SPECIAL PROCEDURES
UNITED NATIONS
HUMAN RIGHTS COUNCIL

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LAB JAC

I have the right to BREATHE clean air



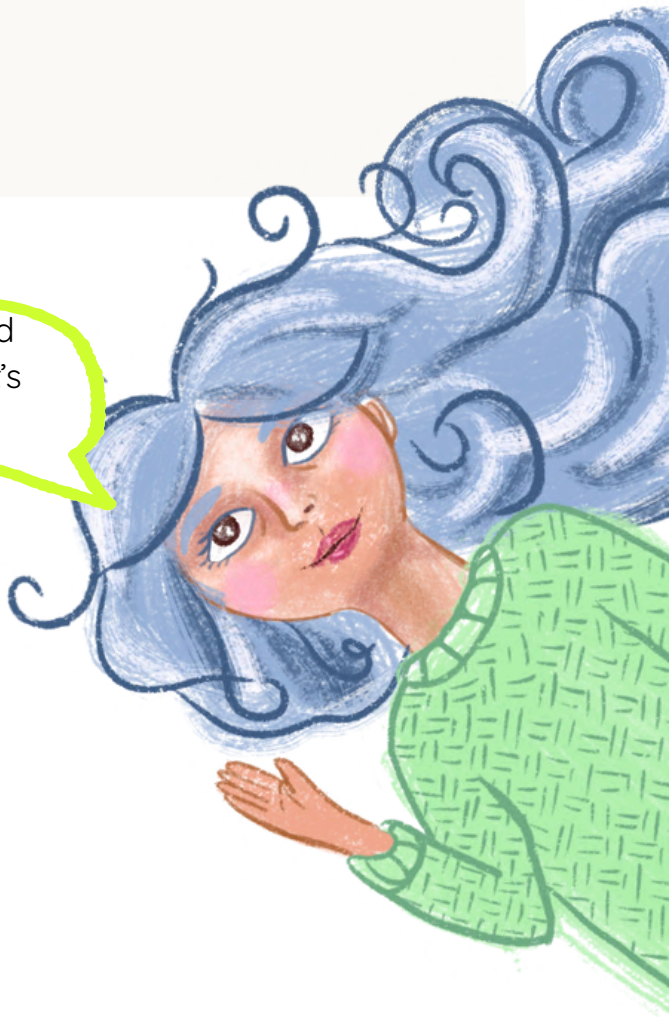


Children's version of the report "Priority actions towards breathing clean air, protecting public health and ensuring a healthy environment" (A/HRC/61/47).
United Nations Special Rapporteur on the human right to a clean, healthy, and sustainable environment,
Astrid Puentes Riaño.
Illustrated by **Azul Ayala Mendoza.**

Hello!
Welcome to this children's version of my report on clean air.
This short activity book is designed for the whole family to enjoy and learn together.
As the United Nations Special Rapporteur on the human right to a clean, healthy, and sustainable environment, part of my job is to investigate how this right is experienced around the world, and to help people of all ages understand it.
Did you know that we have a right to a healthy environment? And, within that healthy environment, to breathe clean air?
It is very important that you know your rights, including about the air you breathe. Our lives, our health, our dignity, and the ability to realize our dreams and develop our talents to contribute to society depend on the quality of the air we breathe.
But don't worry!
Before we begin, I want to tell you that having clean air is possible. We've already done the math! Solutions to air pollution are cheaper than continuing to live with pollution. It is our right, and we must demand it.

I'm happy to share this topic with you, and I'd love to see your drawings!
Oh! And I'd like to introduce you to a friend: Nube!

Astrid



_____
Your name

WHAT IS A HUMAN RIGHT?

Human rights are protections that allow everyone, no matter where we come from or who we are, to live a dignified life from the moment we are born. No one can take them away from us. We can always enjoy and demand them! For example:

The right to life,
to education,
to play,
to be heard,
to a home,
to have a family,
to a healthy environment.

In 2022 the United Nations recognized that having a **clean, healthy, and sustainable environment** is a human right. This means that everyone should have...

...access to **information** to better understand the world,
...access to **participation**, because everyone should be part of decision-making,
...access to **justice**,
...a **safe climate,** now and in the future,
...safe and sufficient **water**,
...**non-toxic environments**—meaning we don't live in highly polluted places that harm us,
...healthy and sustainable **food,**
...**healthy biodiversity and ecosystems**—meaning that the plants, animals, and all of the planet's nature are happy, healthy, and strong,
...**clean air** to breathe.



HOW CLEAN IS THE AIR I BREATHE?

