

EMBARGOED UNTIL SATURDAY, JANUARY 25, 2014

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## **INDIA RANKS 155<sup>TH</sup> ON THE 2014 ENVIRONMENTAL PERFORMANCE INDEX**

*India's overall performance has improved despite dramatic declines on air quality*

**DAVOS, Switzerland** – India ranks 155th out of 178 countries in its efforts to address environmental challenges, according to the 2014 Environmental Performance Index (EPI). India performs the worst among other emerging economies including, China, which ranks 118th, Brazil, at 77th, Russia, at 73rd, and South Africa at 72nd.

A bottom performer on nearly every policy issue included in the 2014 EPI, with the exception of forests, fisheries, and water resources, India's performance lags most notably in the protection of human health from environmental harm. In particular, India's air quality is among the worst in the world, tying China in terms of the proportion of the population exposed to average air pollution levels exceeding World Health Organization thresholds.

“Although India is an ‘emerging market’ alongside China, Brazil, Russia, and South Africa, its environment severely lags behind these others,” said Angel Hsu of the Yale Center for Environmental Law and Policy and lead author of the report. “Very low GDP per capita coupled with the second highest population in the world means India's environmental challenge is more formidable than that faced by other emerging economies.”

Switzerland comes in at the very top of the 2014 EPI. Luxembourg, Australia, Singapore, and Czech Republic round out the top five positions of the Index, which ranks countries on high-priority environmental concerns including air quality, water management, and climate change.

The stresses of urbanization without sufficient investment in environmental protection help explain why India has seen a 100 percent decline in its air quality scores over the past decade. While media attention has focused on neighboring China's air quality over the last year, India and other South Asian countries, including Bangladesh and Nepal, rank the worst in the EPI's air quality category. This category also includes a household air quality indicator assessing the percentage of solid fuel used primarily for cooking and heating.

With expanded data coverage, the 2014 EPI ranks 46 more countries than the last EPI release. These countries are mostly sub-Saharan African nations and Small Island Developing States, providing a first look at where these developing countries stand on their environmental efforts. Tonga, for example, far outperforms all other countries with similarly sized economies, coming in at 47th overall. In total, the 178 countries in the Index represent 99 percent of global population, 98 percent of the world's total land area, and 97 percent of global GDP.

The sweeping coverage of the 2014 EPI reveals important global trends. For example, the world is doing well on improving drinking water and sanitation. Child mortality has declined as a result.

Progress in these categories tracks the concerted pursuit of the Millennium Development Goals, which have clear targets, strategies, and metrics for assessment on water and sanitation.

Poor environmental performance is difficult to improve when policymakers do not set clear targets, as with fisheries, industrial wastewater treatment, and air quality. Since 2000, the number of people breathing unsafe air has risen by 606 million people, to a total of 1.78 billion. These numbers are heavily concentrated in the developing world.

“The EPI reveals that improved environmental results are possible when measurement and management practices align,” said Yale University Prof. Daniel Esty. “When data and measurement are poor or not in concert with policy priorities, natural and human systems suffer.”

The Index also demonstrates what happens when countries are unable to prioritize environmental management. The bottom five performers – Somalia, Mali, Haiti, Lesotho, and Afghanistan – all grapple with civil unrest, significant economic development pressures, and political turnover. Still, each of the bottom-performing countries has improved environmental performance in some areas over the past 10 years. The percentage of households in Afghanistan with access to improved drinking water, for instance, increased from 5 percent in 1991 to 61 percent in 2011.

While the 2014 EPI offers an overview of global performance on some issues, it also reveals distressing data gaps. The sustainability of agricultural practices and toxic chemical exposure, among a range of critical policy challenges, have virtually no reliable metrics by which to identify priority needs, set policy targets, or evaluate national performance. The international community must continue to prioritize these issues and work toward better metrics. The impending Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) are one avenue of international opportunity.

“The EPI has clear implications for the international effort on the SDGs,” said Columbia University's Marc Levy, an architect of the EPI. “The good news about the SDGs is the commitment to treating the environment as an integral part of the next generation of development goals. The bad news is that this political breakthrough rests on a dreadfully weak measurement infrastructure.” Potential SDGs on agriculture and water, for example, will fail without dramatic measurement improvements.

Delivering better data will not be easy. “It is going to require more than just the work of national governments and NGOs,” said Kim Samuel, the EPI’s co-creator. “The private sector is realizing the parallel benefits of business and environmental sustainability. The hope is that the EPI will guide increased cooperation among all sectors of society.”

The EPI is produced biennially by researchers at Yale and Columbia universities, in collaboration with the World Economic Forum and with support from the Samuel Family Foundation and the McCall MacBain Foundation. Full details available at <http://epi.yale.edu>.

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Angel Hsu, the lead author of the 2014 EPI, co-author Marc Levy, and Kim Samuel, co-creator of the project, will hold a press conference at the World Economic Forum Annual Meeting 2014 in Davos, Switzerland, on January, 25 at 2:00 PM local time.