JANE NISHIDA REMARKS

WHO First Global Conference on Air Pollution and Health

Geneva, Switzerland

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- I am Jane Nishida, Principal Deputy Assistant Administrator for International and Tribal Affairs at the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency—the USEPA, and am pleased to be representing the U.S on behalf of EPA and a number of our sister agencies, including the Department of Health and Human Services, their National Institutes of Health, the Department of State and U.S. Agency for International Development, who share our interest on the importance of air quality and health.

- EPA's core mission is protecting human health and the environment, and air quality is essential to that protection.

- The USEPA has annually reported on our nation's progress in addressing air pollution since the passage of our Clean Air Act in 1970.

- As our Acting Administrator remarked at the recent release of our report on "Our Nation's Air: Status and Trends Through 2017":

  "Through federal and state implementation of the Clean Air Act and technological advances in the private sector, America has achieved one of the great public-private successes of our time – dramatically improving air quality and public health while simultaneously growing the nation's population and economy."

- The Report highlights that between 1970 and 2017 the combined emissions of our six common or "criteria" air pollutants dropped by 73 percent, while the U.S. economy more than tripled.

- Even with this progress, however, some Americans still reside in areas that do not meet our national air quality standards.

- So, at the federal level, we continue to work with our states, local and tribal government, and our citizens, to further improve air quality across the country.

- The important lesson from the U.S. experience is how it clearly demonstrates the ability to significantly reduce human exposure to air pollution while simultaneously achieving robust economic growth.

- The United States has long played a leading role in seeking to elevate the priority and attention to air pollution as a major area for international cooperation and action through various important multilateral policy fora.

- The United States was a sponsor of the successful resolution on *"Health and the Environment: Addressing the Impact of Air Pollution"* at the 68th World Health Assembly (WHO) in 2015.

- We also introduced a successful resolution to elevate air pollution as a priority program area for the U.N. Environment Program (UNEP) at the 1st U.N. Environmental Assembly in 2014.

- This year, we introduced this issue at the G-7 Environmental Ministers Meeting, advocating for greater focus on this fundamental environmental issue that has a significant and well-known impact on public health.

- In that vein, the United States advocated to fully recognize air pollution as a major cause of deaths from non-communicable diseases – or NCDs-, as part of the recent 3rd High-Level Meeting on Prevention and Control of NCDs at this year's UN General Assembly.

- Despite its ranking as the second largest risk factor for NCDs, air pollution is not included among the four main risk factors that are the focus of the 2013-2020 WHO Global NCD Action Plan.

- So, we were pleased to see that the Political Declaration from the UNGA High Level Meeting on Prevention and Control of NCDs included the following language, calling for support to:

  "Increase global awareness, action and international cooperation on environmental risk factors, to address the high number of premature deaths from non-communicable diseases attributed to human exposure to indoor and outdoor air pollution, and underscoring the particular importance of cross-sectoral cooperation in addressing these public health risks;"

- The outcome from the High-Level Meeting along with this Conference today, show the growing recognition of the need to address air pollution if we are to meaningfully reduce premature deaths from non-communicable diseases globally.

- The U.S. has long been active in sharing legal, policy, and technical approaches we have found successful in our own work, including research cooperation that supports the scientific foundation needed for effective air quality management.

- This has included engaging with a number of countries in Africa, Asia and Latin America to help establish key building blocks for effective air quality management, including air monitoring, emission inventories and control strategy development.

- A good example of this sort of work, that is particularly relevant to this gathering, has been EPA efforts to share a key tool that we use domestically to help correlate specific actions that reduce air pollution emissions, with their associated public health and economic benefits.

- We refer to this tool as the "Benefits Mapping and Analysis Program"—or BenMAP. EPA has developed an international version of the tool that has been

demonstrated in number collaborating countries and we have certified 10 BenMAP trainers in eight countries. We have now also produced online training to make use of this tool even more broadly available. Earlier this week, EPA also provided a short course on BenMap as part of the training day for the Conference.

- The U.S. has long been a leading advocate for reducing the devastating public health and environmental impacts from harmful emissions from home cooking and heating in developing countries. We are actively engaged with WHO and the Global Alliance for Clean Cookstoves and other committed partners, and encourage others to join us.

- Our experience with BenMap and cookstoves is proof that the environment and health communities can join together to tackle environmental health challenges.

- The contributions each of us can make to addressing air pollution are important to understand if we are to make progress on this issue. I am pleased to inform you that we have shared with the organizers of this event, a number of specific initiatives that demonstrate our continuing U.S. commitment to supporting international cooperation to reducing health risks of air pollution.

- The U.S. would very much encourage other country governmental organizations with responsibilities for improving air quality to protect public health, especially those with well-established programs, to join us in sharing their expertise with other countries.