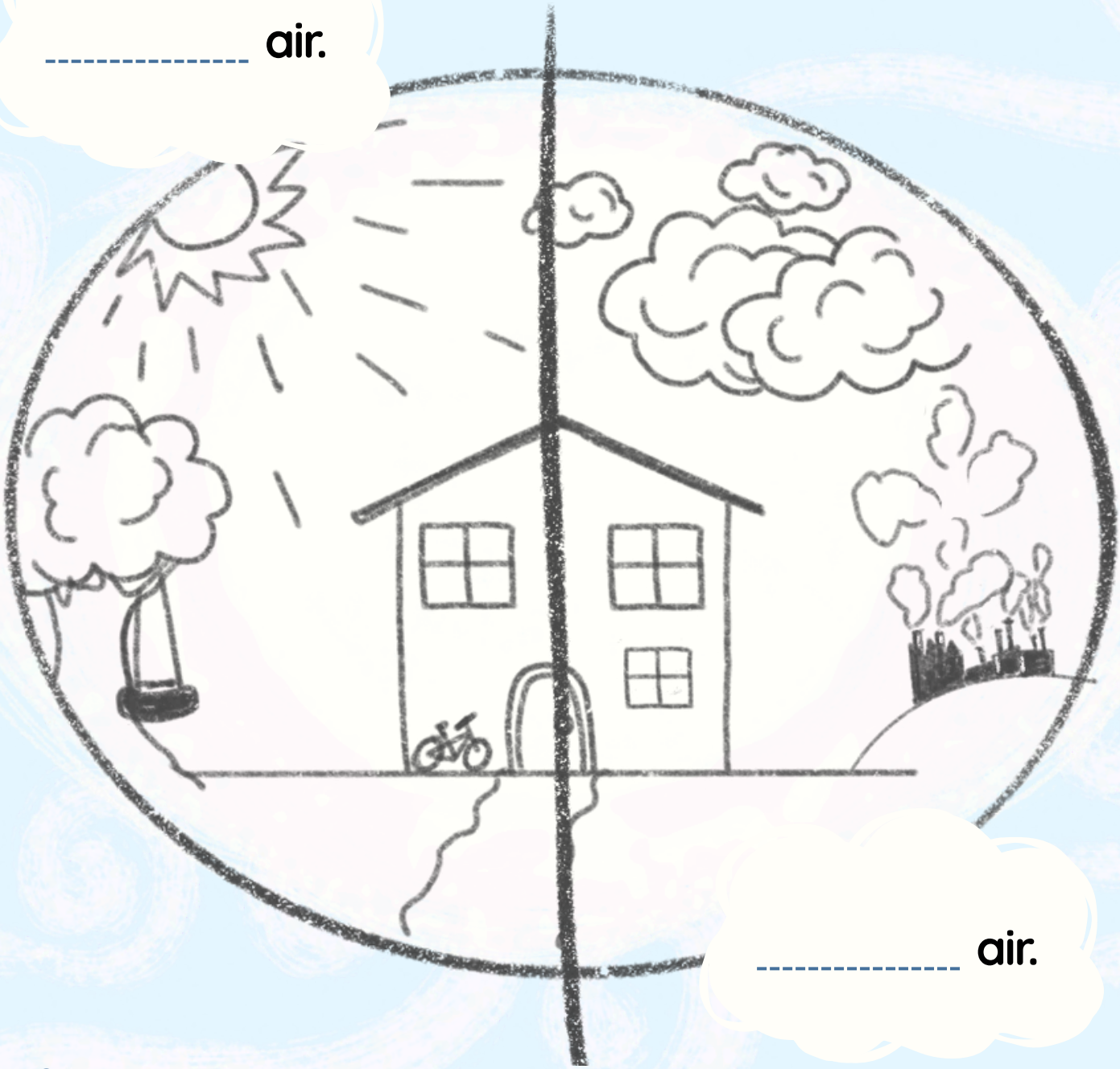


	Clean Air	Polluted Air
What does it look like?	Clear and transparent.	It looks like a cloudy day, with dust and smoke.
How does it feel when I breathe it?	Easy, light, like being out in nature.	More difficult to inhale, like being very close to a campfire.
What does it smell like?	It has no smell.	It can smell bad, like smoke, chemicals, or trash, although sometimes it has no smell at all.
Where does it come from?	From a clean, healthy and sustainable environment.	Cars, factories, fires, fireworks, waste and many other things we humans do.
What does it do to us when we breathe it?	It makes us feel good, full of energy. It helps us grow strong and healthy.	It can be irritating to the eyes, nose, and throat. It can make us sick.

FILL IN THE BLANKS AND DRAW.

Below is a scene divided in two parts. Write in the space: Which side has clean air and which has polluted air? Also, color and draw: What colors do you imagine? Do plants grow there? Do you think there are children playing outside? Are there birds flying?

_____ air.



_____ air.

MOST AFFECTED POPULATIONS.

