



International Day  
of Clean Air  
for blue skies

# The 2023 International Day of Clean Air for blue skies

**#TogetherForCleanAir:**

A practical guide for individuals, cities, governments,  
schools & universities, businesses, civil society



## **On 7 September 2023, the world will celebrate International Day of Clean Air for blue skies**

calling for global action to combat air pollution, one of the greatest health and environmental challenges of our time. The day invites us all to consider how we can support action for clean air in our countries, cities and businesses, and make changes in our daily lives to reduce air pollution.

These actions benefit human health, protect ecosystems, and reduce climate-warming air pollutants and greenhouse gases.

# The world needs to act now

## What is air pollution, and why does it matter to me?

Air pollution is caused by gases and particles emitted by a variety of human activities and natural sources. Over 99 per cent of people breathe unsafe air.

Air pollution is the most important health issue of our time, and it can cause heart and lung diseases, lung cancer, stroke and more.

Air pollution causes an estimated 6.7 million premature deaths every year. It also harms our natural environment, decreasing the oxygen supply in our oceans, making it harder for plants to grow and contributing to the climate crisis.

But air pollution is preventable. Solutions are available and must be implemented.



# Five sectors are the main sources of human-driven air pollution. Good policies and practices can significantly reduce emissions from each sector.

## 1. Agriculture

Methane, generated from agricultural processes and livestock, contributes to ground-level ozone air pollution, causing asthma and other respiratory illnesses. Methane is also a powerful greenhouse gas that has contributed to as much as 45 per cent of current net-global warming. Open burning of clear agricultural fields and land is a leading contributor of particulate pollution including black carbon.

See [here](#) for more info about sources and effects of air pollution.

## 2. Transport

Fine particulate matter including black carbon, ozone and nitrogen dioxide are all linked to emissions from the global transport sector. Exposure to vehicle emissions is linked to up to 400,000 premature deaths a year and approximately US\$1 trillion in health damages.

## 3. Households

Particulate matter including black carbon, carbon monoxide, lead and mercury are the main pollutants from burning solid fuels in open fires and inefficient stoves inside homes. Household air pollution causes 4.3 million premature deaths annually.

## 4. Industry

Industries release large amounts of carbon monoxide, hydrocarbons, particulate matter and chemicals into the air.

## 5. Waste

The open burning of waste releases methane, particulate matter, persistent organic pollutants and other toxins. These enter the food chain and ecosystems, threatening human and environmental health.

# Why is air pollution an urgent issue now?

## Health

Evidence of the effect of air pollution on human health is stark and mounting. Air pollution causes cardiovascular and respiratory disease, disrupts a range of biological and developmental mechanisms, and increases the risk of diabetes, dementia, impaired cognitive development and more. Air pollution leads to 6.7 million premature deaths each year.

## Human rights

In 2023, Member States declared access to a clean, healthy and sustainable environment a universal human right. Obligations related to clean air are implicit in a number of international human rights instruments, including the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights.

## Clean Air and the Sustainable Development Goals

Fulfilling the right to breathe clean air goes hand in hand with achieving the Sustainable Development Goals, including healthy lives for all, sustainable cities, universal access to clean energy and effective action to address climate change.

### Climate

Air pollution and climate change are intrinsically linked as they share common sources. Therefore, well-designed control measures can achieve benefits for both climate and local air quality. For example, 16 short-lived climate pollutant control measures addressing major sources of methane and black carbon, could simultaneously reduce global warming by up to 0.5 C over the next few decades, avoid 2.4 million premature deaths from air pollution and avoid more than 50 million tonnes of crop losses per year due to ground-level ozone.

### Environment

Air pollutants impact the environment. They can change or deplete nutrients in soil and waterways, endanger vital freshwater sources, harm forests, minimize crop yields, introduce toxins and heavy metals to the food chain and damage cultural icons such as monuments and statues.

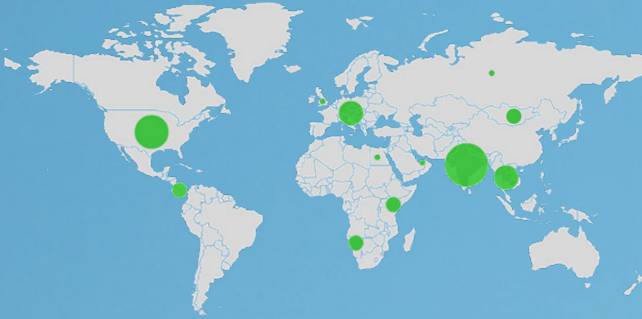
### Economic

The most evident economic impact of air pollution is the cost to public health. Air pollution costs the global economy more than US\$5 trillion every year in welfare costs. The effects are worse in the developing world, where in some places, welfare losses cost nearly 7.5 per cent of GDP.

