

## The Second Regional Science Policy Dialogue on Air Quality Management in the Indo-Gangetic Plain and Himalayan Foothills

26–27 June 2024

The Second Regional Science Policy Dialogue (SPD) on air quality management (AQM) in the Indo-Gangetic Plain and Himalayan Foothills (IGP-HF) region arrived at the following understanding and appreciation of issues around air quality improvement:

- i. that poor air quality affects health, environment, the economy and social wellbeing of a large proportion of the world's population;
- ii. that air pollution is a global, regional, airshed-level and local challenge that requires action at all levels;
- iii. that the IGP-HF region is one of the most highly air polluted airsheds in the world, where sources of emissions and impacts are cross-border in nature that requires an airshed management approach, with coordination, cooperation and collaboration at regional, national and sub-national levels;
- iv. that the main sources of pollutants are similar across this region – particularly between the neighboring jurisdictions – which include transport, industries, power generation, cooking and heating, crop residue burning, open burning of waste, and wildfire;
- v. that all countries and jurisdictions have made progress in transitioning to clean energy and adoption of less polluting alternatives;
- vi. that with implementation of current and additional policies in each of the countries and jurisdictions, the air quality situation would be substantively better;

- vii. that the benefits of engaging in an airshed approach to AQM planning involving the federal, state and provincial governments, private sector, development partners and communities will be significant for all stakeholders.

The Science Policy Dialogue, therefore, recommends the following actions as the way forward for improving air quality in the region:

- i. operationalise the “Kathmandu Road Map” for Air Quality Improvement through the respective national and sub-national Clean Air Programmes;
- ii. rename the SPD as Science, Policy and Finance Dialogue (SPFD);
- iii. accelerate actions to reduce air pollutant emissions to comply with National Ambient Air Quality Standards as soon as possible;
- iv. consider an aspirational goal of  $< 35 \mu\text{g}/\text{m}^3$  for annual PM<sub>2.5</sub> concentrations by 2035 (“35 by 35”) for long term Air Quality planning;
- v. constitute a technical committee of experts recommended by governments from the region to meet in between the 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> Science Policy Finance Dialogues to advise on the preparation for the 3rd SPFD;
- vi. propose during the first technical committee meeting, the set-up of working groups consisting of experts/scientists from the concerned agencies (including Academia and Technical Institutions) in the region to develop the AQM strategies, assess

- and identify research gaps, and needs. Based on regional and international experiences, the first meeting of the technical committee will also develop a proposal for a regional cooperation structure including the reflection on the creation of regional centers of excellence and expertise;
- vii. share scientific knowledge and information, good policies and practices, through a common platform and during the annual SPFD;
  - viii. leverage funding and investments in adoption of green technologies and practices in the main polluting sectors – transport, industries, power generation, waste burning, cooking/heating and agriculture;
  - ix. build capacity of relevant agencies for air quality management including air quality forecasting, and implementation of abatement measures through joint training programmes;
  - x. propose air quality improvement as a priority theme for regional cooperation;
  - xi. draw support from available funding opportunities from funding agencies and development partners including World Bank, United Kingdom Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office, Swiss Development Cooperation, Asian Development Bank, United Nations Environment Program, KfW Development Bank, Clean Air Fund, and private sector partners and others as appropriate to reflect on developing innovative and financing instruments aiming at supporting national, sub-national and harmonised regional Air Quality Management strategies.

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