Although everyone in the world needs clean air to live, some people can get sick more easily if the air is polluted. For example:

Children: When we are young, our bodies are still developing and are more sensitive to getting sick when there is pollution.



During pregnancy (moms and babies): During pregnancy, mom's bodies are more sensitive and whatever they experience is passed on to the babies. So if moms breathe polluted air it affects them and the babies. From the time we are in the womb, we need clean air to be healthy.



People with health issues: There are people—of all ages—who have health conditions such as heart disease or breathing problems. Polluted air makes their conditions worse.



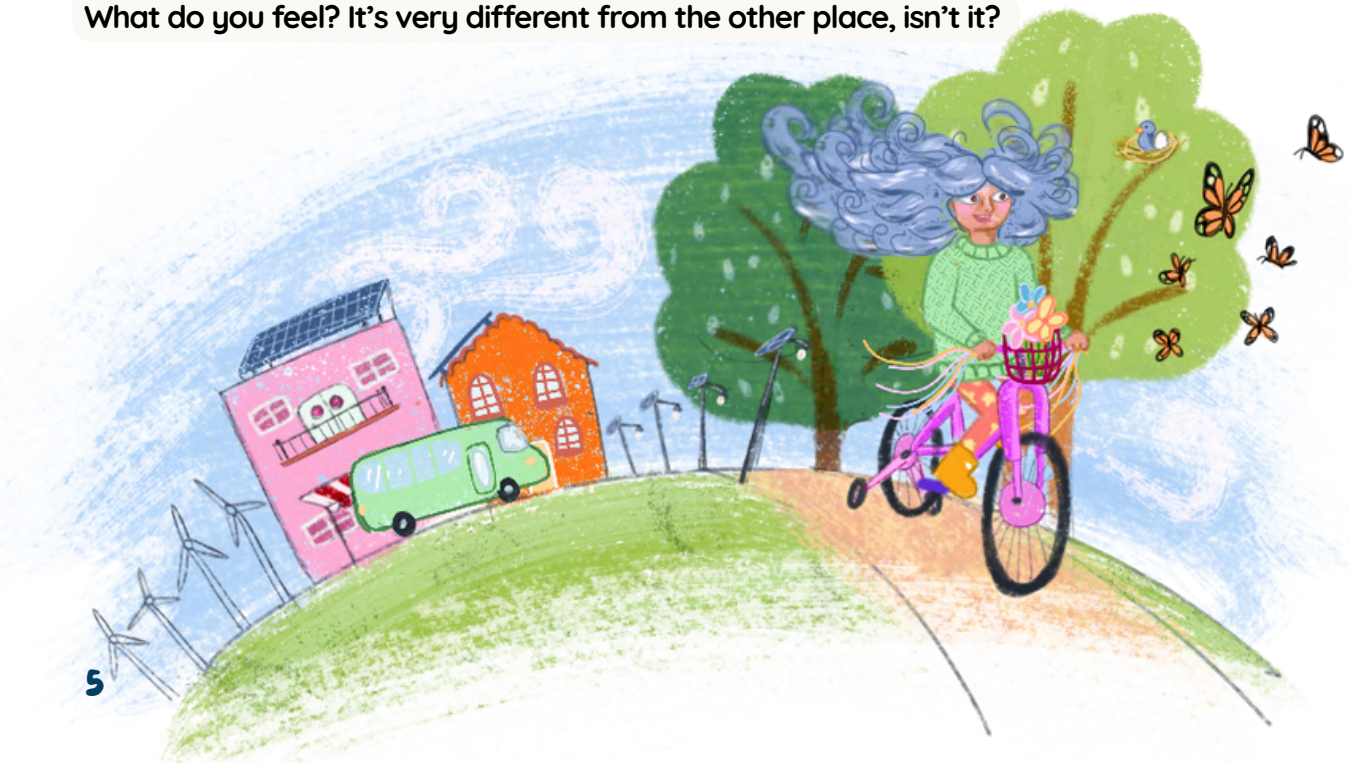
Older persons: As we get older, our bodies become more sensitive to pollution. Clean air can help older adults feel more energetic!

Now that we know more about the air we breathe, imagine you go out for a walk one day...

...first you walk past a factory; its smokestacks are releasing smoke. All around, there are many cars spewing lots of smog. Oh! And there's also someone burning a pile of trash.
How do you feel? What does the sky look like?

