



11.05.2016 - Every year 4.3 million deaths occur from exposure to indoor air pollution and 3.7 million deaths are attributable to outdoor air pollution. Air pollution is the world's largest single environmental health risk.

Last year on 26 May, the World Health Assembly in Geneva adopted a landmark [resolution](#) in addressing the health impacts of air pollution. It urged Member States to develop air quality monitoring systems related to air pollution and promote clean cooking, heating and lighting technologies.

Today the [World Health Organization](#) (WHO) will release a new air pollution report with a database comprising 3,000 cities in 103 countries. It is hoped that this database will serve to strengthen international transfer of expertise, technologies and scientific data in the field of air pollution.

Air pollution is contamination of the indoor or outdoor environment by any chemical, physical or biological agent that modifies the natural characteristics of the atmosphere. Household combustion devices, motor vehicles, industrial facilities and forest fires are common sources of air pollution.

Emissions of the main air pollutants (particulate matter and nitrogen dioxide) in Europe have declined in recent decades, resulting in generally improved air quality across the region. However, despite considerable improvements in past decades, air pollution is still responsible for more than 400 000 premature deaths in Europe each year, [around 90 % of city dwellers in Europe are exposed to pollutants at concentrations higher than the air quality levels deemed harmful to health](#). It also continues to damage vegetation and ecosystems.

Policies and investments supporting cleaner transport, energy-efficient housing, power generation, industry and better municipal waste management would reduce key sources of urban outdoor air pollution. By reducing air pollution levels, countries can mitigate the number of premature deaths and reduce the burden of [disease](#) from stroke, heart disease, lung cancer, and both chronic and acute respiratory diseases, including asthma.

Outdoor air pollution is a major environmental health problem affecting everyone in developed and developing countries alike, it is a global health risk which requires urgent action if Member States are to achieve Sustainable Development Goal 3: [Ensure healthy lives and promote well-being for all at all ages](#)

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Photo: UN Photo. *Gas emissions at a manufacturing complex in Toronto, Canada.*