



DELEGATION OF THE EUROPEAN UNION TO TURKEY

AVRUPA BİRLİĞİ TÜRKİYE DELEGASYONU

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7th September, “International Day of Clean Air for Blue Skies” celebrated for the first time in Turkey and around the globe

- **7th September, declared as the “International Day of Clean Air for Blue Skies” by the United Nations is being celebrated for the first time in Turkey and around the globe with the highest level of participation from the United Nations, T.R. Ministry of Environment and Urbanization as well as 81 provinces.**
- **Celebrations within the scope of EU Funded "CityAir" Project, Technical Assistance for Improving Air Quality and Raising Public Awareness in Cities, conducted by the Ministry of Environment and Urbanization will take place on a regular basis from this year onwards. The EU is providing support to the CITYAIR (Technical Assistance for Improving Air Quality and Raising Public Awareness in Cities in Turkey CITYAIR (in line with CAFE Directive) project. With the air quality modelling done for 31 provinces across the country and the Clean Air Action Plans prepared, the project will provide the policy makers and implementing institutions the right tools to fight air pollution.**
- **Prof. Mehmet Emin Birpınar, Deputy Minister of T.R. Ministry of Environment and Urbanization, addressing at Clean Air Special Event Session during celebrations, mentioned that the coronavirus pandemic has shown the importance of clean air all over the world and states his content regarding the decision of the United Nations in terms of public awareness.**
- **Revision of the air quality action plans for 31 provinces in Turkey as well as awareness raising activities within the scope of the EU funded CityAir have been in progress for the last two years. The air pollutants for these 31 cities will be identified when the project is completed and this will allow micro-level activities to reduce these pollutants at city and street level.**

Today, protection of air quality is at the top of the agenda for most critical environmental issues associated with human health. In fact, 9 out of 10 people worldwide breathe polluted air and air pollution accounts for 8 million people affected by various diseases. The significance of merging global efforts and ensuring collaboration has come to the forefront of the agenda once again due to Covid-19 pandemic strongly hitting the whole world.



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Given that, during the 74th Session of the United Nations in December 2019, 7th of September was declared as “**International Day of Clean Air for Blue Skies**”. “Clean Air Day”, celebrated for the first time this year, aims to raise public awareness at all levels and to encourage activities for improving air quality.

The EU is putting in a lot of effort to this end. With its ambitious 2030 Climate and Energy Framework and the European Green Deal, the EU is re-positioning itself to be the first carbon neutral economy by 2050. EU has also enacted its Climate Law this year. Focusing on areas from emission reduction to resource efficiency, sustainable mobility to health and environmental protection, the EU is committed to fulfil this ambition, even more so after suffering from the impacts of Covid-19 crisis.

Head of EU Delegation to Turkey Ambassador Meyer-Landrut: "Nothing could be as precious as the air we breathe"

Mentioning that air pollution accounts for approximately 6.5 million people in the EU suffering from diseases such as stroke, asthma and bronchitis every year, Head of EU Delegation to Turkey Ambassador Nikolaus Meyer-Landrut said:

"Let me take this opportunity to express our thanks to the Ministry of Environment and Urbanisation for organising this important event together with the UNEP Europe Office. I trust that with such initiatives and the efforts of the Ministry through the CITYAIR project, the EU will have contributed to better air quality management and a higher quality of life for the citizens of Turkey as well.

Every year, life expectancy of more than 400 thousand people decreases due to reasons associated with air pollution. However, nothing can be more precious than breathing. That is indeed the reason why we are trying to take European Union standards to the highest level possible and monitor the air quality in Cities very closely.

We have pleasure in cooperating for a shared knowledge and experience in this field with the Turkish government and the municipalities."