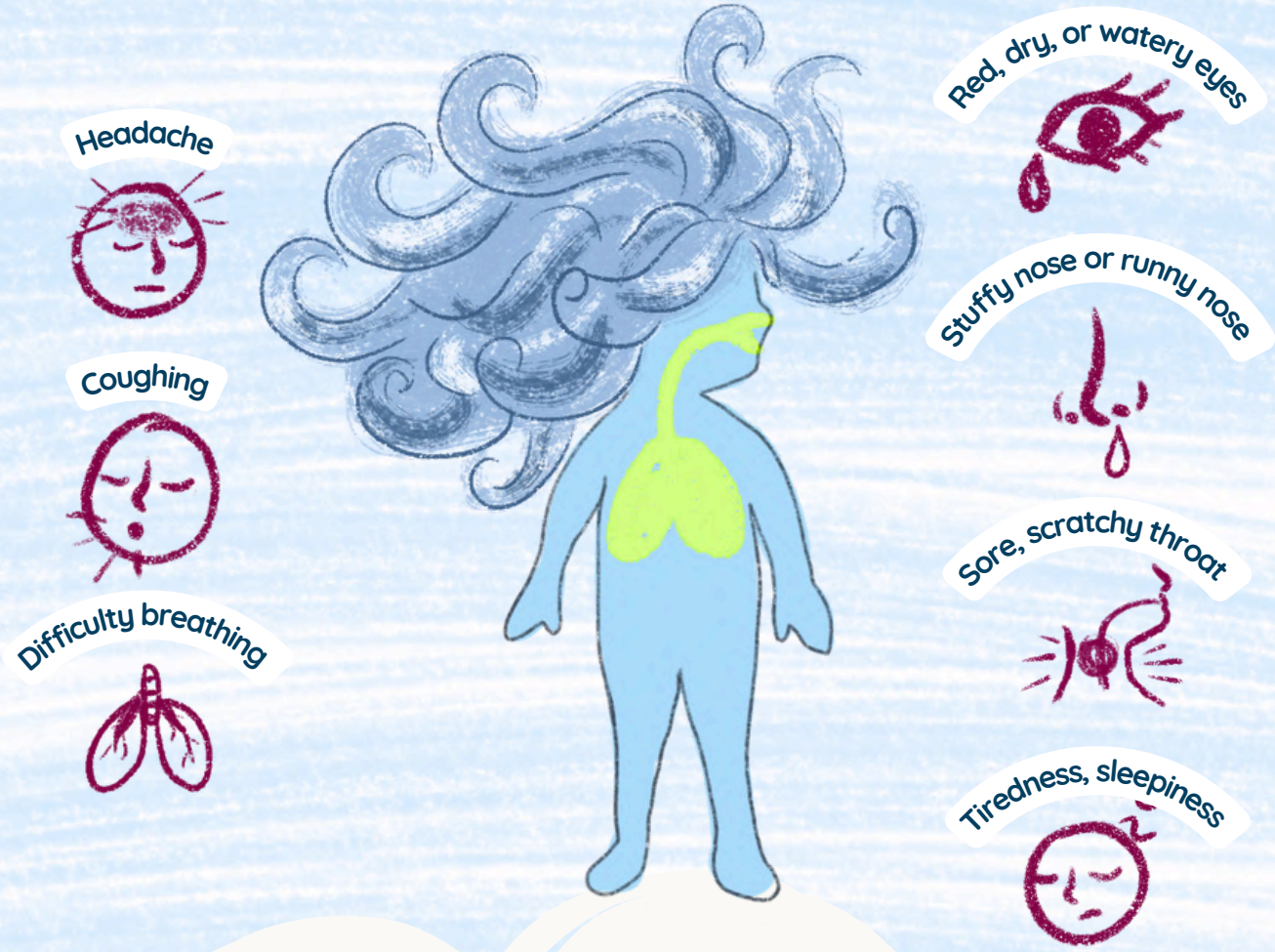


...you keep walking and, luckily, you arrive in another part of the city! The streets are lined with huge trees; in the background, you hear birds singing, and you notice lots of butterflies fluttering by. There are no factories, no fires, and no polluting cars nearby. You take a loooong, deep breath.
What do you feel? It's very different from the other place, isn't it?



SYMPTOMS OF BREATHING POLLUTED AIR.

We can tell we're breathing polluted air because our bodies don't like pollution, so we might feel:



WRITE OR DRAW

Think of a day when you were in a place with a lot of air pollution. Did you feel any of these symptoms? Where were you?

WHAT CAUSES AIR POLLUTION?

Air pollution is (almost always) caused by people. Especially through these activities:



Extracting oil, gas, and coal from the ground—known as **fossil fuels**—to create energy.



Cars, trucks, and motorcycles that run on gasoline or diesel.



Some forms of **electricity** (from power plants that burn coal, oil, or gas).



Some **cooking methods** (such as using cooking gas, or barbecues using charcoal or firewood).



