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## **UNEP delivers new climate and air quality monitoring stations for Bosnia and Herzegovina**

### ***Country empowered to prevent deaths from invisible killer***

**Sarajevo, 19 January 2016** – The United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) has opened two new air monitoring stations in Bosnia Herzegovina and brought two existing ones back to full function, significantly helping the country monitor climate and air quality in line with national and EU law and prevent further illnesses and deaths from outdoor pollution.

Thanks to the new and refurbished stations, accurate data will be available to monitor climate changes and announce pollution alerts to the general public, as well as to measure the impact of policy measures to improve air quality.

Bosnia and Herzegovina – where air pollution is estimated to have caused over 3500 premature deaths in 2014 - also now moves closer to being in line with EU legislation after signing a Stabilisation and Association Agreement with the bloc in last year.

The move to boost air quality monitoring was announced at the country's Parliamentary Assembly today in an event organised by UNEP together with the country's Ministry of Foreign Trade and Economic Relations.

“These new devices form part of the first comprehensive network of air quality monitoring stations in Bosnia and Herzegovina and offer a real example of how human health and environment are intrinsically linked,” said Jan Dusik, Director of UNEP's Regional Office for Europe, welcoming the launch of new and refurbished stations. “In complement with policy measures, they can save lives lost to the silent killer of air pollution,” he underlined.

The launch is part of an overall UNEP/Global Environment Fund project worth US\$ 1,438,000 grant to enhance data collection and reporting on the environment for three UN Conventions Bosnia and Herzegovina is signatory to.

The two new monitoring stations are located in the cities of Prijedor and Goražde. The locations were chosen by the country's Federal Hydro-meteorological Institute and the Republic Hydro-meteorological Service of the Republika Srpska so as to provide continuous monitoring in both urban and sub-urban environments. In Prijedor, the safe threshold for solid particles has been exceeded 19 times since 8 December 2015.

The restored stations are located in Ivan Sedlo and Banja Luka. In the latter town, the upper safe limit of solid particles (PM10) was exceeded in all but one days of November 2015, with winter being the most common time for this to occur.

A 2015 report by the European Environment Agency estimated that over 44000 years of life are lost in Bosnia and Herzegovina each year due to particulate matter, nitrogen dioxide or ozone pollution.

Being in a basin amid mountains, Sarajevo is prone to heavy fog that converts into smog when mixed with high pollution levels. During November and December 2015, a stable anticyclone combined with weak wind meant that pollutants were kept in the air breathed by the local population. Schools are even reported to have been forced to shut early ahead of their winter break due to the pollution.

## **NOTES TO EDITORS**

The initiative to build new and restore existing air monitoring stations forms part of a UNEP/Global Environment Fund project titled ‘Capacity development for the integration of global environment commitments into national policies and development decision-making in Bosnia and Herzegovina,’ launched in November 2014.

The project aims to boost data collection and reporting on the environment for the Framework Convention of the United Nations on Climate Change – UNFCCC, the United Nations Convention on Biological Diversity – UNCBD, and the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification UNCCD. UNEP will now provide training on the data collection and maintenance of equipment. It has also produced an online database for Bosnia and Herzegovina and other countries to store and share the information.

Real-time monitoring of climate and air quality conditions can meanwhile already be measured at 2000 other stations across the world using the [UNEP Live platform](#).

The World Health Organisation estimates that 500 000 premature deaths are caused by illnesses related to air pollution in western, central and eastern Europe each year. It describes air pollution as the world’s largest single environmental health risk, contributing to diseases such as heart disease and lung cancer. ‘Years of life lost’ refers to years of potential life lost to premature death.

Particulate matter is produced by incomplete combustion of fossil fuels and biomass and one of the biggest concerns. The International Agency for Research on Cancer concluded in 2013 that particulate matter is carcinogenic to humans. Ground-level ozone (O3) is another important air pollutant, which damages human health and crops.

Bosnia and Herzegovina is a potential candidate for EU accession and a Stabilisation and Association Agreement with the bloc entered into force in June 2015. EU law requires member states to measure, address and communicate levels of sulphur dioxide, nitrogen dioxide, particulate matter, lead, benzene and carbon monoxide.

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