

COP21 side event on Health

Scheduled	Title
Tue, 08 Dec 2015 18.30-20.00 COP Venue Room: OR1	Why the climate change agreement is critical to Public Health CC poses serious health risks, mostly for the poorest populations, but can also stimulate stronger health systems and health gains from the transition to a low-carbon economy. A robust international climate treaty is critical for public health. Focus areas: air pollution, biodiversity loss.

Background

A new effective universal climate change agreement must also be very much an effective public health agreement. It is paramount that health practitioners speak up to make this point clear as countries shape the final outcome, which will be concluded in Paris, in December.

Climate change presents important health risks, particularly for the poorest populations, but it can also stimulate opportunities and gain through strengthening of health systems, and a transition to a greener, low-carbon economy.

The central message this side event will bring to COP21 discussions is that a strong and effective international climate treaty is a critical public health agreement.

The event will be organised by the World Health Organization in collaboration with UNECE, WMO, UNEP, UNICEF, CBD and with the support of the French Ministry of Health.

Main issues to be highlighted

The event will review the evidence for **health risks from climate change**, and from the polluting energy sources and unsustainable development practices that are causing global warming. The groups who are likely to bear most of the resulting disease burden are children, the elderly, people with pre-existing medical conditions and the poor, especially women. The major diseases that are most sensitive to climate change – diarrhoea, vector-borne diseases like malaria, and infections associated with undernutrition – are mainly diseases of poverty. For example, the per capita mortality rate from vector-borne diseases is almost 300 times greater in developing nations than in developed regions. They are also particularly diseases of children. 90% of the burden of malaria and diarrhoea, and almost all of the burden of diseases associated with undernutrition, are borne by children aged 5 years or less, mostly in developing countries. These populations have contributed least to the emissions of greenhouse gases that are the main driver of climate change.

At the same time, they also suffer the greatest burden of exposure to air pollution from highly polluting fuels, which causes approximately 7 million deaths each year.

Most importantly, the side event will also address **solutions to these challenges**. More sustainable and equitable development, including poverty alleviation and strengthening of universal health coverage including preventive public health interventions, would improve health now and reduce vulnerability to ongoing climate change. There is now emerging experience of specific approaches to addressing climate risks to health which can build resilience and give effective protection against health risks from heatwaves and other extreme weather events, as well as infectious diseases, and long-term risks such as food insecurity.

In addition, the transition to a green economy, and more sustainable policy choices in sectors such as electricity generation, household energy and transport has the potential to greatly reduce non-communicable disease burdens associated with, for example, **air pollution** and physical inactivity. Removing subsidies for polluting fuels, and assessing accounting for the health impacts of different energy and development choices would make an important contribution to a healthier, more sustainable and fairer society.

Special Focus on Air Pollution and Biodiversity

The World Health Assembly in May 2015 adopted an historic resolution to address the health impacts of air pollution. This resolution is a strong call to the health sector to play a lead role in tackling air pollution -- a major cause today of heart disease, stroke and pneumonia as well as cancers, "commits WHO to scale up its work with member states to better identify the sources of air pollution, and the most effective mitigation measures that are good for health, development and climate."

Building on the expert input of UNEP and UNECE, which it is administering the Convention on Long-Range Transboundary Air Pollution (Air Convention), this event will be an opportunity to discuss how to develop air quality monitoring systems and health registries to improve surveillance for all illnesses related to air pollution; promote clean cooking, heating and lighting technologies and fuels; and strengthen international transfer of expertise, technologies and scientific data in the field of air pollution.

It is also important for the climate change community to recognize that human health and well-being are influenced by the health of local plant and animal communities, and the integrity of the local ecosystems that they form. Climate policies must ensure that the impacts of ecosystem alteration are assessed and reflected in strategies by meaningfully engaging with different sectors, disciplines and local communities. The Climate Change talks provide unique momentum and opportunity to develop coherent, coordinated, crosssectoral action.

Moderation

Dr Richard Horton, Editor, Lancet/Dr Maria Neria, Director PHE

First Part (30 min)

Welcome message by MOH France, *Ms Marisol Touraine*

Speakers

- Mr. Christian Friis Bach (UNECE Executive Secretary)
- Dr. Braulio Ferreira de Souza Dias, CBD Executive Secretary
- Deputy Health Minister Brazil, MOH African and OASIS countries (Tuvalu, Fiji)
- Mr. Jaime Burrows (Vice-Minister of Health from Chile)
- Mr. Bernard JOMIER, Deputy Mayor of Paris in charge of Health, Handicap and relations with Paris Hospitals
- Dr Gina Radford. Deputy Chief Medical Officer, UK
- Marcelo Sánchez Sorondo, Chancellor of the Pontifical Academy of Sciences and the Pontifical Academy of Social Sciences/ Pope Climate adviser
- Dr. Oyun Sanjaasuren (former Minister of Environment and Green Development of Mongolia, and current president of the United Nations Environment Assembly) TBC
- MOE Nigeria/Canada/Norway (TBC)
- Representative of Youth / Medical student from IFMSA