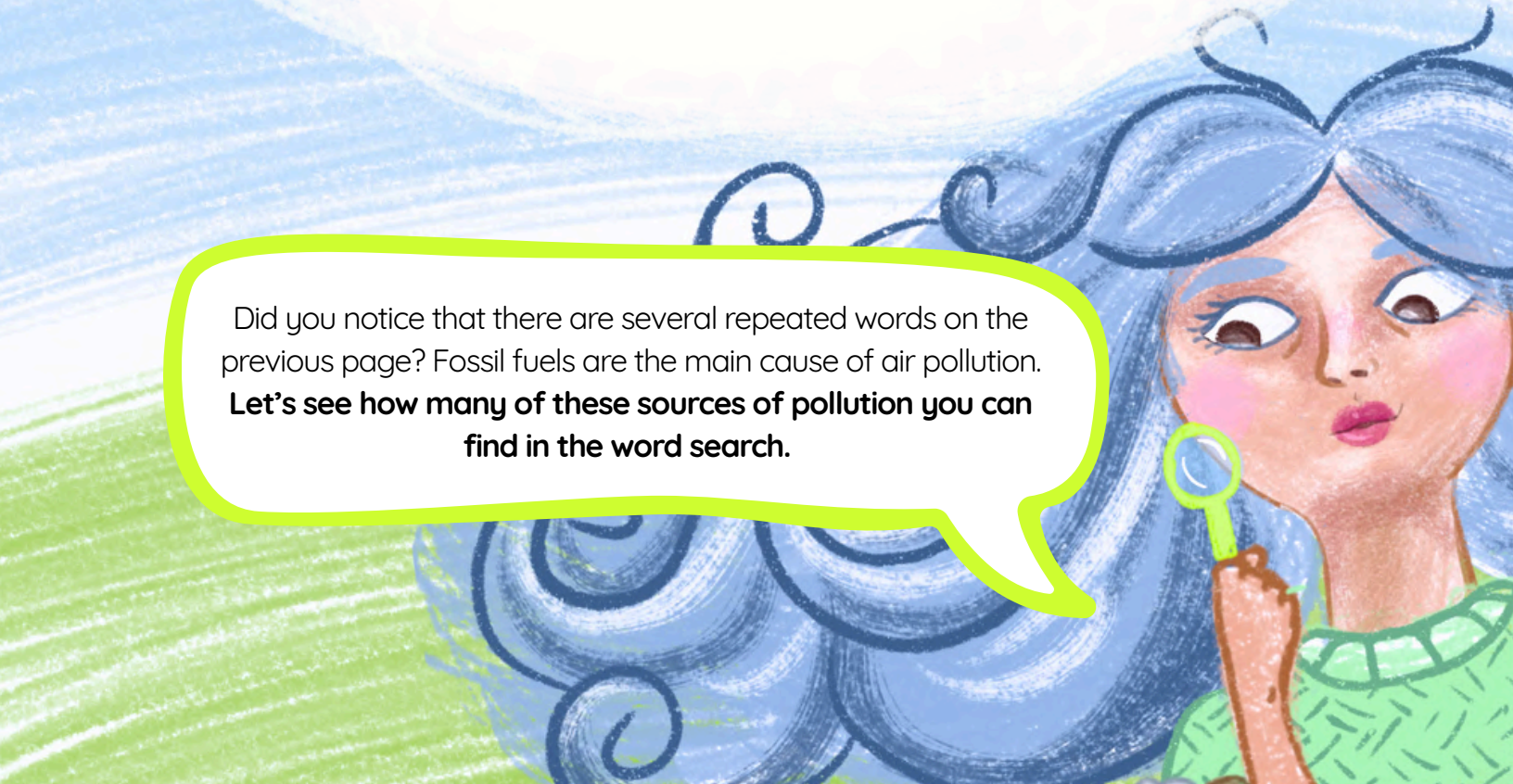
Wildfires.



Fireworks.

FOSSIL FUELS · CARS · COAL · FIRES GASOLINE · OIL · GAS

N	Q	U	R	F	I	R	E	S	I	O	S
G	W	O	P	I	X	U	V	S	B	U	F
U	O	M	J	U	U	N	S	C	G	I	Y
F	O	S	S	I	L	F	U	E	L	S	S
P	B	K	N	B	A	E	L	I	U	R	C
E	C	D	O	C	H	N	O	K	A	M	U
L	D	Y	L	N	O	I	Z	C	Z	U	E
R	W	Y	A	A	H	L	J	E	P	A	G
O	I	A	O	G	E	O	A	D	N	O	S
I	E	D	C	F	Q	S	F	B	H	B	S
L	K	S	I	M	H	A	O	M	G	A	S
O	M	I	K	E	T	G	U	B	O	U	A



Did you notice that there are several repeated words on the previous page? Fossil fuels are the main cause of air pollution. **Let's see how many of these sources of pollution you can find in the word search.**

