

WHO statement on air pollution

Mr Chairman, distinguished delegates,

- We would like to **thank** the European Union, the Marshall Islands, the United States, Zimbabwe and the many other countries that have drawn our attention to the health risks associated with indoor air pollution, and that have called for a strong political commitment to address this problem.
- You should have in front of you a **position statement** by the World Health Organization and partners that outlines a few key steps that must be taken urgently if we are to prevent 1.5 million deaths a year.
- We all know that **“What does not get measured does not get done”**. Therefore, we call upon **countries to endorse the target: “By 2015, to reduce by half the number of people without access to modern cooking fuels and to make improved cooking technologies widely available.”** Working towards this target, recommended by the UN Millennium Project, will not only reduce indoor air pollution and improve children’s and women’s health but will also make an essential contribution to achieving ALL of the Millennium Development Goals.
- The **mechanisms for monitoring progress** towards this target are already in place: WHO is the UN agency monitoring the MDG indicator “proportion of population using solid fuels”.
- WHO is working with countries to implement its **global air quality guidelines**. These guidelines apply to outdoor AND indoor environments. As few indoor spaces can be regulated, WHO has started the development of **indoor air quality guidelines** that will provide guidance on how to achieve guideline values through **technological interventions and ventilation**.
- As already pointed out by previous speakers, a greater awareness among the affected and women in particular, is essential if households are to switch away from health-damaging traditional practices and find out about available solutions. But awareness is NOT sufficient where affected households do not have a choice. Measures to address indoor air pollution will need to be integrated into national policies. We call upon **developing countries to commit to reviewing relevant national policies, including Poverty Reduction Strategies and national development plans, to address the health**

risks from cooking and heating. We also call upon industrialized countries to commit to reviewing their national development cooperation strategies with the same aim.

- **Public sector investments** – at national and international levels – are essential to catalyse the process of providing the poor with access to modern household energy.

Thank you.