**It's time to come #TogetherForCleanAir**



## Everyone is invited to take part!



Explore the International Day of Clean Air for blue skies website and use this practical guide to learn about the different types of air pollution and why they matter. With infographics, quizzes and stories from around the world, everyone can act.

Using these as inspiration, register your events on the website to connect with those in your community and worldwide. These could include working from home, biking to buy groceries or encouraging your city to introduce a car-free day.

All registered events will be given global visibility on the site via a real-time map.

In the weeks after the International Day of Clean Air for blue skies, the site will share stories on commitments that cities, governments and the private sector have made. It will track how we have collectively moved the needle on air pollution and will remain active throughout the year as we prepare for 2024!

[Register your event on our world map](#)

# Practical Guide Individuals





**Over 99 per cent of people breathe unsafe air. Everyone everywhere must come #TogetherForCleanAir. Alongside celebrities, influencers and creators, everyone is invited to consider, commit and announce to your family, friends, peers and larger networks on social media:**



### **WASTE**

**Reduce your waste,** compost food, recycle non-organic trash, reuse grocery bags and **don't burn trash.**



### **DIET**

Switch to a **plant-rich diet**, cut single-use plastic products and consider ways of **travelling through means that pollute less.**



### **TRANSPORT**

**Use public transport, cycle or walk** to get around.



## ENERGY

Check efficiency ratings for home heating systems and cook-stoves, favouring fuels and technologies that **reduce emissions and protect health.**

**Conserve energy**, turn off lights and electronics when not in use, use appliances with high energy-efficiency ratings in your home. This will **reduce emissions and save money.**



## LOBBY FOR CHANGE

Encourage and support your government and businesses to **take measures to improve air quality.**



## #WORLDCLEANAIRDAY

On 7 September, when International Day of Clean Air for blue skies is observed worldwide, make a social media post by a taking photo or video of yourself fulfilling your commitment and use the hashtags **#WorldCleanAirDay** and **#TogetherForCleanAir**

# Practical Guide Civil Society



**On the International Day of Clean Air for blue skies, we should all think about making pledges to be more sustainable in our consumption and reduce air pollution in our daily lives. Here are some practical tips to get started:**



### **LOBBY FOR CHANGE**

Advocate and support public authorities in implementing programmes to **address the issue of air pollution.**

**Work with private organizations** to support incorporation of practices to **green the value chain.**



### **TAKE INDIVIDUAL ACTION**

**Commit to promoting and using public transport**, cycling or walking short distances, and carpooling where possible.

Make a commitment to **reduce and recycle trash.**

Consider how **to integrate steps that combat air pollution** into your activities.



### **GROUP ACTION**

Organize a **tree-planting activity**.

Organize a **trash clean-up event**.

Organize public events and campaigns to improve public knowledge and action to **address the issue of air pollution**.

Work with artists and musicians to create events and exhibitions that **raise awareness in your communities**.



### **#WORLDCLEANAIRDAY**

Use the International Day of Clean Air for blue skies as an opportunity to **ask your local authorities to provide timely, regular air quality data** and petition for legislation to control the worst polluters.

# Practical Guide Schools and Universities



**The International Day of Clean Air for blue skies can be a platform for students and education officials to lead the fight for cleaner air and ask their governments and schools to transition to cleaner energy. Here are some examples of meaningful action:**



### **TRANSPORT**

Commit to providing **electric buses** and making your school campus **bicycle friendly**.

Create **no-car idling zones** near your school or university campuses.



### **EDUCATION AND AWARENESS**

Explore options and **install air quality monitors** so that the community is aware of the air they are breathing. Announce this on the Day.

**Ask teachers and professors** to teach about the issue of air pollution and how it is linked to climate change and development.

Integrate educational content and activities to **improve students' knowledge** and action on environmental issues in general and on **pollution reduction** in particular.



### **GROUP ACTION**

**Ask students to bring in seedlings** for a tree-planting event

Support students in the creation of environmental clubs, online or on campus, which can **empower youth to be innovative** and come up with ideas to tackle air pollution



### **#WORLDCLEANAIRDAY**

Explore and commit on the Day to **using renewable energy on your campuses.**

The Day can be used as platform for students and education officials to **lead the fight for cleaner air** and ask their governments and schools to **transition to cleaner energy**



# Practical Guide Cities



## Use the International Day of Clean Air for blue skies to raise awareness about actions your city is taking to improve air quality. Here are some ideas:



### TRANSPORT

Provide **free public transport** in urban areas to raise awareness to encourage drivers to **leave their cars at home**.