THERE'S A SOLUTION TO ALL THIS

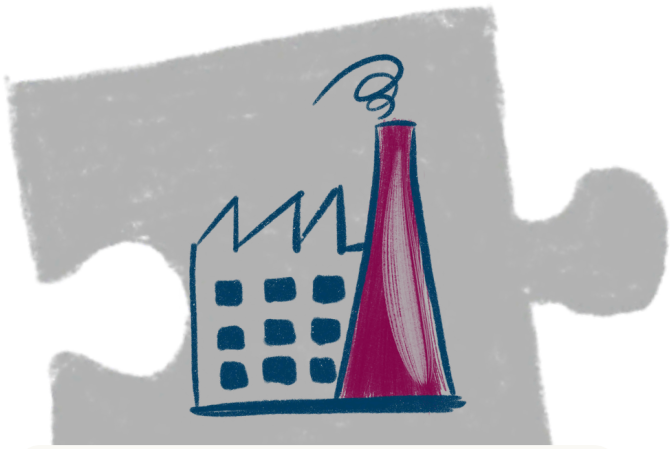
We've learned that we need clean air, and we know what causes the air to be polluted. We also know how pollution affects our body and our health, and who is more affected by it. **So, what else can we do?**

First, we must remember that clean air is a very important part of the human right to a clean, healthy, and sustainable environment. And, there are many people who protect our rights. To have clean air, we have to agree to care for, help and monitort he air to make fair decisions to benefit everyone.

WHO IS RESPONSIBLE FOR OUR RIGHT TO A HEALTHY ENVIRONMENT?



Governments: Should make rules and spend money to protect the air and safeguard everyone's health.



Companies: Should avoid polluting the air and seek cleaner ways to do their work. They must also follow the rules and care for their surrounding communities.



International Organizations: They must ensure that all governments are complying with the rules, protect human rights, and establish agreements among various countries to protect us all.

STEPS TO TAKE.

Air pollution is a problem that affects everyone, but we can solve it. Here are some steps we can take together:



Understand what pollution is, its causes, and its effects on our health, the economy, and the environment.



Information about air quality—who pollutes, how it happens, and the effects on our health and the environment—must be shared and made easy for everyone to understand.



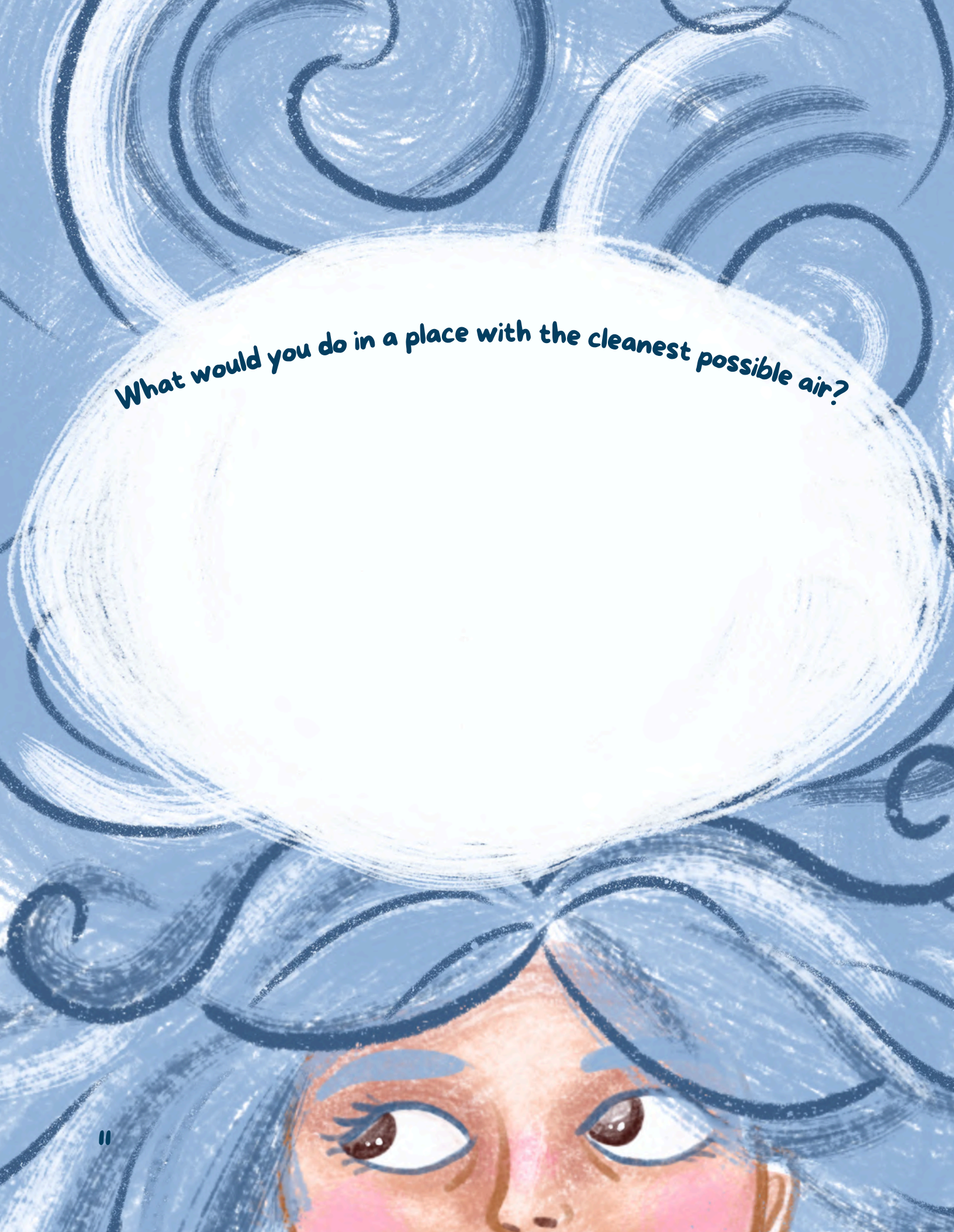
Governments and international organizations must enact laws for companies and activities that pollute. They are the ones responsible for protecting our human rights, leaving no one behind. We all deserve a healthy environment equally.



