PRESS RELEASE

Mayors warn vehicle manufacturers: “The health of our children is more important than the health of your profits”

New WHO report finds 630 million children under 5 years old are exposed to unsafe air globally

Children are at greater risk than adults from the many adverse health effects of air pollution

London, UK (29 Oct 2018) — The mayors of Paris, Copenhagen, Seoul, and Medellín have called for vehicle manufacturers to stop producing petrol and diesel cars as soon as possible, to protect the health of children in cities around the world. Responding to alarming new research released by the World Health Organization (WHO) today, the mayors also urged every city around the world to help their youngest citizens by signing the C40 Green & Healthy Streets Declaration. The Declaration commits mayors to procure only zero-emission buses from 2025 and ensure that a major area of their city is zero emission by 2030.

“The children of Paris and cities around the world have the absolute right to breathe clean air,” said Anne Hidalgo, Mayor of Paris & Chair of C40. “They have no power to change the environment they are growing up in, so we as responsible adults and political leaders must act on their behalf. As mayors of the world’s great cities we are transforming the way that our citizens move around the city - prioritising walking, cycling, and clean public transport through initiatives like C40’s Green & Healthy Streets Declaration. The figures released by the WHO today, reveal that we must do even more. I urge every city to join us and send an unmistakeable message to vehicle manufacturers: The health of our children is more important than the health of your profits."

“The problem of petrol and diesel vehicles polluting our streets needs to be fixed if we want to improve air quality and protect the health of our children,” said Frank Jensen, Lord Mayor of Copenhagen, and Vice-Chair of C40 Cities. “In Copenhagen we are continuously making new bike lanes, expanding our public transport system and introducing tougher regulations on polluting diesel vehicles passing through the city. But this is not sufficient. I therefore strongly urge all vehicle manufacturers to phase out the production of petrol and diesel cars and focus on more sustainable alternatives such as electrical vehicles. Our citizens, young and old, have a right to clean air.”

“The WHO report clearly shows that adults' daily behaviours are threatening the health of innocent children. No single adult on the planet can be free from the pain suffered by our children due to air pollution,” said Park Won-soon, Mayor of Seoul,
and Vice-Chair of C40 Cities. “The city of Seoul is adding more electric and hydro fuel cell vehicles on the road to protect our children from the air pollution. I urge car manufacturers to join us in cleaning the air and protecting our future - children - by exponentially increasing zero-carbon vehicle production.”

“Today we are creating the future,” said Federico Gutiérrez, Mayor of Medellín, and Vice-Chair of C40 Cities. “To do this, taking action to improve the quality of our air is an imperative, not an option. Building a sustainable city and planet requires working for the welfare of our people, especially our children. We have committed ourselves to working to become a GHG emissions-neutral city, so together with the private sector we sign a pact to enhance the quality of our air. We have better fuel today, and, step by step, we are migrating towards a future of electric mobility that will allow us to breathe better. We are all part of the pollution problem, so we must all contribute to the solution: our commitment must be both individual and collective, to improve the quality of our region’s public health in the long term.”

“Tokyo aims to achieve ‘Zero Emission Tokyo’ with no CO2 emissions. At the “Tokyo Forum for Clean City & Clear Sky”, an international conference I hosted in this May, the representatives of 22 cities from all over the world discussed better air quality management,” said Yuriko Koike, Governor of Tokyo, and Vice-Chair of C40 Cities. “For further environmental load reductions, Tokyo will promote the adoption of Zero Emission Vehicles (ZEV), which do not emit any CO2 or pollutant, including battery electric vehicles, plug-in hybrid electric vehicles, and FCVs. We will strive to increase the ZEV market share account for 50 percent of new passenger car sales in 2030 in cooperation with the relevant industries and by supporting the development of appropriate technologies. Working hand in hand with the world’s major cities as a vice chair of the C40, Tokyo will continue to devote ourselves to finding solutions to environmental issues for the sake of our planet and our children.”

“As this report sets out, a child who is exposed to air pollution in early life can suffer a “life sentence” of ill health. One in four deaths of every child under 5 is directly or indirectly related to environmental risks. Earlier this month the ‘Special Report on Global Warming of 1.5 °C ’ laid out, in stark terms, that pollution from many of the same sources is close to tipping climate change past the point where humanity can hope to exercise any control over it,” said Mark Watts, Executive Director, C40 Cities. “The moral and practical case for urgent, bold and far-reaching action to reduce emissions, including calling an end to the fossil fuel era, is now utterly irrefutable. Citizens are demanding action to protect their children, mayors of the world’s big cities are regulating take dirty vehicles off the streets and slash emissions from buildings and waste. Now is the moment for governments, car manufacturers and other big polluters to step up.”
The WHO report, *Air Pollution And Child Health*, urges “strong action from decision-makers to protect the most vulnerable, voiceless citizens: children who have little or no control over the air they breathe.” Mayors of the world’s big cities, are already committing to the bold action required to deliver clean, safe air for all to breathe, as well as delivering on the highest goals of the Paris Agreement.

26 cities have already committed to Green & Healthy Streets: Paris, Copenhagen, London, Tokyo, Los Angeles, Seoul, Barcelona, Quito, Vancouver, Cape Town, Seattle, Mexico City, Auckland, Milan, Rome, Warsaw, Oslo, Rotterdam, Medellin, Heidelberg, Birmingham, Greater Manchester, Honolulu, Oxford, Santa Monica & West Hollywood. More than 80,000 buses run on the streets of these 26 cities, representing a major shift towards zero emission vehicles in the world’s great cities.

-ENDS-

**Notes:**

Key findings from *Air Pollution And Child Health* include:

- 93% of all children < 18 years of age and about 630 million children under 5 years in the world are exposed to levels of fine particulate matter (PM2.5) higher than the WHO air quality guidelines.

- In Low & Middle Income Countries, 98% of all children under 5 years are exposed to levels of fine particulate matter (PM2.5) higher than the WHO air quality guidelines.

- In High Income Countries, 52% of children under 5 years are exposed to levels of fine particulate matter (PM2.5) higher than the WHO air quality guidelines.

- 543,000 deaths in children under 5 years and 52,000 deaths in children aged 5–15 years were attributed to the joint effects of ambient and household air pollution in 2016.

- Of the total number of deaths attributable to the joint effects of household and ambient air pollution worldwide in 2016, 9% were in children.

**About C40 Cities:**

C40 Cities connects 96 of the world’s greatest cities to take bold climate action, leading the way towards a healthier and more sustainable future. Representing 700+ million citizens and one quarter of the global economy, mayors of the C40 cities are committed to delivering on the most ambitious goals of the Paris Agreement at the local level, as well as to cleaning the air we breathe. The current chair of C40 is Mayor of Paris Anne Hidalgo; and three-term Mayor of New York City Michael R. Bloomberg serves as President of the Board. C40’s work is made possible by our three strategic funders: Bloomberg Philanthropies, Children’s Investment Fund Foundation (CIFF), and Realdania.
To learn more about the work of C40 and our cities, please visit our website, or follow us on Twitter, Instagram, Facebook and LinkedIn.