

News

UNEA-6 Resolution on Air Quality acknowledges the Integrated Assessment of Air Pollution and Climate Change for Sustainable Development in Africa

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Clean Air Benefits for Africa

In a major boost to air quality and sustainable development in Africa, a new **UNEA-6 Resolution on Air Quality has acknowledged the Integrated Assessment of Air Pollution and Climate Change for Sustainable Development in Africa**.

The new development came in 2023, when the [Integrated Assessment of Air Pollution and Climate Change for Sustainable Development in Africa \(UNEP, 2023\)](#), was published by a partnership of the African Union, Climate and Clean Air Coalition and the United Nations Environment Programme. The assessment was developed with contributions from over 100 authors across Africa, in a process supported by the Stockholm Environment Institute (Kaudia et al. 2022). The Assessment recommended for an Africa Clean Air Program (ACAP) to provide a key rallying point for African multilateral institutions, the Regional Economic Communities (RECs) and Member States, and development partners to work collaboratively to implement the recommendations from the assessment and deliver multiple benefits of clean air for Africa.

The Assessment recommends a package of 37 measures across five key development areas: transport, residential energy, energy generation and industry, agriculture, and waste management (Figure 1). Seventeen of these 37 measures focus on reducing short-lived climate pollutants (SLCPs) such as methane, black carbon and hydrofluorocarbons. Besides meeting national development goals, implementing these measures can deliver substantial clean air, regional climate and development benefits for Africa by 2030 and 2063, in line with the SDGs and the African Union's Agenda 2063 – the Africa We Want respectively.

The African Assessment clearly demonstrated that action that is both integrated across climate and clean air objectives and coordinated across the five key sectors can potentially deliver:

- Substantial reductions in emissions of greenhouse gases (GHG), including carbon dioxide (CO₂), methane (CH₄) and nitrous oxide (N₂O), SLCPs, including black carbon, ozone precursors and hydrofluorocarbons, and other air pollutants (40-80% by 2063);
- Prevention of 200,000 premature deaths per year by 2030 and

880,000 premature deaths per year by 2063 due to outdoor and indoor air pollution;

- Improving food security by reducing desertification and increasing crop yields for rice, maize, soy and wheat;
- Limiting the negative effects of regional climate change on rainfall, especially in the Sahel region, and temperature in parts of Africa.

Links to the UNEA Resolutions

The sixth United Nations Environment Assembly (UNEA-6), through its '[resolution on promoting regional cooperation on air pollution to improve air quality globally \(UNEP 2024\)](#)' has now set the scene for accelerating delivery of the Africa Clean Air Program as part of the African Union's Agenda 2063. The Resolution 'Encourages member states to accelerate efforts to implement relevant provisions of Environment Assembly resolution 3/8 on preventing and reducing air pollution to improve air quality globally, including developing national air quality programmes and setting national ambient air quality standards, bearing in mind the most recent air quality guidelines of the World Health Organization, as appropriate in their national circumstances'.

The Integrated Assessment on Air Pollution and Climate Change for Sustainable Development in Africa (UNEP, 2023) has outlined how this can be achieved while simultaneously delivering clean air, regional climate and development benefits in Africa. The UNEA-6 air quality resolution acknowledges 'the progress achieved by existing bodies and initiatives that facilitate cooperation on in-country and transboundary air pollution, including' inter alia the 'Integrated Assessment of Air Pollution and Climate Change for Sustainable Development in Africa and its proposed Africa Clean Air Program'.

The 37 African Assessment measures resonate particularly well with the theme of the UNEA-6 discussions, i.e. 'inclusive and sustainable multilateral actions to tackle climate change, biodiversity loss and pollution,' and actions in the following areas:

- Cooperation with Multilateral Environmental Agreements,
- Implementation of resolution 3/8 on preventing and reducing air pollution to improve air quality globally,
- The implementation of resolution 4/3 on sustainable mobility,
- Implementation of resolutions 4/14 and 5/2 on sustainable nitrogen management,