Prof. Mehmet EminBirpınar: It is in our hands to improve the air quality in cities

A Clean Air Special Event Session is hosted by T.R. Ministry of Environment and Urbanization, with wide participation including Provincial Environment Directorates of 81 cities, with the aim of emphasizing the significance of 7th September “Clean Air Day”. **Prof. Mehmet EminBirpınar, Deputy Minister of T.R. Ministry of Environment and Urbanization**, addressing the session, stated his content regarding the decision of the United Nations in terms of public awareness. Explaining the fact that Covid-19 has shown the world how vital clean air is, Birpınar continued as follows: “We are going through a period during which we need quality and clean air more than ever. The data received from European Union Copernicus Atmosphere Monitoring Programme, during the period when pandemic measures were implemented in our country, has indicated improvement in air quality. This observation is also a proof of the scale of air pollution we cause under normal circumstances and that it is indeed possible to improve air quality by means of taking measures. Our Ministry will be carrying on its activities in this field in a fast and determined manner.”.



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Naming CityAir Project as one of the important public awareness projects of the Ministry in the field of air quality, Birpınar continued his speech as follows:

“This is the first time that such a comprehensive project is held in Turkey to create public awareness on significance of air quality. By means of this project, covering 31 provinces located in South-Central Anatolia, Aegean, Mediterranean and Central Black Sea regions, we not only ensure progress in air emission inventory systems but also update the clean air action plans of our cities. Subsequently, air quality modelling activities will be carried out for each and every one of these provinces. Thereby, we will be able to identify what kind of pollutants we are exposed to at provincial, district and even street level. Furthermore, we will identify the distribution of pollutants, sources as well how the emission takes place in the atmosphere in the light of the data we obtain from more than 300 measurement stations throughout Turkey. This will enable us to conduct a micro level study to remove the pollutants. Up until now, we organized a couple of workshops to which officials responsible for air quality management from Kahramanmaras, Sinop, Izmir, Isparta and surrounding cities attended. During these workshops, we explained how the local authorities and relevant stakeholders should communicate this issue to our citizens. Our goal is to increase the knowledge on improving air quality significantly in the long run thanks to increasing awareness and active efforts. We are working on road maps which will help develop emission reduction strategies in the new period at city level and improve air quality by increasing the awareness in the society”.

Prof. AlperÜnal: Individual awareness is of vital importance for sustainable clean air

Speaking on the environmental impacts of air quality, City Air Project Expert **Prof. AlperÜnal from Istanbul Technical University (ITU) Eurasia Institute of Earth Sciences, Climate and Marine Sciences Department** underlined that the coronavirus pandemic has revealed how big a role individual measures play in the fight against air pollution. Ünal said, “Decreasing number of vehicles in traffic particularly in large cities due to majority of the population staying home has reduced air pollution due to particulate matter PM₁₀ by 32 percent. This is a very significant reduction. In order to make it sustainable, not only the public but also individuals have an important role to play”.

Indicating the fact that United Nations is creating an awareness at international level and aiming to ensure a global improvement in terms of air quality, Ünal continued as follows: “All actors working on this subject united to work on a solution starting at local level and rising to global. Within the scope of the Emission Inventory Workshops we organize in CityAir Project, we ensure that local authorities and all relevant stakeholders become knowledgeable on this issue. This awareness starting at local level will make sure that the subject will be handled at national level in the upcoming period.”

Isparta Emission Inventory Workshop completed

Emission Inventory Workshop, the fourth in a series of technical workshops within the scope of CityAir Project, has been organized with attendance from Isparta province as well as 9 other provinces under the responsibility of south-central Anatolia Clean Air Centre Directorate. The current status of air quality and relevant details about future planning have been discussed during the workshop, in which provincial directorates, municipalities and authorities working in the field of air quality have participated. During the training sessions organized within the scope





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of the workshop, the stages, main principles and purpose of developing emission inventory have been addressed in detail as well as the modelling activities.

The objectives of “International Day of Clean Air for Blue Skies”:

- Ensuring that people from all parts of the society understand the significance of air quality for health, environment, economy and productivity,
- Indicating the close link between air quality and other environmental issues such as climate change and Sustainable Development Goals,
- Promoting solutions for air quality improvement by means of sharing knowledge, innovation and success stories which have been and can be put into action,
- Developing alliance-forming strategies among local, national and international projects conducted in the field of air quality management and accelerating air quality activities by bringing international actors together.

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