

8 December 2014 – The objective of the regional strategy on health and the environment and plan of action 2014–2019 is to support countries of the Region in their multisectoral efforts to reduce the toll of morbidity and premature mortality caused by environmental risks.

A regional forum, comprising more than 60 participants, took place to discuss implementation of the strategy from 8 to 9 December 2014 in Amman, Jordan. The meeting was organized with the joint participation of ministries of health and ministries of environment from about 20 Member States, WHO and international and regional experts. The aim is to operationalize the regional strategy at the national level by launching national multi-stakeholder processes in terms of: provision of technical support to Member States to adapt and implement the strategy for health and the environment; building partnerships to facilitate implementation of the strategy; and monitoring and reporting on the progress achieved.

The first meeting will present a methodology for adapting the strategy at national level and preparing national plans of action. It will also provide a platform to initiate the strategy implementation process in the Region.

The regional strategy identifies seven environmental health priorities including air quality. Outdoor and indoor air pollution cause several diseases such as ischaemic heart disease, stroke, chronic obstructive pulmonary disease, lung cancer, and acute lower respiratory tract infections in children.

In 2014, WHO estimated that globally 7 million people – including 400 000 in the Region – are prematurely dying annually because of preventable exposure to indoor and outdoor air pollution. Excessive air pollution is often a byproduct of unsustainable policies in sectors such as housing, transport, energy, waste management and industry. While the health sector is already engaged in action to address air pollution, engagement is not always systematic and coordinated. Systematic surveillance of health impacts of indoor and outdoor air pollution is still a challenging endeavour in our Region.

Regional strategy on health and the environment

EM/RC60/R.5 Regional strategy on health and the environment 2014–2019

Framework for Action on Health and the Environment 2014–2019

Consultation on air quality and health

A second regional consultation is taking place from 10 to 11 December 2014 in Amman, Jordan. It will support framing of national policies to protect health from air pollution impacts, advocate for health-based air pollution control policy and management interventions by other relevant sectors, and promote monitoring and surveillance of the health impacts of air pollution. Cost-effective interventions to minimize human exposure to indoor and outdoor air pollution are available and well known. Furthermore, obvious health gains achieved through mitigation of climate change will synergize efforts to reduce air pollutants, including curtailment of greenhouse gas emissions.

Related link

Read the Indoor air quality guidelines: household fuel combustion

These regional consultation events will be opened by the Regional Director via VC, stressing the importance of establishing a roadmap for implementing the regional strategy, raising awareness of air pollution as a regional and national health problem, building commitment towards improving air quality and outlining a framework for action on air pollution and health for the health sector. The WHO Regional Center for Environmental Health Action (CEHA) is conducting the two meetings back-to-back in the Landmark Hotel in Amman, Jordan (8–11 December 2014). The objective of the regional strategy on health and the environment and plan of action 2014–2019 is to support countries of the Region in their concerted multi-sectoral efforts to reduce the toll of morbidity and premature mortality caused by environmental risks.

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