Building Political Will, Including the G20 Outcomes

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Authors and Knowledge Partners

- On 17 October 2025, and under the Presidency of South Africa, Ministers of Environment and Climate of the G20, and Invited Countries, met in Cape Town, South Africa, on the 16th and 17th October 2025, and adopted the **Cape Town Ministerial Declaration on Air Quality**.

- **Technical Paper Titled: Identifying and Implementing Effective Air Quality Policies -**

- Support from **Climate and Clean Air Coalition (CCAC)** Secretariat and contributions from staff at the **UN Environment Programme (UNEP)**
- Case studies from South African **Council for Scientific and Industrial Research (CSIR)** in partnership with the **Clean Air Fund**

From Kruger National Park

To Cape Town

G20 and other Key Multilateral Engagements

- Despite air quality being regularly noted as a co-benefit of other policies, the **G20 had not made a collective commitment to work toward cleaner air**
- In other fora, there has been a clear global mandate for action on air pollution including:
  - **UN General Assembly**: recognition of a clean, healthy environment as a human right; International Day of Clean Air; Sustainable Development Goals
  - **UN Environment Assembly**: Resolutions 1/7, 3/8, and 6/10
  - **World Health Assembly**: Resolution 68/8, Roadmap for Air Quality in 2040

Background and Introduction

- Each year, exposure to air pollution kills millions of people (**2021 – 8.1 million deaths**), impacts supplies of the food we eat, and costs the global economy trillions of dollars (**$6 trillion annually or 4.6% of GDP**).
- These impacts are not felt equally – **95% of deaths linked to air pollution are in developing countries**. Children, pregnant women, the elderly, and those with pre-existing health conditions are more susceptible to harm.
- **The impacts of air pollution are not shared equally**, and are subject to geographic, demographic, and socioeconomic disparities. More than 700,000 children under 5 die annually due to air pollution
- Without intervention, **the magnitude of the problem is expected to increase** alongside growing economic activity, populations, and urbanization.

Background and Introduction

- **Efforts to improve air quality have been shown to return benefits many times the cost**. These include lives saved and avoided healthcare costs, but also include increased worker productivity, new jobs, increased crop yields, improved efficiency of renewable energy sources, and improved educational outcomes.
- The World Bank states that **halving air pollution by 2040 was viable, cost effective and would reduce deaths by 28% while growing the global economy $1.9-2.4 trillion**
- The paper identified four key challenges – **the transboundary nature of air pollution, access to monitoring and data, capacity, and funding** – and highlights lessons learned from initiatives that have successfully overcome them
- The paper's fundamental premise is that **proven solutions exist today** and there is an opportunity to share and build on these to improve air quality globally

Challenge: Air pollution doesn't stop at national borders

***What Works*:**

- Getting high-level political buy-in
- Applying an airshed approach to addressing air pollution
- Developing shared evidence using collaborative approaches to monitoring and modelling
- Acting at all levels of government – sub-national, national, and regional
- Implementing context-specific measures that address multiple pollutants
- Harmonizing policies and standards across countries within a region
- Building technical capacity between partners
- Creating opportunities to share expertise and experiences

Challenge: Many countries lack access to reliable air quality monitoring and other data

What Works:

- Applying a range of available tools
- Focusing on incremental improvements – even one data point can make a difference
- Making air quality data publicly available
- Collaborating with locally influential organizations, including the health and academic sectors
- Investing in staff, supplies, and maintenance of equipment
- Acting now on known sources of pollution

Challenge: Limited technical capacity or human resources can hinder progress

What Works:

- Sharing best practices, tools, data, and expertise
- Ensuring implementation is someone's job by funding posts with the specific remit to advance policy priorities
- Creating partnerships with a well-defined common goals
- Drawing on expertise from all relevant stakeholders, including government, NGOs, IGOs, and the private sector
- Working across all jurisdictions of government to drive action

Challenge: Insufficient funding for air quality projects and the funding available does not reach those who need it most

***What Works*:**

- Making use of existing funding sources where air quality can be integrated into projects
- Reducing barriers to access, including for sub-national authorities
- Repurposing subsidies for polluting sectors
- Incentivizing private sector investment
- Mobilizing the philanthropic sector

G20 Technical Paper Recommendations

The report proposed concrete actions G20 members could take to advance solutions key challenges, including:

- **Support action on transboundary air pollution** by joining and engaging constructively in regional initiatives and advocating for application of the best practices identified for such fora.
- **Promoting and engaging in mutually beneficial technical exchanges between experts** from G20 members, African nations, and other developing countries on core air quality management topics.
- **Increasing the quantity of funding and amount of concessional funding for air quality** by targeting funding to countries that have historically been underfunded, reducing barriers to access and partnering with other funders to support projects through blended financial instruments.
- **Working toward a world in which every country has at least one reference grade monitor** publicly sharing data, with local staff trained to operate and maintain the equipment.
- **Join with the South African Presidency, the African Union Commission, and partners in championing the Africa Clean Air Programme** and other similar initiatives, noting the opportunity for best practices from their development and implementation to be shared between regions

Cape Town Air Quality G20 Declaration – 17 October 2025

We, the Ministers of Environment and Climate of the G20, and Invited Countries, met in Cape Town, South Africa, on the 16th and 17th October 2025, and adopted the Cape Town Ministerial Declaration on Air Quality.

- 1. We recognize the significant risks that poor air quality poses and the need to improve air quality to address impacts on human health, particularly for persons in vulnerable situations, including children, the elderly and persons living with disabilities. We also recognize air pollution, both indoor and outdoor, is a contributor to the global burden of disease, and a cause of premature mortality, and a high economic cost. **We welcome the United Nations Environment Assembly Resolution (UNEA) 6/10 and call for its continued implementation**
- 2. We continue to support international collaboration to combat transboundary air pollution, including at the local, national, and regional levels, in line with UNEA Resolution 6/10, as well as the Global Air Quality Cooperation Network, and take note of the actions taken and efforts made by Parties to the Convention on Long-range Transboundary Air Pollution, and **particularly encourage collaboration on regional clean air programs in Africa, Asia and Latin America**

Cape Town Air Quality G20 Declaration – 17 October 2025

- 3. We encourage collaboration to **share information on the best available technologies, promote the adoption** and implementation of measures to improve air quality, **fostering synergies among different policies and sectors as well as mobilizing all sources of financial resources**.
- 4. We recognize the importance of **open and reliable air quality data and support voluntary efforts to increase access to sustainable monitoring** where it is not currently available, to expand air quality information systems that rely on the full range of available tools, and to promote voluntary transparent sharing of data. We encourage **collaboration to improve capacity** in monitoring and analytical techniques as well as to improve data comparability and exchange, consistent with national laws and circumstances.

Cape Town Air Quality G20 Declaration – 17 October 2025

- 5. We welcome the South African Presidency's commitment to **convening a technical workshop**, with a view to continuing the consideration of air quality, amongst G20 Members, on a voluntary basis, to support exchange of experience and encourage future G20 Presidencies to continue and strengthen this effort

Looking Forward

- Cape Town Air Quality declaration demonstrates the urgency towards:
  - Improving air quality global, and political will that must be translated to action through financing, collaboration, capacity building and collaborations
  - Support to governments and other organisations in developing countries to prioritise and institionalise clean air goals from **policy, monitoring, management and markets**

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Thank You..

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