

Turkey's health professional reacts to UN's Clean Air Initiative: Turkey must align climate change and air pollution policies

Following the announcement of the [Clean Air Initiative](#) [1] by the UN, the World Health Organization (WHO), the UN Environment Programme (UNEP) and the Climate and Clean Air Coalition (CCAC), Turkey health professionals called government to address the climate and air pollution crises by joint actions.

- The Clean Air Initiative seeks to simultaneously mitigate climate change, reduce air pollution and promote health.
- Clean Air Initiative, calls on national and subnational governments to commit to achieving air quality that is safe for citizens and to align climate change and air pollution policies by 2030.
- Meeting the goals of the Paris Agreement on climate change could **save over one million lives a year by 2050** and bring health benefits worth around USD 54.1 trillion through reduced air pollution

The UN Secretary-General's Special Envoy for the Climate Action Summit, Luis Alfonso de Alba, announced the initiative on 23 July 2019 in New Delhi, India. He said ***the climate and air pollution crises are driven by the same factors and must be addressed by joint actions.***

It is one of many initiatives that will be presented during the UN Secretary-General's Climate Action Summit on 23 September 2019, which will provide an opportunity for new commitments and investments in interventions for climate-resilient health systems, and in air quality monitoring and policy implementation.

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According to WHO; air pollution causes **seven million premature deaths every year, 600,000 of whom are children**. The World Bank found that air pollution costs the global economy an estimated USD 5.11 trillion in welfare losses, and in the 15 highest-emitting countries, the health impacts of air pollution cost more than 4% of gross domestic product (GDP).

Meeting the goals of the Paris Agreement on climate change, however, **could save over one million lives a year by 2050** and bring health benefits worth around USD 54.1 trillion through reduced air pollution, twice the amount spent on mitigation.

Doc. Dr. Gamze Varol from Turkish Medical Association, a member of [Right to Clean Air Platform-Turkey \[2\]](#), commented on the Clean Air Initiative; “It is very pleasing to see that the United Nations has started an initiative prioritizes air pollution. We hope that this global call for a simultaneous approach to climate change and air pollution will enable the prioritization of the issue by national and local governments of Turkey. A report published by our Platform in May, revealed that **in Turkey at least 52 thousand premature deaths** - which equals to 7 times the traffic accidents - **could be prevented if the air pollution levels were below WHO guidelines in 2017**. In order to control pollutant emissions from electricity generation from fossil fuels, industrial production and transportation, which are the main sources of both air pollution and climate change; decision-makers, primarily Turkish Ministry of Health and Ministry of Environment and Urbanisation, should develop collaborative policies that put human health at the center.

HEAL’s, another member of [Right to Clean Air Platform-Turkey](#), consultant Funda Gacal also states that; ”

Turkey, in line with the Clean Air Initiative call, needs to take necessary steps for lowering air pollution levels to the WHO guidelines. To this end, it is important to adopt a regulation with binding limit values for particulate matter 2.5 (PM 2.5), which has the greatest health impact, and to be a part of global agreements, such as the Gothenburg Protocol to report air pollutant sources publicly. Thus, upon the clear identification of air pollution sources for Turkey, air pollution mitigation strategies can be developed with the contribution of experts in universities and civil society.”