

# Media Update

4 June 2019

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## United Nations

### World Environment Day

5 JUNE 2019

The **World Environment Day** (WED), celebrated each year on 5 June, is the day to raise worldwide awareness and inspire action to protect our environment. Since it began in 1974, the event has grown to become a global platform for public outreach that is widely celebrated in over 100 countries. This year the WED is coinciding with the end of the holy month of Ramadan and Eid Ul Fitr.

Each World Environment Day is organized around a theme that draws attention to a particularly pressing environmental concern. **The theme for 2019 is “Air pollution”**. It is a call to action to combat one of the greatest environmental challenges of our time. Chosen by this year’s host, China, the theme invites us all to consider how we can make changes in our everyday lives to reduce the amount of air pollution we produce and thwart its contribution to global warming and its effects on our own health.

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*Please find below video message from the UN Secretary General and short videos on Climate Change and Air Pollution on this World Environment Day. Please feel free to use for coverage and your reports on WED.*

**SG message: World Environment Day 2019 ( With Englis subtitles)**

[https://s3.amazonaws.com/downloads2.unmultimedia.org/public/video/ondemand/SG\\_WED\\_EN.mp4](https://s3.amazonaws.com/downloads2.unmultimedia.org/public/video/ondemand/SG_WED_EN.mp4)

**World Environment Day 2019: Beat Air Pollution for a Sustainable Pakistan**

<https://youtu.be/9JaExOepbDQ>

**Climate Change and World Environment Day 2019**

<https://youtu.be/PB3s8vLJqk4>



**Eid and WED message from UNRC Pakistan, Neil Buhne:**

<https://youtu.be/cntH-heTwXI>

*The UN Secretary- General's message*

**5 June 2019**

“The theme for this year’s World Environment Day is air pollution. All around the world -- from megacities to small villages – people are breathing dirty air. An estimated nine out of ten people worldwide are exposed to air pollutants that exceed World Health Organization air quality guidelines. This is lowering life expectancy and damaging economies across the planet.

To improve air quality, we must know our enemy. Deaths and illnesses from air pollution are caused by tiny particles that penetrate our defences every time we fill our lungs. These particles come from many sources: the burning of fossil fuels for power and transport; the chemicals and mining industries; the open burning of waste; the burning of forests and fields; and the use of dirty indoor cooking and heating fuels, which are major problems in the developing world.

This polluted air kills some 7 million people each year, causes long term health problems, such as asthma, and reduces children’s cognitive development. According to the World Bank, air pollution costs societies more than \$5 trillion every year.

Many air pollutants also cause global warming. Black carbon is one such example. Produced by diesel engines, burning trash and dirty cookstoves, it is extremely harmful when inhaled. Reducing emissions of such pollutants will not only improve public health, it could alleviate global warming by up to 0.5 degrees Celsius over the next few decades.

Tackling air pollution therefore presents a double opportunity, as there are many successful initiatives that both clear the air and reduce greenhouse gas emissions, such as phasing out coal-fired power plants and promoting less polluting industry, transport and domestic fuels. With investments in renewable energy sources outstripping those in fossil fuels every year, the rise of clean energy is helping globally. Cleaner transport is also growing around the world.



It is in such initiatives, designed to improve air quality and fight climate change, that hope lies. I urge everyone attending the Climate Action Summit that I am convening in September to draw motivation from such examples. There is no reason why the international community cannot act. Precedent exists in the Montreal Protocol. Scientists identified a grave threat to public and planetary health, and governments and businesses acted to successfully protect the ozone layer.

Today, we face an equally urgent crisis. It is time to act decisively. My message to governments is clear: tax pollution; end fossil fuel subsidies; and stop building new coal plants. We need a green economy not a grey economy.

On World Environment Day, I ask each of us to act so we can breathe more easily. From pressuring politicians and businesses to changing our own habits, we can reduce pollution and beat climate change.” António Guterres

## Global facts about Air Pollution

- Approximately 7 million people worldwide die prematurely each year from air pollution.
- About 4 million of deaths due to air pollution are occurring in Asia-Pacific
- 92 per cent of people worldwide do not breathe clean air
- Air pollution costs the global economy \$5 trillion every year in welfare costs
- Ground-level ozone pollution is expected to reduce staple crop yields by 26 per cent by 2030

## Additional resources:

*Articles and pieces:*

<https://www.unenvironment.org/news-and-stories/press-release/green-infrastructure-natures-best-defence-against-disasters>

<https://www.worldenvironmentday.global/story/25-steps-end-millions-deaths-new-tobacco>

<https://www.worldenvironmentday.global/story/pakistan-customs-seize-massive-smuggled-shipment-ozone-depleting-gas>

<https://www.worldenvironmentday.global/eid-ul-fitr>



*Videos:*

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FQ77WNHfoYg>  
<https://youtu.be/UF1GzWSzsss>

*Trello:*

<https://trello.com/b/w8UmpwKh/world-environment-day-2019>

*Website:*

<https://www.worldenvironmentday.global/>  
[https://www.unenvironment.org/explore-topics/air\]](https://www.unenvironment.org/explore-topics/air)  
[www.un.org/en/events/environmentday](http://www.un.org/en/events/environmentday)

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