



**ESMO Statement
for the
156th WHO Executive Board Meeting
3 February – 11 February 2025**

Agenda item 21: Updated roadmap for an enhanced global response to the adverse health effects of air pollution

Honorable Chair, Esteemed Delegates,

[The European Society for Medical Oncology](#), representing more than 40,000 oncology professionals from 179 countries, welcomes the 'Updated roadmap', and extends its strong support for WHO's increased emphasis on tackling air pollution within the adopted 14th General Programme of Work.

As medical oncologists, the prevention of cancer through improvements to air quality is a key objective. Recent findings presented at ESMO Congresses, demonstrate a clear link between ambient air pollution, notably PM_{2.5} exposure, and an increased incidence of lung cancer in non-smokers¹ and the incidence of breast cancer². Research also indicates increased morbidity and mortality associated with PM_{2.5} in lung cancer patients undergoing treatment³.

Accordingly, we urge Member States to harmonise their national standards with WHO guidelines. Air pollution control requires urgent action globally, with particular attention paid to low- and middle-income countries, where ambient air pollution related premature deaths are highest⁴.

Thank you.

¹ A pathway from air pollution to lung cancer in non-smokers has been identified. <https://dailyreporter.esmo.org/esmo-congress-2022/research-advances-in-the-last-months/a-pathway-from-air-pollution-to-lung-cancer-in-non-smokers-has-been-identified>

² Air Pollution and Breast Cancer Risk - A Link That Calls for Political Action. <https://www.esmo.org/newsroom/press-and-media-hub/esmo-media-releases/air-pollution-and-breast-cancer-risk-a-link-that-calls-for-political-action>

³ Ou JY, Kirchhoff AC, Hanson HA. Air Pollution across the Cancer Continuum: Extending Our Understanding of the Relationship between Environmental Exposures and Cancer. *Cancer Epidemiol Biomarkers Prev.* 2020 Oct;29(10):1876-1879. doi: 10.1158/1055-9965.

⁴ World Health Organization. Ambient (outdoor) air pollution factsheet, 24 October 2024. [https://www.who.int/news-room/factsheets/detail/ambient-\(outdoor\)-air-quality-and-health](https://www.who.int/news-room/factsheets/detail/ambient-(outdoor)-air-quality-and-health)