



## UN Environment and WHO agree to major collaboration on environmental health risks

News release [URL:

<http://www.who.int/mediacentre/news/releases/2018/environmental-health-collaboration/en/> ]

10 January 2018 | Nairobi - UN Environment and WHO have agreed a new, wide-ranging collaboration to accelerate action to curb environmental health risks that cause an estimated 12.6 million deaths a year.

**BREATHE  
LIFE**

Clean Air. Healthy Future.

Today in Nairobi, Mr Erik Solheim, head of UN Environment, and Dr Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus, Director-General of WHO, signed an agreement to step up joint actions to combat air pollution, climate change and antimicrobial resistance, as well as improve coordination on waste and chemicals management, water quality, and food and nutrition issues. The collaboration also includes joint management of the BreatheLife advocacy campaign to reduce air pollution for multiple climate, environment and health benefits.

This represents the most significant formal agreement on joint action across the spectrum of environment and health issues in over 15 years.

"There is an urgent need for our two agencies to work more closely together to address the critical threats to environmental sustainability and climate – which are the foundations for life on this planet. This new agreement recognizes that sober reality," said UN Environment's Solheim.

"Our health is directly related to the health of the environment we live in. Together, air, water and chemical hazards kill more than 12.6 million people a year. This must not continue," said WHO's Tedros.

He added: "Most of these deaths occur in developing countries in Asia, Africa and Latin America where environmental pollution takes its biggest health toll."

The new collaboration creates a more systematic framework for joint research, development of tools and guidance, capacity building, monitoring of Sustainable Development Goals, global and regional partnerships, and support to regional health and environment fora.



The two agencies will develop a joint work programme and hold an annual high-level meeting to evaluate progress and make recommendations for continued collaboration.

The WHO-UN Environment collaboration follows a *Ministerial Declaration on Health, Environment and Climate Change* calling for the creation of a global "Health, Environment and Climate Change" Coalition, at the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) COP 22 in Marrakesh, Morocco in 2016.

Just last month, under the overarching topic "Towards a Pollution-Free Planet", the United Nations Environment Assembly (UNEA), which convenes environment ministers worldwide, adopted a resolution on Environment and Health, called for expanded partnerships with relevant UN agencies and partners, and for an implementation plan to tackle pollution.

### **Note to editors**

Priority areas of cooperation between WHO and UN Environment include:

**Air Quality** - More effective air quality monitoring including guidance to countries on standard operating procedures; more accurate environment and health assessments, including economic assessment; and advocacy, including the BreatheLife campaign promoting air pollution reductions for climate and health benefits.

**Climate** - Tackling vector-borne disease and other climate-related health risks, including through improved assessment of health benefits from climate mitigation and adaptation strategies.

**Water** – Ensuring effective monitoring of data on water quality, including through data sharing and collaborative analysis of pollution risks to health.

**Waste and chemicals** – Promotion of more sustainable waste and chemicals management, particularly in the area of pesticides, fertilizers, use of antimicrobials. The collaboration aims to advance the goal of sound lifecycle chemicals management by 2020, a target set out at the 2012 United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development.

Ongoing WHO/UN Environment collaboration includes:

[Ministerial Declaration on Health, Environment and Climate Change –WHO/UN Environment announcement at COP22](#)

[BreatheLife](#) campaign has engaged countries, regions and cities in commitments to reduce air pollution for climate and health benefits, covering more than 120 million people across the planet, including Santiago, Chile; London, England; Washington DC, USA, and Oslo, Norway, with major cities in Asia and Africa set to join.