10 January 2018 | Nairobi - UN Environment and WHO have agreed a new, wide-ranging collaboration to accelerate action to curb environmental health risks that cause an estimated 12.6 million deaths a year.

Today in Nairobi, Mr Erik Solheim, head of UN Environment, and Dr Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus, Director-General of WHO, signed an agreement to step up joint actions to combat air pollution, climate change and antimicrobial resistance, as well as improve coordination on waste and chemicals management, water quality, and food and nutrition issues. The collaboration also includes joint management of the BreatheLife advocacy campaign to reduce air pollution for multiple climate, environment and health benefits.

This represents the most significant formal agreement on joint action across the spectrum of environment and health issues in over 15 years.

"There is an urgent need for our two agencies to work more closely together to address the critical threats to environmental sustainability and climate – which are the foundations for life on this planet. This new agreement recognizes that sober reality," said UN Environment's Solheim.

"Our health is directly related to the health of the environment we live in. Together, air, water and chemical hazards kill more than 12.6 million people a year. This must not continue," said WHO's Tedros.

He added: "Most of these deaths occur in developing countries in Asia, Africa and Latin America where environmental pollution takes its biggest health toll."

The new collaboration creates a more systematic framework for joint research, development of tools and guidance, capacity building, monitoring of Sustainable Development Goals, global and regional partnerships, and support to regional health and environment fora.

The two agencies will develop a joint work programme and hold an annual high-level meeting to evaluate progress and make recommendations for continued collaboration.

The WHO-UN Environment collaboration follows a *Ministerial Declaration on Health, Environment and Climate Change* calling for the creation of a global "Health, Environment and Climate Change" Coalition, at the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) COP 22 in Marrakesh, Morocco in 2016.

Just last month, under the overarching topic "Towards a Pollution-Free Planet", the United Nations Environment Assembly (UNEA), which convenes environment ministers worldwide, adopted a resolution on Environment and Health, called for expanded partnerships with relevant UN agencies and partners, and for an implementation plan to tackle pollution.