First Global Air Quality Cooperation Network Meeting

24 March 2025 | Cartagena, Colombia

Resolution 6/10 on Promoting regional cooperation on air pollution to improve air quality globally, adopted at the sixth session of the United Nations Environment Assembly (UNEA) in 2024, requested the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), subject to the availability of resources, to "form and facilitate a cooperation network on air quality."

The goal of the new Global Air Quality Cooperation Network will be to empower governments at different levels and other key stakeholders to reduce air pollution through enhancing air quality management capacities, increasing the uptake of solutions to reduce air pollution from high-impact sectors, and improving access to finance, funding and other forms of support.

UNEP convened the first meeting of the Network on 24th March, 2025, on the margins of the WHO's Second Global Conference on Air Pollution and Health, held in Cartagena, Colombia. The 3.5-hour event brought together over 50 in-person participants and 60 online attendees, including representatives from at least 35 Member States, UN entities, and regional bodies and international organizations. The agenda featured opening remarks from UNEP, WHO, and Canada; a presentation on the network's concept and progress; and two interactive discussion sessions featuring 12 speakers. A summary of **key messages**, the meeting **agenda,** and **photos** from the event can be found below.

In terms of **next steps**, at the meeting UNEP committed to:

- Share a report on the meeting with participants.
- Establish communication channels to keep Network focal points informed about the progress made in establishing the Network and future opportunities for engagement.
- Share further information on how the Thematic Working Groups will be established.

Get in touch!

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Information about the Network can also be found at www.unep.org/topics/air/global-air-quality-cooperation-network

Key Messages

The inaugural Network meeting highlighted the critical need for international collaboration across sectors and regions to address air pollution effectively, particularly against a backdrop of rising geo-political tensions. The Network was recognized as a platform that could amplify existing initiatives, build trust, facilitate knowledge exchange, and support countries in leapfrogging polluting development phases. To sustain this shared vision, ongoing consultation, transparent communication, and robust feedback mechanisms for participants will be essential.

Participants stressed that the Network must complement, not duplicate, the efforts of existing air quality cooperation networks and platforms. By leveraging its global reach, the Network can amplify and scale-up successful initiatives while also helping stakeholders avoid overlap by identifying synergies, encouraging joint programming, and sharing information about new projects, research activities, and funding opportunities.

The Network can connect Member States and stakeholders in need of technical support with those offering solutions. By facilitating these connections— including through South-South and South-North cooperation—the Network can promote peer learning, resource-sharing, and joint problem-solving. Participants emphasized the importance of further consultations by the Secretariat to design and implement effective matchmaking mechanisms.

Regional collaboration was underscored as crucial for tackling air pollution challenges. Progress from existing regional air quality arrangements was shared at the meeting, demonstrating success in data-sharing and coordinated action. The Network was identified as an opportunity to amplify these efforts by facilitating knowledge exchange, scaling up successful interventions, and fostering inter-regional collaboration to address shared challenges. This includes supporting new regional initiatives like the West Asia Air Quality Network and the Africa Clean Air Program, as well as advancing cross-regional efforts to tackle transboundary air pollution.

The Network can help Member States and other stakeholders overcome critical capacity challenges in air quality management by providing access to tailored training programs contributed by participants and leveraging resources like the AQMx platform. Existing regional experience and tools—such as online trainings from the UNECE Air Convention and FICAP—can be amplified through the Network to reach a global audience.

Participants identified insufficient financial resources as a major barrier to ambitious action on air pollution, especially for developing countries—a challenge further compounded in 2025 by declining aid budgets and economic instability. The Network can help address this funding gap by uniting diverse global stakeholders to advocate for increased financing, highlight the economic benefits of clean air policies, and explore innovative funding and financing mechanisms.

Strengthening the science-policy interface is critical for informed decision-making and effective implementation of air quality measures**.** While the Network can support this process, it should maintain a strong focus on action by connecting scientific data to practical interventions that deliver measurable improvements. Participants also emphasized the potential for the Network to promote a unified message on air pollution to build political will and raise public awareness. This could include supporting participants to develop targeted communication strategies and sharing best practices for engaging citizens.

With its diverse global participation, the Network can drive coordinated action across sectors and regions, ensuring that air quality objectives are integrated into broader development and climate agendas. Participants stressed the importance of embedding air quality goals into Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs) under the Paris Agreement and national development plans aligned with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The Network can provide technical guidance, facilitate knowledge exchange, and advocate for integrating air quality considerations into sectoral projects to unlock funding opportunities.

