



Operationalizing the Regional Action Programme on Air Pollution: Meeting of the Open-Ended Working Groups on Air Quality Standards and Data

13 March 2024

United Nations Conference Centre and via Video Conferencing

[Register through this link](#)

Background

Many countries of Asia and the Pacific face increasing air pollution due to various factors, including industrial expansion and economic growth undertaken in an unsustainable manner, large-scale farming practices which involve crop burning, and a growing use of motor vehicles. Poor air quality has a detrimental impact on health and results in economic losses. For example, nearly 1.1 billion total life years were lost in Southeast Asia due to high levels of particulate pollution in 2021¹.

ESCAP is implementing a project on operationalizing the Asia-Pacific Regional Action Programme on Air Pollution (RAPAP), including through the establishment of Working Groups on Data and Air Quality Standards, respectively. The project seeks to build a foundation of knowledge and expertise to support the acceleration of policies and practices to address air pollution and achieve air quality across the region that meets World Health Organization guidelines. The project will leverage and strengthen connections among existing subregional initiatives to enhance exchange of knowledge and best practices and identify key capacity gaps for further technical assistance. In this context, a brief overview of these various initiatives will be provided for the Working Groups to consider when building a more detailed plan of future activities to support the review of standards and data across the region.

Overview

Following consultations from the first session of the Working Groups held in September 2023, the Terms of Reference, as previously circulated, have been established. Accordingly, the structure of the Working Groups will continue to follow an open-ended expert group modality throughout 2024. The Terms of Reference as adopted can be found below.

¹ University of Chicago, Air Quality Life Index 2023 Annual Update, Available at: https://aqli.epic.uchicago.edu/wp-content/uploads/2023/08/AQLI_2023_Report-Global_v03.5_indiaview_spreads.pdf

Path Forward

The specific proposals deliberated during the first sessions of the Working Groups will be further developed in the forthcoming two rounds of consultations (expected in March and June). Selected priorities shortlisted following the September 2023 meetings will be further elaborated as concepts in a policy brief for the consideration of the ESCAP member States during the 8th session of the Committee on Environment and Development (CED-8) in October 2024. A draft policy brief will be circulated prior to the March session. Feedback from the members of the Working Groups will be integrated by June, in order to give member States suitable time to consider the recommendations. Outcomes of the CED-8 will be integrated into the draft to prepare for finalization of the document in the fourth and final session of these Working Groups (expected in November), the recommendations will support the future work of the ESCAP Secretariat on operationalizing the RAPAP.

Working Group on Standards

The second session of the working group on standards will be built on the recommendations of the first meeting held in September 2023. Following consideration of the inputs received, the following short-list of priorities will be further elaborated in the Second Session of the Working Group:

1. Develop recommendations for regional harmonization of guidelines and policies on air quality standards.
2. Compile Best Practices for Monitoring Air Quality

Working group on data

The second session of the working group on data will be built on the recommendations of the first meeting held in September 2023. Following consideration of the inputs received, the following short-list of priorities will be further elaborated in the Second Session of the Working Group:

1. Enhance international cooperation among monitoring networks and air pollution observatories utilizing remote sensing and ground monitoring stations.
2. Amplify communities of practice on air quality data, nationally and internationally.
3. Encourage the use of data sharing modalities in support of air quality networks.

Draft Programme

Time	Agenda
14:00 – 14:05	<p>Opening:</p> <p>Mr. Sangmin Nam, Director, Environment and Development Division, UNESCAP</p> <p>Mr. Mushtaq Memnon, Regional Coordinator for Chemicals and Pollution Action, UNEP</p>
14:05 – 14:15	Review of Working Group Scope, Terms of Reference, and Path Forward (UNESCAP) Matthew Perkins, Economic Affairs Officer
14:15 – 14:25	Recap of outcomes from UNEA6: Global Context and Areas of Cooperation (UNEP). Dana Crawhall Duk, Senior Analyst, UNEP Climate and Clean Air Coalition (CCAC)
Working Group on Standards	
14:25 – 14:40	<p>Presentation of proposed follow up work on the recommendations (UNESCAP):</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Develop recommendations for regional harmonization of guidelines and policies on air quality standards. 2. Compile Best Practices for Monitoring Air Quality <p>Background Remarks: Perspectives on Cooperation for Regional Monitoring of Air Quality, Peeranan Towashiraporn, Asia Disaster Preparedness Center</p>
14:40 – 15:20	<p>Open discussion with working group members on two priority action areas. Participants should be prepared to provide their views on the discussion questions from the background document. Additionally, data will be sought through online polling.</p>
Working Group on Data	
15:20 – 15:40	<p>Presentation of proposed follow up work on the recommendation (UNESCAP):</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Enhance international cooperation among monitoring networks and air pollution observatories utilizing remote sensing and ground monitoring stations. 2. Amplify communities of practice on air quality data, nationally and internationally. 3. Encourage the use of data sharing modalities in support of air quality networks. <p>Background Remarks: Opportunities for harmonizing communities of practice. Adam D. Ross, Director, Regional Environment, Science, Technology, and Health Office, USA</p>
15:40 – 16:50	<p>Open discussion with working group members on three priority action areas. Participants should be prepared to provide their views on the discussion questions from the background document. Additionally, data will be sought through online polling.</p>
16:50 – 17:00	<p>Summary of meeting</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Summary of discussions and recommendations. - Next Steps