

Inger Andersen  
Under-Secretary-General of the United Nations  
Executive Director of the United Nations Environment Programme  
United Nations Environment Programme  
United Nations Avenue, Gigiri  
PO Box 30552, 00100  
Nairobi, Kenya

Jul 29, 2021

Re: International Day of Clean Air for blue skies

Dear Inger Andersen,

As a group of advocates, experts and networks dedicated to securing clean air for all, we write to offer our unwavering support and encouragement for 'International Day of Clean Air for blue skies'. We are here to help ensure it is a great success.

Air pollution is the top environmental threat to health worldwide, and it's a persistent one. The production and use of fossil fuels is the greatest contributor to poor air quality, and also fuels climate change. Making the connection between air pollution, our health and the climate and ecological crises has never been more important.

Today, as our economies continue their recovery from the ongoing shock of COVID-19, we must use every opportunity we have to secure a thriving future for humanity. We cannot allow communities anywhere to be locked into, and burdened by, outdated technologies that will continue to damage our air and planet, and therefore all living beings upon it.

That's why this 'International Day of Clean Air for blue skies' we must come together behind a strong call for action for governments and decision makers to end all new fossil fuel development and secure a just transition for every worker, community and country to our clean energy future.

The International Energy Agency recently released information showing that energy-related CO2 emissions will likely rise 1.5 billion tonnes in 2021, driven by a strong rebound in demand for coal in electricity generation. This will erode our chances of keeping warming within the Paris Agreement temperature goal of 1.5°C - increasing the already devastating consequences of climate change for people everywhere - and further exacerbate suffering from respiratory and other air pollution-related diseases all around the world.

As you know, burning fossil fuels for electricity, heat and transport causes one in five premature deaths. That is 8.7 million people per year. It is the silent pandemic, and it is chronically damaging the health and life potential of the world's children.

We cannot talk about or dream of a future with clean air and continue to be silent on fossil fuels. We therefore urge you to centre the messaging for 'International Day of Clean Air for blue skies' around a strong call to end the financing of new fossil fuel development. Let's push instead for the renewable fuels of the future. This will save lives, give us a better chance of meeting the Sustainable Development Goals and speed up our transition to the fossil-fuel-free economy promised by the Paris Agreement.

The IEA has already made clear why and how we must do this, indicating that such a shift is indeed possible. Financiers, regulators and insurers from China to Bangladesh, Malaysia to South Korea, India and Japan see the risks and are abandoning coal. The World Health Organization has called for an end to using taxpayers money to fund pollution. The G7 have agreed to take the first critical steps. Activist shareholders and the courts have just set new precedents that will accelerate this transition. But in order to capture the public's attention in ways that will support political action at greater speed and scale, we need to do so much more.

Let us use the opportunity we have with this year's 'International Day of Clean Air for blue skies' to send out a rallying cry that will resonate the world over!

We look forward to working together and supporting each other to clear the air on September 7th.

Yours sincerely,

- Association Air4Health Bulgaria
- Campaign Collective
- Clean Air Fund
- European Lung Foundation (ELF)
- European Public Health Alliance (EPHA)
- European Respiratory Society (ERS)
- German Alliance on Climate Change and Health — Deutsche Allianz Klimawandel und Gesundheit (KLUG)
- Health Care Without Harm
- Health and Environment Alliance (HEAL)
- Institute for Health and Environment, Slovenia
- International Network for Children's Health, Environment and Safety (INCHES)
- International Society for Doctors for the Environment Italy (ISDE Italy)
- Moms Clean Air Force
- Réseau Environnement Santé France