Participants at the meeting emphasized the Network's potential to bring together diverse stakeholders to co-create bold and innovative solutions to air quality challenges. Through collaboration and shared expertise, the Network can create an environment where new ideas and strategies flourish, potentially leading to the development of long-term solutions beyond 2030, innovative funding mechanisms and future cooperation frameworks and agreements.

The success of the Network will depend on the commitment, leadership and active participation of its participants. By stepping forward to lead initiatives, contribute tools and resources, share expertise, and support collaboration, participants can transform the Network into a powerful force for addressing air pollution globally.

Agenda

Agenda item	Description
Opening Remarks (10 minutes) • **Jacqueline Alvarez**, Chief Chemicals and Health Branch, UNEP • **Jennifer Kerr**, Director, Environment and Climate Change Canada • **Heather Adair-Rohani**, Acting Head, Air Quality, Energy & Health, WHO	Welcome remarks emphasizing the importance of global collaboration on air quality and the linkages with the WHO Conference.
Presentation: Global Air Quality Cooperation Network Concept, Progress and Next Steps (20 minutes) • **Soraya Smaoun**, Air Quality Coordinator, UNEP - **Tom Bannister**, Associate Expert, UNEP • Audience question and answer	Overview of the Network, including its objectives, structure, achievements to date and next steps.

Session 1: Challenges and Needs (60 minutes)
• **Martina Otto**, Head of Secretariat, CCAC (moderator)
• Panellist remarks:
  - **Cristian Tolvett Caro**, Head of Air Quality Division, Ministry of Environment of Chile
  - **Jane Burston**, CEO, Clean Air Fund
  - **Sergio Sanchez**, Senior Policy Director for Global Clean Air, Environmental Defense Fund
  - **Paolo Laj**, Chief, Atmospheric Environment Research Division, World Meteorological Organization
• Moderated discussion
	This discussion session took stock of the most significant air quality management challenges faced by Member States and key stakeholders and explored how the Network can help overcome them by adding value to existing efforts. It also touched upon which thematic focus areas and work modalities the Network could consider to best meet the current and future needs of network participants.

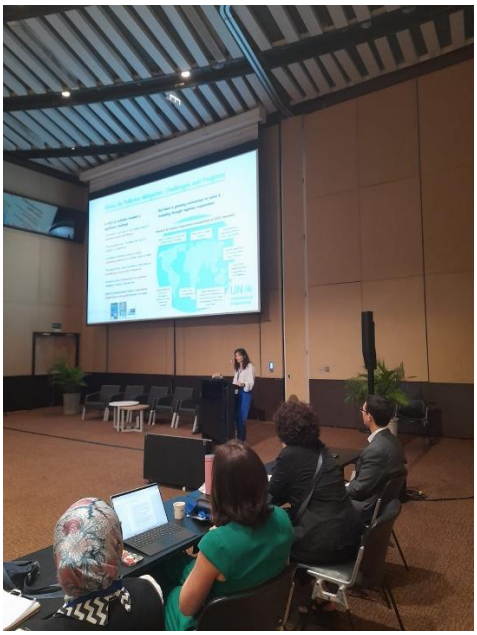
Coffee Break (20 mins)	

Session 2: Regional Air Quality Cooperation Successes, Lessons and Opportunities (60 minutes)
• **Beatriz Cardenas**, Air Quality Global Director, WRI (moderator)
• Panellist presentations
  - **Luiz Gustavo Haisi Mandalho**, Chief of Air Quality Division, Ministry of Environment and Climate Change, Brazil
  - **John Salter**, Head of International Air Quality, Department for Environment Food and Rural Affairs, UK
  - **Kenza Khomsi**, PAGE National Coordinator for Morocco
  - **Itsuki Kuroda**, Deputy Director, Ministry of the Environment of Japan
  - **Mohammed Dighriri**, General Director, National Centre for Environmental Compliance, Saudi Arabia
  - **Sangmin Nam**, Director, Environment and Development Division, ESCAP (online)
• Moderated discussion
	The second discussion session explored opportunities for the Network to complement, scale-up and add value to current efforts to address air pollution, with a focus on the existing regional air quality arrangements. The session also touched upon how the Network can be made sustainable, impactful, and ambitious over the long term.

Closing Remarks (5 minutes) • **Soraya Smaoun**, Air Quality Coordinator, UNEP	Summary of key takeaways and next steps.

Photos

The meeting took place in room Barahoma 3 at the Centro de Convenciones Cartagena de Indias.



UNEP presents the Network concept and progress made to date.

Speakers in Session 1: Challenges and Needs.

Speakers in Session 2: Regional Air Quality Cooperation Successes, Lessons and Opportunities.