



International Day
of Clean Air
for blue skies



International Day of Clean Air for blue skies 2025

Racing for Air

Led by the Republic of Korea, the United Nations General Assembly [designated](#) September 7 as the International Day of Clean Air for blue skies in 2019, with the first global observance in 2020. The Day responds to growing evidence of air pollution's harm to human and environmental health and its relevance to achieving the Sustainable Development Goals.

In its sixth edition, the campaign united governments, businesses and communities to accelerate action against this threat. Under the theme Racing for Air, the 2025 observance emphasized urgency and collective commitment, highlighting that clean air delivers a triple win for human health, climate stability and economic resilience.

Air pollution remains the world's second leading risk for mortality, causing an estimated [8.1 million premature deaths](#) annually. It also imposes major economic costs – [up to 6.5 per cent of global GDP](#) – through healthcare expenses, lost productivity and environmental degradation.

However, there are solutions that pay off. Cutting fine particulate pollution (PM2.5) can raise productivity [by up to one third](#) while creating jobs across sectors.

Forward-looking cities and countries around the world are delivering scalable solutions. The challenge now is to accelerate the pace.



Messages from Leadership



“Air pollution is a global emergency — and a preventable one. Today, nearly every person on Earth breathes air that is unsafe, contributing to millions of deaths every year — particularly amongst the elderly and children. For too many around the world, blue skies have been stained grey by inaction and injustice. Let us take urgent steps today, for clean, breathable air for all.”

ANTÓNIO GUTERRES

UN Secretary-General



“Air pollution is one of the world’s deadliest environmental threats, claiming over 8 million premature lives each year, and countless days are lost for school and work accordingly and impacting people’s quality of life. But this race against air pollution can be won. We have the solutions: cleaner energy and cooking solutions, sustainable transport, better agricultural and waste practices, stronger regulatory frameworks and proven solutions to cut super pollutants. Clean air is not a privilege. It’s a right.”

INGER ANDERSEN

UNEP Executive Director



“Now, more than ever, we must move at full speed to halt the ‘crisis clock’ ticking for our planet—the only home we share with future generations. To restore the familiar rhythm of four distinct seasons and ensure blue skies each and every day, I earnestly urge not only the government but all citizens to join this crucial race.”

KIM SUNG-HWAN

Ministry of Climate, Energy and Environment, Republic of Korea

Racing for Air Across the Globe

In the lead-up to September 7, people from all walks of life embraced the clean air campaign. Activities ranged from high-level policy dialogues and regional forums to school exhibitions, community clean-ups, and sports events.

A total of **163 events in 56 countries** were registered, up from 147 in 2024. UNEP supported 11 official events, including high-level observances in New York, Bangkok and Beijing; an education festival in Bishkek; the Medellín Marathon with 27,000 runners; and a month-long running challenge in the Republic of Korea.

163

EVENTS REGISTERED

56

COUNTRIES

11

UNEP ASSOCIATED EVENTS



Photo: Street Art for Mankind

Clean Air: sustaining life on Earth

On the sidelines of the 80th session of the UN General Assembly, the “Clean Air for All” mural was unveiled. As part of the Climate Action Outdoor Museum initiative, led by [Street Art for Mankind](#), artist Adry del Rocio developed a piece inspired by the 2023 wildfires that shrouded New York City in smoke.



Advancing Policy and Action

Governments, experts and civil society came together to promote policy reform, strengthen institutional responses and share solutions.

NEW YORK — UN HEADQUARTERS

UN agencies and Member States [showcased innovative clean air solutions](#) from countries and cities in the UN Headquarters in New York, under the leadership of the Republic of Korea.

THE CLIMATE AND CLEAN AIR COALITION SECRETARIAT

The Climate and Clean Air Coalition (CCAC) Secretariat launched new guidance to support evidence-based decision-making and public engagement during a [global webinar](#).

REPUBLIC OF KOREA

Blue Sky Week featured an official ceremony and a technology exhibition highlighting innovations in transport, industry and air quality monitoring.

CHINA — BEIJING

UNEP [convened](#) policymakers, scientists and NGOs to address the air–health–climate nexus, in a session with over 100 participants led by the Ministry of Ecology and Environment and the Beijing Environment Bureau.

THAILAND — BANGKOK

Member States [discussed renewable energy and air pollution reduction](#) during the ESCAP Committee on Energy, supported by UNEP and the Republic of Korea.