It is important to pay special attention to what is most valuable: our health. That is why governments, companies, and international organizations must create plans to ensure we have a healthy environment.



After thorough planning, governments and international organizations must pay close attention to ensuring that the rules are being followed and monitor the results.


What would you do in a place with the cleanest possible air?

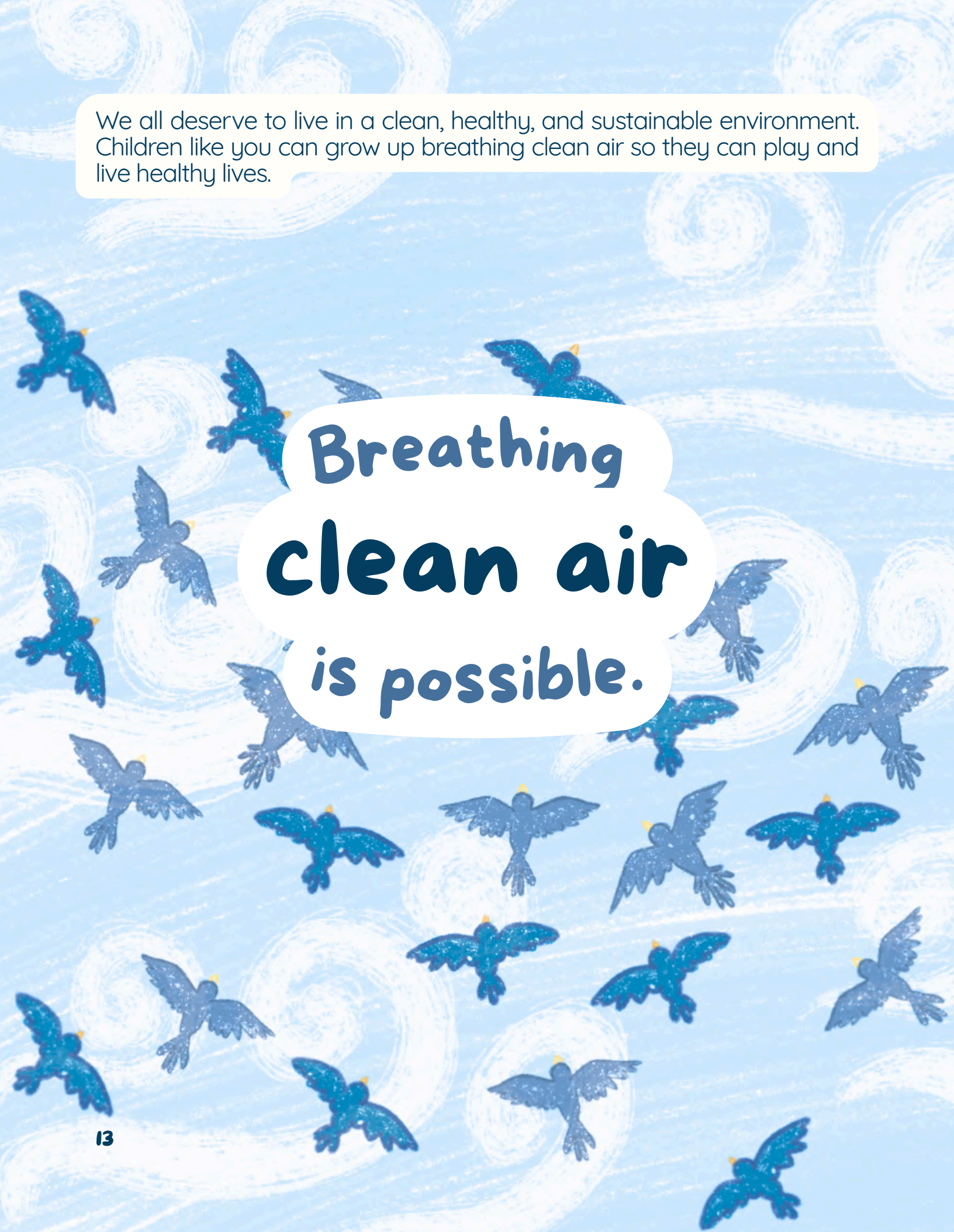
Just as you have the right to life, to food, to go to school, to play, and many other things, you have the right for your government to have adequate rules so you can breathe clean air.

