4. Making air and people healthier

Air pollution, both outdoor and indoor, is the greatest environmental health hazard in the Region. Nearly one third of deaths from cardiovascular disease and one half of deaths from chronic obstructive pulmonary disease are associated with air pollution, amounting to 6.5 million deaths each year globally and 2.7 million in the Region.

The Manila Declaration on Health and Environment (2016) and the Western Pacific Regional Framework for Action on Health and Environment on a Changing Planet (2016) recommended that Member States and WHO take urgent action to ensure clean air for health and well-being.

Following this recommendation, the WHO Regional Office convened the first-ever Member States Consultation on Addressing the Health Impact of Air Pollution in Manila in October 2017. Fifty representatives of health and environment sectors from 13 countries shared views and formulated priority actions for WHO and Member States to undertake in coming years.

Countries identified the health impacts of sand dust in Northern Asia and haze in South-East Asia as major concerns of the Region. They agreed that transboundary air pollution should be addressed by international cooperation supported by WHO.

Member States committed to working with WHO to develop and implement national policies and action plans to reduce the morbidity and mortality related to household and ambient air pollution linked to Sustainable Development Goal target 3.9. Pacific island and Mekong countries called attention to the Sustainable Development Goal and climate-related financing mechanisms for small island developing states and vulnerable states to improve air quality.