WEST ASIA — AMMAN

National air quality managers [strengthened technical skills](#) at the third West Asia Air Quality Network Meeting convened by the Jordanian Ministry of Environment and UNEP.

UZBEKISTAN — TASHKENT

A [public dialogue](#) focused on air quality management, monitoring and climate resilience, hosted by the Ministry of Ecology of Uzbekistan and supported by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), UNEP and other partners.



SERBIA — BELGRADE

UNEP [convened partners](#) to catalyse joint action and present the latest plans to tackle air pollution, in a session opened by Minister of Environmental Protection Sara Pavkov.

Communities Mobilized

Citizens and youth amplified the clean air message through creativity, sports and grassroots action:

COLOMBIA

27,000 runners joined the [Medellín Marathon](#) under the [#Racing4Air](#) theme, as part of a partnership with the Climate and Clean Air Coalition.

REPUBLIC OF KOREA

Nearly 1,400 participants logged over 34,000 kilometres in a national running and walking challenge that ran for two months.

CHINA

The China Children's Air Troupe performed during [UNEP's official event](#) in Beijing.

KYRGYZSTAN

The [DemAI Festival](#) engaged youth through science, art and sports.

KENYA

Community clean-ups, recycling workshops and car-free moments took place in Nairobi as part of the Breathe Cities Initiative.

LATIN AMERICA

An edit-a-thon led by [Wikimedistas de Uruguay](#) and UNEP expanded public knowledge of air pollution, reaching thousands of readers.

TAJIKISTAN

Tajikistan's Youth Group on the Protection of the Environment [called for regional cooperation](#) in Central Asia, highlighting links between clean air, health, and water and energy security.



Photo: Alex Betancur Escobar / Flickr

In just a few years, Medellín has reduced PM2.5 pollution by nearly 40 per cent through green corridors, reforestation, electric public transport, and controls on major pollution sources.

The #CleanAirDay Campaign

UNEP developed and amplified a [wealth of resources](#) to expand the campaign across digital platforms in all UN languages and convey messages to inspire change in key audiences.

667K

USERS REACHED

61K

INTERACTIONS

5,500

#CLEANAIRDAY
MENTIONS

92.6%

ENGAGEMENT
RATE



Artists and public figures – including UNEP Goodwill Ambassadors Dia Mirza, Antoinette Taus, Alex Rendell, Rocky Dawuni and Roberta Annan – spoke out for the right to breathe clean air. They emphasized the health, environmental and equity impacts of air pollution, reaching thousands of users.

“Clean air is not a luxury – it’s a fundamental right.”
– [Dia Mirza](#)

[Watch here](#)

“In the global race for clean air, everyone deserves to win.” – [Antoinette Taus](#)

[Watch here](#)

The Day was also a platform to highlight progress. [NASA](#) showcased its air quality monitoring system through the TEMPO mission; the [European Environment Agency](#) reported major reductions in pollution-related deaths; and [C40 Cities](#) shared examples of mayoral leadership transforming urban air quality in London, Jakarta, Amman, Addis, Johannesburg and Rio.

585 news media articles were published in **483** media outlets across **72** countries in **16** languages, **184** of which mentioned UNEP.

The Race for Clean Air is a Race for Our Lives

Despite progress, 99 per cent of the global population still breathes air that exceeds WHO guideline limits. The International Day of Clean Air for blue skies continues to amplify the voices of those most affected – whether in marginalized communities, in overcrowded public transport, or while commuting to school.

This year demonstrated growing resolve from policymakers and citizens alike. We have the science, knowledge and tools to act. By joining forces and accelerating solutions, we can clean the air . . . and win this race.



Photo: Nelzar Vianna / Corrida 100% Verde

The observance of the International Day of Clean Air for Blue skies is facilitated by UNEP, jointly with the Climate and Clean Air Coalition and in collaboration with other relevant organisations. The observance of the Day has been made possible through the generous financial support of the Republic of Korea.

The running team from the Brazilian public health research institute Fiocruz racing for clean air in Salvador de Bahia on 7 September 2025.

For further information

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The UN General Assembly designated September 7 as the International Day of Clean Air for blue skies in 2019, recognizing clean air as essential to protecting health and accelerating climate action.

#CleanAirDay
cleanairblueskies.org



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