What would you like to ask the people responsible for protecting our right to a healthy environment so we can breathe clean air? In this space, you can write a letter mentioning, for example, how polluted air affects you, if there is a source of pollution nearby, and which family members or friends are most harmed by breathing polluted air.

MY VOICE FOR CLEAN AIR



We all deserve to live in a clean, healthy, and sustainable environment. Children like you can grow up breathing clean air so they can play and live healthy lives.



WHAT DOES IT MEAN?

Fossil fuels: These are non-renewable energy sources that formed many, many years ago, when dinosaurs lived, and are extracted from underground, such as oil, gas or coal. We use them to power cars, ships, and factories, but they cause a lot of pollution and are the main drivers of climate change. Fortunately, there are new energy sources that help us maintain a clean, healthy, and sustainable environment, such as wind and solar energy. We also need to be responsible and use the energy we have wisely.

Inhale: When we breathe, we do two things: inhale and exhale. Inhaling is when air enters through your nose or mouth and travels to your lungs (which are like two balloons inside your chest). With fresh air, your body gets what it needs to run, play, and grow.

International Organizations: These are forums where many countries around the world come together to discuss and agree on how to care for children, adults, and the planet, and to ensure that all the rules are followed so we can live well. A very important example is the United Nations. It is the organization with the most member countries—193 as of today!

Smog: This is a compound word that combines "smoke + fog." Smog is like a gray, dirty cloud, full of pollution that sometimes covers cities. Breathing smog isn't good for you.

Sustainable: Means that we use nature's resources without harming them, so that our grandparents, ourselves, and the children not yet born can all enjoy them equally.

Symptoms: These are the signals our body gives us to say, "Help, something's wrong!" For example, if we breathe polluted air, a symptom might be a sore throat or a bad cough.

Toxics: Substances that can harm health. There should be no toxics in a clean and healthy environment.

ABOUT...

The United Nations Special Rapporteur on the Human Right to a Clean, Healthy, and Sustainable Environment.

For the first time in its history, the United Nations has recognized that everyone, everywhere, has the right to live in a clean, healthy, and sustainable environment.
Special Rapporteurs are independent human rights experts with mandates to report and advise on human rights from a thematic or country-specific perspective.

The mandate on the human right to a **clean, healthy, and sustainable environment** exists to:

- Examine human rights obligations related to the enjoyment of a safe, clean, healthy, and sustainable environment.
- Promote best practices regarding the use of human rights in policymaking.
- Identify challenges and obstacles to the global recognition and implementation of the right to a safe, clean, healthy, and sustainable environment.
- Conduct country visits and respond to human rights violations.

The Laboratory for Environmental and Climate Justice (LabJAC)

The Laboratory for Environmental and Climate Justice (LabJAC) is part of the "Berta Cáceres" Legal Clinic for Environmental Justice at the Universidad Iberoamericana in Mexico City.
Its objective is to offer key solutions grounded in environmental justice to effectively address the triple planetary crisis—which refers to climate change, biodiversity loss, and pollution—a crisis exacerbated by structural inequality and discrimination.
One of LabJAC's fundamental tasks is to serve as external support for the activities of the United Nations Special Rapporteur on the Human Right to a Clean, Healthy, and Sustainable Environment. This approach allows the laboratory to have a global reach.
Visit our website: https://bit.ly/LabJAC

FOR PARENTS AND GUARDIANS OF YOUNG READERS:

If you'd like to learn more about these issues, the report and its reader-friendly version, as well as the executive summary, are available on the mandate's website:
https://www.ohchr.org/en/special-procedures/sr-environment

To share your drawings, you can post your photo on social media with the hashtag #CleanAirHealthyEnviro and tag @srhealthyenvironment (Instagram)/ @SREnvironment (X).

THANK YOU...

Astrid Puentes Riaño, Special Rapporteur and LabJAC Director, expresses her gratitude to everyone who made possible this children's version of her report.

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Thank you for your collaboration!

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