Organize eco-walks and public cycling events to **promote walking and bicycling**.

Create **car-free streets**.



### EDUCATION AND AWARENESS

Join **BreatheLife** to raise public awareness about the health and climate impacts from air pollution and commit to track progress, share experiences and best practices through the BreatheLife Network.

**Share online educational materials** for local schools.



## EVENTS

**Organize tree-planting** activities.

Work with artists and musicians to create events and exhibitions that **raise awareness across your city.**

Organize an **in-person or virtual event** with local city officials and health professionals.



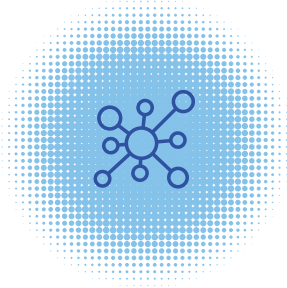
## #WORLDCLEANAIRDAY

**Share** pictures, videos and stories on social media using **#WorldCleanAirDay** and **#TogetherForCleanAir.**



# Practical Guide Private Sector

# Use the International Day of Clean Air for blue skies to make pledges to reduce emissions and invest in research and development:



## NETWORKS

**Build networks** with like-minded businesses to promote ecologically, economically and socially sustainable business ideas that **reduce air pollution**.

**Join the Alliance for Clean Air** convened by the World Economic Forum.



## INVESTMENT

**Invest** in and promote products, solutions and technologies that **cut emissions and reduce pollution**.

Make pledges to reduce emissions and green the value chain, **adopt more sustainable production/business practices**, and invest in research and development to imagine new and **less damaging ways of doing business**.



## SUPPLY CHAINS

**Track and reduce** air pollutants and greenhouse gases from facilities and supply chains.

**Use recycled and recyclable materials** in products and packaging, reduce waste from production cycles, move towards **renewable energy sources**, and opt for **energy-efficient transport**.

# Practical Guide Government & Policymakers



## Use the International Day of Clean Air for blue skies to make commitments to improve air quality. Here are some ideas:



### NATIONAL POLICIES

Announce **new regulations** to reduce harmful air pollutants from industrial sources.

Commit to policies that improve municipal solid **waste management** and reduce emissions from that sector.

Pledge to **reduce** subsidies **from fossil fuels**.

Commit to integrate air quality and climate planning, management and **emissions inventories**.

Commit to implement local and national **air quality action plans**.



### HUMAN HEALTH

Commit to **assess** the number of **lives that are saved**, the health gains in children and other vulnerable groups, and the avoided financial costs to health systems that result from implementing new policies.

Implement policies that **increase access to clean, non-polluting energy sources** in all homes.

Commit to **monitor air quality**, assess pollution sources across key sectors and tackle them to protect citizens from harmful toxins and pollutants.



## INTERNATIONAL POLICY

Join **BreatheLife** to raise public awareness about the health and climate impacts from air pollution and commit to **track progress**, share experiences and best practices through the BreatheLife Network.

Implement integrated air quality and climate change policies designed to simultaneously **achieve the WHO Ambient Air Quality Guideline values and Paris Agreement climate commitments**.

Commit to work towards and **advocate** for regional, national and international **action** on sources outside your borders.

Commit to the **Global Methane Pledge** and national actions to help achieve a 30 per cent reduction in global methane emissions below 2020 levels by 2030.



## TRANSPORT

Implement **e-mobility** and sustainable mobility policies and actions with the aim of making a decisive **impact on road transport emissions**.

Commit to a **phase out petrol and diesel** based cars.



## INVESTMENTS

Pledge more **investments in renewable energy** sources.





**Practical Guide  
International  
Community**

## Use the International Day of Clean Air for blue skies to make commitments to improve air quality. Here are some ideas:



### GOVERNMENTS

Help national governments improve their ability to plan and **implement emissions reductions** and monitor progress in reducing air pollution.



### INVESTMENT

Steer investment to renewable and cleaner electricity generation, **moving away from fossil-based electricity**, to enable cleaner electric mobility, meet increased demand for cooling, electrical appliances, and clean cooking.



### GLOBAL DEVELOPMENT

Support developing countries **move away from using polluting fuels** for energy and biomass for cooking.



### METHANE EMISSIONS

**Reduce methane emissions**, thus reducing ozone pollution and its impacts on health, crop productivity and forest growth.



You can download the Brand Guide together with other branding assets, including the logo and logo lockup files from:

**[cleanairblueskies.org/get-involved/brand-guide](https://cleanairblueskies.org/get-involved/brand-guide)**

**[cleanairblueskies@un.org](mailto:cleanairblueskies@un.org)**

**#WorldCleanAirDay  
#TogetherForCleanAir**

**@unep**

