • Cooperation Agreements
13:40-14:00	Methodology for Airshed Analysis Dr. Sarath Guttikunda
National Segment	
30 Mins	Bhutan Scene Setting (5 Min: ESCAP) National Perspective (15 Min: Ministry/City) Needs, similar projects, sustainability and harmonization opportunities Q&A (10 min)
30 Mins	Cambodia Scene Setting (5 Min: ESCAP) National Perspective (15 Min: Ministry/City) Needs, similar projects, sustainability and harmonization opportunities Q&A (10 min)
30 Mins	Laos Scene Setting (5 Min: ESCAP) National Perspective (15 Min: Ministry/City) Needs, similar projects, sustainability and harmonization opportunities Q&A (10 min)
International Segment	
20 Mins	Discussion Session on Cooperation Priorities • Data • Actions • Communities of Practice
Closing and Summation	
10 Minutes	Closing Remarks and Next Steps