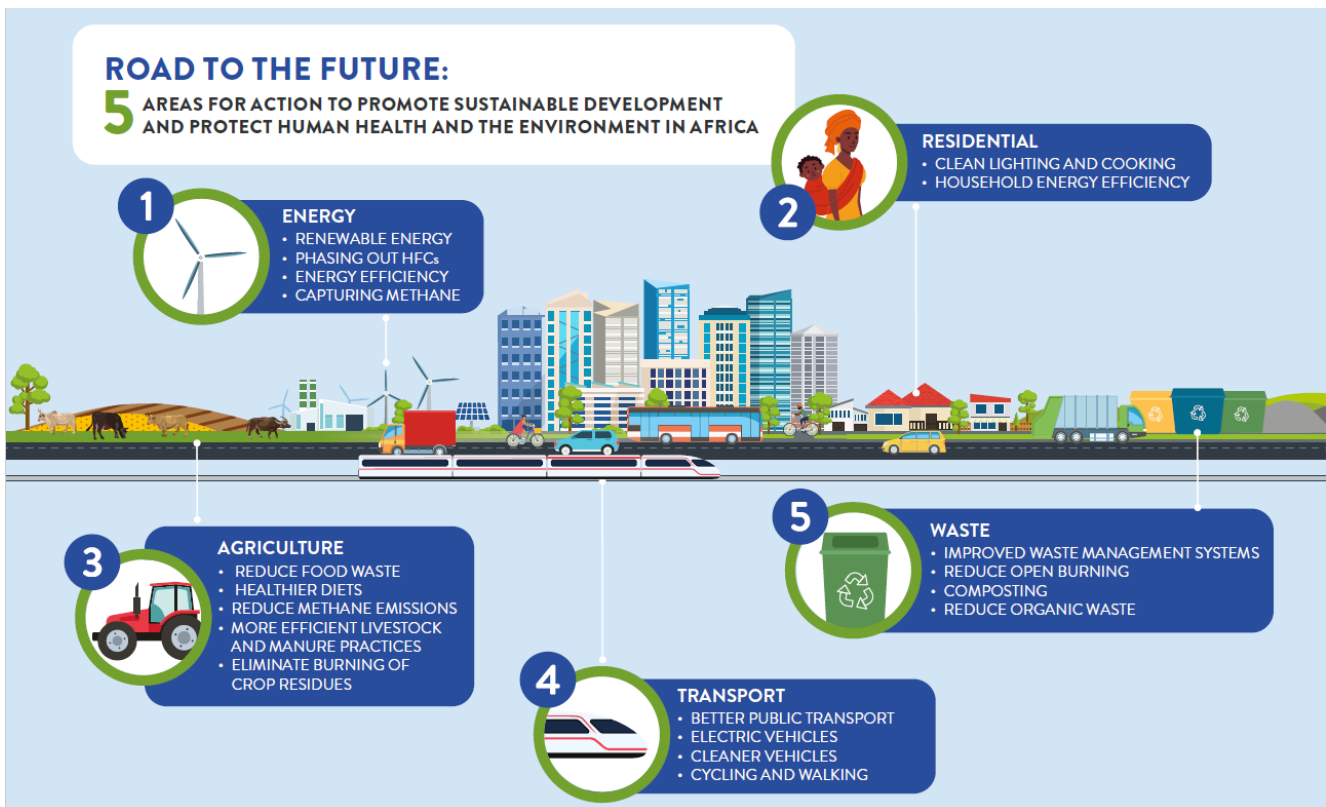


Figure 1: Examples of the 37 measures across five key development areas: energy generation and industry, residential energy, agriculture, transport and waste management, recommended by the Integrated Assessment of Air Pollution and Climate Change for Sustainable Development in Africa (Image copyright: Climate and Clean Air Coalition)

- Implementation of resolution 5/1 on the animal welfare–environment–sustainable development nexus,
- Implementation of resolution 5/7 on the sound management of chemicals and waste,
- Implementation of resolution 5/9 on sustainable and resilient infrastructure,
- Implementing resolution 5/11 on enhancing circular economy as a contribution to achieving sustainable consumption and production.

The links between the benefits of the Africa Assessment’s mitigation measures and the aims of UNEA resolutions are clear and include improving air quality, crop yields, animal welfare, sustainable nitrogen management (including circularity of livestock manure), waste management and increased renewable energy, sustainable mobility, and residential energy options.

Tackling air pollution climate change and sustainable development across the scales

The Africa Assessment shows how coordinated action from local/city scales, through sub-national, to national, regional, and continental scales is necessary for achieving national and international targets for air quality, climate change and sustainable development. For example, the importance of the national scale is demonstrated by several countries in Africa that have already included actions related to the Assessment’s measures in the Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs) under the Paris Agreement, although often without reference to specific measures or targets. By demonstrating how the 37 measures deliver against

a range of policy objectives and showing that all of these proposed measures are technologically proven and cost-effective, as well as implemented already somewhere on the continent, the case can be made for considering their inclusion into the reviews of the NDCs that are due for submission in 2025. Such inclusion can unlock climate finance to implement these solutions at scale. Using such approaches, the African Assessment shows that action that is both integrated across climate and clean air objectives and coordinated action across multiple sectors can potentially deliver substantial development benefits. The time to act is now.

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