



Tuesday March 10, 2009  
11:00 to 12.30

Lyon Convention Center  
France

## CITY AIR WE CAN BREATHE (Co-organised with TWAS)

### Moderator

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- **Peter Wrobel**, Editorial Director of Science Business Publishing, UK

### Speakers

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- **Claudia Sheinbaum-Pardo**, Researcher at the Institute of Engineering National Autonomous University of Mexico, former Mexico City's Environment Minister, Mexico
- **Robert Vautard**, Director, Laboratoire des Sciences du climat et de l'environnement, France
- **Sarath Guttikunda**, Founder, Urban Emissions.Info, India

### Summary

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- A century ago 10% of global population lived in cities. The figure is now 50%. By 2050, 75% of population will be in cities. 95% of global population growth will be in developing country cities.
- Measurement of air pollutant particles as small as pm10 is now standard in most cities, both in the developing and developed worlds.
- Measurement of air pollution in developing world cities faces two major challenges: how to maintain laboratory standards and how to ensure accuracy of the measurements.
- Where and how many measuring instruments are used can have significant political and technical implications.
- A promising way forward may lie in using a combination of observed data points and data assimilation models.
- Despite all of the research that has been done, problems remain on how to measure the true health and economic effects of pollution. Additional studies are needed.
- By most measures, in Asia, asthma rises to the top of air pollution health-related issues.
- Although air pollution is a global problem, solutions can actually be dealt with on a city scale level, providing tangible and measurable effects.
- A major issue for developing country cities resides in the speed of change that they face. Delhi is an excellent example of how difficult it is to sustain the benefits



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of reform measures in the face of unprecedented increases in the use of automobiles.

- As is true for other issues, scientific exchange and cooperation in air pollution research and policies has made a big difference in affecting beneficial policy changes. Cities, both in the North and the South, are learning from one another on how best to deal with this issue.
- Science is critical to success. But so too is long-term institutional planning and political will. Bureaucracy and, in some cases, corruption can make it difficult to implement and sustain the needed reform measures.
- Having substantially reduced air pollutant levels, Europe now faces the risk of unpredictable extreme weather events such as the historic heat wave that struck the continent in 2003 and which had direct effect on ozone levels.

## Quotes

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*"No city's atmosphere has been studied more than that of Mexico City."*  
Claudia Sheinbaum-Pardo

*"Air pollution mitigation efforts during the Beijing Olympics provide a good lesson on how to measure the footprint of industry and human activity on air pollution."*  
Sarath Guttikunda

*"We still do not know all we need to know about air pollution's impact on human health."*  
Robert Vautard

*"Dealing with air pollution should rise above political party concerns."*  
Claudia Sheinbaum-Pardo

*"Public awareness campaigns are necessary; people need to see and understand the benefits of reducing air pollution, otherwise all other efforts are useless."*  
Sarath Guttikunda