

**Opening remarks**  
**Launch of UNICEF Report on Mongolia's Air Pollution Crisis**  
**22 February 2018**  
**Beate Trankmann, UN Resident Coordinator**

- I am delighted to be here today. Thank you for inviting me to this important event.
- Over the last 15 years, Mongolia has shown strong development progress:
  - it entered the high Human Development Country category for the first time in 2016;
- However, progress is fragile with poverty reduction gains sliding back due to the economic downturn and one in three Mongolians currently living in poverty up from one in five in 2014;
- Experience shows that economic development without sufficient environmental and social consideration often comes at a high price: For example, exposure to air pollution is linked to around 6.5 million premature deaths globally.
- Mongolia, has one of the highest per capita carbon footprints in the world, despite being a relatively low emitter in absolute terms. The cold climate combined with rapid urbanization and strong housing demand mean that energy needs are surging. And coal based energy generation is leading to increased air pollution.
- Even without the surge in energy demand, already existing levels of air pollution in urban settlements, and especially in UB, are regularly hitting hazardous levels in winter with far reaching consequences on health and quality of life.
- The report presented today by the National Center for Public Health and UNICEF suggests that the failure to reduce air pollution would lead to an increase in treatment costs for air pollution-induced diseases in children by 33% in the next 8 yrs. This will cost health providers at least 4.8 billion Tugrik extra per year by 2025.

- There is no single ‘silver bullet’ that can resolve Mongolia’s urban air pollution crisis. Efforts will need to come from all parts of society – government, private sector and consumers. And they will need to be sustained and systematically pursued over extended periods of time, spanning several election cycles.
- The mix of responses will need to consist of:
  - long-term strategies that include: A) investments to provide more households and companies with on- and off-grid renewable heating and electricity solutions to reduce the dependency on coal and B) pricing strategies for coal based energy generation that fully reflect the costs of their negative impact on health and the environment.
  - In the meantime, complementary investments will be needed from government, public and private companies, and individuals to decrease the most harmful emissions from the burning of coal. This includes measures such as the phase-out of inefficient stoves and heat-only boilers and the replacement of raw coal with cleaner burning brickets, but also increasing energy efficiency in buildings;
  - To reduce the negative health impacts, short term and immediate measures should include reducing the exposure to air pollution of children, pregnant women, the elderly, and people with pre-existing conditions.

The UN system including UNICEF but also UNDP and other agencies are already working with the Government and partners to develop approaches and costing strategies to address both the symptoms and root causes of air pollution.

In line with the SDGs, we stand ready to support Mongolia in finding pathways that balance the economic, social and environmental aspects of development and ensure that progress is inclusive and sustainable.