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Press Release

Regional governments, representing 35 million people, commit to a clean air future during COP23

- *10 regional governments joined the BreatheLife Campaign to combat the global challenges of air pollution.*
- *The regions represent almost 3000 municipalities and a total population of over 35 million people*
- *Together, the regions have committed to over 30 actions to mitigate air pollution.*

This Monday, ten members of the [Network of Regional Governments for Sustainable Development – nrg4SD](#) – joined the BreatheLife Campaign, led by the UN Environment, together with the World Health Organization and the Climate and Clean Air Coalition, to strengthen the actions to fighting air pollution.

The first regional governments that announced their commitment during COP23 represents almost 3000 municipalities and a total population of over 35 million people. They are: Gossas (Senegal), Jalisco and Campeche (Mexico), Plateau (Benin), Catalonia and Basque Country (Spain), Chaco (Argentina), and Azuay (Ecuador), Lombardy (Italy) and Valle de Aburrá (Colombia).

When it comes to air pollution, regions play a different but complementary role to cities. Cities act on more specific topics such as public transportation, cycling, housing and other elements circumscribed to the urban scenario. Whereas regions have a more comprehensive responsibility, including in terms of enabling a greater impact of cities on air pollution. For example, urban traffic and mobility necessarily depends on the law and regulation of vehicles, fuel emissions and transport, not only at the city-level, but especially in interurban and metropolitan areas. These macro and regulatory elements normally fall upon the competences of regions.

The responsibility of regional governments also includes other crucial areas for tackling air pollution, such as the licensing and surveillance of industrial and agricultural activities, the monitoring of air quality, through regional governments' stations, the promotion of renewable energies, waste management, public health system and regulations in general.

"Regional governments play a defining role in reducing and controlling air pollution. Acting over the whole territory, the further engagement of regions could be game changing, especially through the regulation of industrial activities, transportation, emissions standards, energy production and distribution, waste management and others. Because it's urgent regions take further action on air pollution, nrg4SD is fully committed to promote the BreatheLife among its members." Says Natalia Vera, Secretary General of nrg4SD

The BreatheLife Campaign is aligned to the nrg4SD main thematic priorities and particularly with its agenda on climate change and sustainable development. Air pollution exacerbates the impacts of climate change, and thus requires action to reduce vulnerabilities and increase territorial resilience. Poor air quality has negative effects on health and many on many different areas and sectors, e.g. by reducing crop yields, compromising food

security, and damaging human health. Reducing the number of deaths and illness from air pollution is also a target within the Sustainable Development Goals.

Air pollution is a global challenge that severely affects the environment and human health and well-being. Air pollution contributes as one of the main causes to many diseases and in 2012, it was estimated that one out of nine deaths in the world was connected to air pollution. Additionally, persistent air pollution is also directly connected to global warming and climate change. Therefore, the sources of air pollution are one of the biggest threats of our time.

" The air quality around Barcelona is a chronic problem which has become one of our main concerns in the latest years. It is an urgent issue that affects the health of all citizens. This is why we have taken powerful and coordinated action through the Agreement for Improving Air Quality, which brings together other public administrations to transform the quality of life of the people in Catalonia. " Marta Subirà, Secretary for the Environment and Sustainability of Catalonia

"We are a privileged province, where we are still on time to seek a better air quality and therefore a better life quality, for our citizens. With clear public policies, we will get citizens to appreciate what they have and to endeavor to preserve it. Small cities and towns of our province, could be territories of sustainable development, pushing, from the bottom up to more determined and courageous positions from the national level" María Cecilia Alvarado, Vice-President of Azuay and Co-Chair for the South for nrg4SD

"Air pollution is a major environmental and health issue affecting people worldwide. Tackling the problem is a common responsibility that we have to face up at each government and society level.

Lombardy Region took charge of air pollution question establishing a diffuse emissions monitoring system, implementing long-term planning of measures, cooperating with municipalities and neighbouring regions, sharing initiatives with the business sector and the environmental associations.

Daily working on air pollution prevention, we have realized that transparency is a core value, for at least two reasons. The more awareness is diffuse, the more the people's contribution to the air quality goals is consistent. Moreover, the availability in a wider context of updated and verifiable data is a key success factor to improve local policies thanks to the exchange of experience, knowledge and mutual learning.

Therefore, it is with much conviction that Lombardy Region joins the BreatheLife Campaign and commits to share solutions to combat air pollution. I believe that sub-national governments can play a leading role in addressing this challenge, so I welcome the collaboration among nrg4sd and UN Environment aimed at highlighting and sustaining our efforts." Claudia Maria Terzi, Minister for Environment, Energy and Sustainable Development of Lombardy Region

"Basque Country Air Quality Policy will go beyond mere legal compliance so that it can effectively guarantee the protection of health and environment. BreatheLife initiative will contribute to share our experiences with other regions and states". María Elena Moreno Zaldibar, Deputy Minister for the Environment for Basque Country

"The province of Chaco is committed to the proposed objectives of the Campaign and will work hard for a purer air in our province". Oscar Domingo Peppo, Governor of the Chaco Province.

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OFFICIAL ANNOUNCEMENT & PRESS CONFERENCE

13/11 - 14:30
UNFCCC COP 23 - Sustainable Innovation Forum
Deutsche Post DHL Group - Platz der Deutschen Post
VIP Room

About nrg4SD

The Network of Regional Governments for Sustainable Development - nrg4SD - is a global association that solely represents regional governments in the international agendas on climate change, biodiversity and sustainable development. It was established in 2002, at the World Summit in Johannesburg, and today has over 50 members from 26 countries in 4 continents. The nrg4SD serves as the voice of regional governments at UN negotiations, European Union initiatives and global discussions, advocating for recognition and supporting engagement of regional governments. It facilitates cooperation projects and partnerships between members, and with international experts and promotes expertise exchange, capacity building and knowledge transfer.

For more information: nrg4sd.org | @nrg4SD | #Regions4Climate | #RegionsAdapt | #Regions4Biodiv | #Regions4SDGs

About the BreatheLife Campaign

BreatheLife is a joint campaign lead by the World Health Organization (WHO), United Nations Environment and the Climate & Clean Air Coalition (CCAC) to mobilize subnational governments and individuals to protect our health and planet from the effects of air pollution. By WHO, UN Environment and CCAC joining forces, BreatheLife brings together expertise and partners that can tackle both the climate and health impacts of air pollution. It combines public health and climate change expertise with guidance on implementing solutions to air pollution in support of global development goals. The Campaign provides a platform to share best practices and demonstrates progress, increases monitoring efforts, accelerates solutions and empowers individuals through education about the burden of air pollution.

For more information: breathelife2030.org | @BreatheLife2030 | #BreatheLife