**Press Release: India Clean Air Summit 2020**

***Finding the Missing Evidence***

Date: 25-26 August 2020

The day isn’t far when air pollution may be listed as a ‘cause of death’ on death certificates, according to the World Health Organisation’s Director for Environment, Climate Change and Health, Dr Maria Neira. She was speaking at the India Clean Air Summit 2020 (ICAS2020), a two-day event on air pollution organised by the Centre for Study of Science, Technology, and Policy (CSTEP), a science- and technology-focused think tank. Drawing attention to the health hazards of air pollution, she highlighted the key role the health sector can play in synthesising information, producing evidence-based guidelines, monitoring exposure, and advocating policies.

“Though there has been an increasing trend in monitoring and reporting air-pollution levels, this has been mostly observed in Europe,” Dr Neira pointed out. “There is enough evidence to link health issues to air pollution. Policymakers cannot use lack of evidence as a justification to not act on air pollution,” she added.

The summit highlighted the problem of ‘missing’ or inadequate data that was hampering India from formulating targeted and effective policies to address air pollution.

Many air-pollution experts and policy influencers such as Prof SN Tripathi (IIT-Kanpur), Dr Sulekha Chattopadhyay (air pollution specialist, California Public Utilities Commission), Dr Julian Marshal (University of Washington), Mr Sumit Sharma (TERI), Dr Ashok Ghosh (Bihar State Pollution Control Board), Shri Ashish Tiwari (UP State Pollution Control Board), participated in the discussions, stressing on the key role of data in curbing air pollution.

ICAS2020 assumes significance in the wake of the National Clean Air Programme (NCAP) launched by the Government of India in 2018. NCAP has underlined the absence of scientifically-rigorous monitoring and measurement studies on air pollution in India.

Pointing to the lack of monitoring stations in most parts of India, Shri Vijay Kumar Gogi, Principal Secretary, Department of Forests, Environment & Ecosystem (DoFEE) and Chairman of the Karnataka State Pollution Control Board said that evidence on air pollution was not forthcoming. “We need detailed studies on Air Quality Index of localities and on cost-effective solutions to bring down pollution.” Development cannot be used as an excuse to not address the issue. “Infrastructure development and strategies should account for and address pollution,” he added.

Dr Ashok Ghosh of the Bihar State Pollution Control Board highlighted the need for scientific evidence to inform policies. With three non-attainment cities in Bihar (Patna, Gaya and Muzaffarpur), the Bihar State Pollution Control Board has initiated efforts to increase the number of monitoring stations across the state to cover all districts. He, however, highlighted bureaucratic hurdles that delayed some of these efforts.

*"*Air pollution has negative impacts on human health, our quality of life, and economic productivity,” said Priya Shankar, India Director, Climate and Environment Program, Bloomberg Philanthropies. “Given the scale and urgency of the challenge, both policy action and data analysis need to progress side-by-side. Better evidence leads to more informed policies and effective actions for cleaner air."

ICAS was envisioned as a platform to get those who work in air pollution to talk to each other, said Dr Jai Asundi, Executive Director, CSTEP. “This year we focused on an issue that can drive our ability to frame better policies going forward: data. As a science- and technology-focused think tank, we think it is important to have evidence as the basis of our actions and measure how we are improving because of these actions,” he added. “With this evidence, we can identify priority areas in a quantitative manner and design targeted policies. Finally, quantitative evidence will also show us if we need to change our approach, based on whether or not the policies are working.”

Other participants at the summit, including scientists, researchers, and policymakers called for a common data-sharing platform, and more importantly, a ‘democratic’ approach to studying and resolving air pollution. While there is a lot of awareness, and therefore, attempts to check air pollution in cities such as Mumbai, Bengaluru, and Delhi, efforts in the rest of the country have been dismal, they observed.

CSTEP also used this opportunity to highlight and encourage women working in the field of air quality (#WomeninAQ). All sessions over the two days of the summit were chaired by women including Dr Pratima Singh (Research Scientist, CSTEP), Dr Ramya Sunder Raman (Associate Professor, Indian Institute of Science Education and Research-Bhopal), Dr Gazala Habib (Associate Professor, IIT-Delhi), Dr Sulekha Chattopadhyay, Ms Vinuta Gopal (CEO, ASAR Social Impact Advisors), Dr Pallavi Pant (Staff Scientist, Health Effects Institute), Dr Maria Neira, and Ms Ekta Sekhar, (Lead Campaigner Climate Agenda).

Some details of the discussion are available on CSTEP’s Twitter page - @CSTEP\_India. We will be sharing recordings of the summit shortly. Please feel free to reach out to us for any queries. You may write to cpe@cstep.in for the same.

**About CSTEP**

The Center for Study of Science, Technology and Policy (CSTEP) is one of India's leading think tanks, with a mission to enrich policymaking with innovative approaches using science and technology for a sustainable, secure, and inclusive society. Learn more about us on [www.cstep.in](http://www.cstep.in)

**About Centre for Air Pollution Studies (CAPS)**

CSTEP established the Centre for Air Pollution Studies (CAPS) with the objective to generate scientific evidence for the air-pollution issue through measurement & monitoring studies for rigorous policy analysis. CAPS organises the India Clean Air Summit annually, bringing together subject experts, policymakers, and communicators on a single platform to share interdisciplinary knowledge on air pollution. Learn more on <http://caps.cstep.in>.