

## World Health Assembly agrees to climate change and health action plan

Member States unanimously expressed their strong support and agreed to the [resolution and workplan](#) for scaling up the World Health Organization's (WHO) technical assistance to countries for assessing and addressing the implications of climate change for health and health systems. Twenty-eight countries took the floor to share their experiences and express their appreciation for the Secretariat's work. The workplan aims to support health systems in all countries, identify strategies and actions to protect human health and share knowledge and good practice. It is organized around four objectives, namely: advocacy and awareness raising; engagement in partnerships with other United Nations organizations and sectors other than the health sector at national, regional and international levels in order to ensure that health protection and health promotion are central to climate change adaptation and mitigation policies; promoting and supporting the generation of scientific evidence; and strengthening health systems to cope with the health threat posed by climate change, including emergencies related to extreme weather events and sea-level rise.

## Third WHO International Conference on Children's Health and Environment

The Third WHO International Conference on Children's Health and the Environment: From Research and Knowledge into Policy and Action, to be held in Busan, Republic of Korea, 7–10 June 2009, aims at extending the recognition of children's environmental health needs, providing a platform for the exchange of scientific experiences, encouraging learning about research efforts, and promoting protective policies. It will also pave the way to identifying why existing global efforts have not progressed more rapidly and what needs to be done in both developing and industrialized countries. This conference, hosted by the Ministry of Environment in Korea, in collaboration with the Ministry of Health, Social Welfare and Family Affairs is organized by WHO jointly with national and international partners. "Preventing childhood diseases through healthy environments and behaviours is possible", said Dr Maria Neira, Director, Public Health and the Environment, WHO. "It requires using tools and mechanisms already available, translating research and knowledge into protective policies and, overall, a strong political commitment for action in all countries, and globally.

## International Conference on Chemicals Management

Over 700 delegates from governments, nongovernmental and intergovernmental organizations and industry met to review progress with implementation of the Strategic Approach to International Chemicals Management (SAICM). An important focus of the meeting was on issues that had not been recognized or sufficiently addressed at a global level, including the phase-out of lead in paint, better information about chemicals in articles, raising awareness of nanotechnologies and manufactured nanomaterials, and hazardous substances in electrical and electronic products. A resolution on the health aspects of the sound management of chemicals drew attention to the need to more fully [engage the health sector in SAICM](#). The meeting was held 11–15 May 2009.

## Countries move towards more sustainable roll back of malaria

On 6 May, the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) and WHO, in partnership with the Global Environment Facility (GEF), announced a rejuvenated international effort to combat malaria with an incremental reduction of reliance on the synthetic pesticide DDT. The aim of the new project, a major initiative of GEF with close to US\$ 40 million funding being spearheaded by WHO and UNEP, is to achieve a 30% cut in the application of DDT worldwide by 2014 and its total phase-out by the early 2020s if not sooner, while staying on track to meet the malaria targets set by WHO. "WHO faces a double challenge – a commitment to the goal of drastically and sustainably reducing the burden of vector-borne diseases, in particular malaria, and at the same time a commitment to the goal of reducing reliance on DDT in disease vector control", said Dr Margaret Chan, WHO Director-General.

Worldwide, 13 million deaths could be prevented every year by making our environments healthier.

## Prestigious Spanish Honor for WHO

The World Health Organization was awarded a [prestigious international award](#) for its work on global public health and its convening power to fight global health threats. "I am deeply honoured that the World Health Organization has received the prestigious Prince of Asturias Award for International Cooperation for its efforts to fight against international health threats and for its leadership in coordinating health in a rapidly changing world," said Director-General Dr Margaret Chan.

## G8 Environment Minister's Meeting (April 2009)

The [G8 Environment Minister's Meeting](#), Siracusa, Italy (April 2009) asserted that more should be done to ensure that children are born, grow, develop and thrive in environments with clean air, clean water, safe food and minimal exposure to harmful chemicals.

In her [speech on children's environmental health](#), Lisa Jackson, of the US Environmental Protection Agency, stated, "Our children's future is so bright. But we must work in earnest to ensure that their bright future is not overcast by the clouds of pollution, climate change and other environmental gradation."

## Upcoming events

**7–10 June** 3rd WHO International Conference on Children's Health and Environment, Busan, Republic of Korea

**23–24 June** Global Humanitarian Forum meeting. One session will be hosted on climate change and health equity.

## Regular features

- Links to specific news and recent publications
- Links to our public health and environment regional offices

## Facts and figures

Deaths of children aged under five years have dropped by 27% globally since 1990, according to the latest WHO estimates.

But in [WHO's first progress report on the health-related Millennium Development Goals \(MDGs\)](#) released this month in the World Health Statistics 2009, other results are mixed.

An estimated 9 million children aged under five years died in 2007, significantly fewer than the 12.5 million estimated to have died in 1990, the baseline year against which progress towards the goals is measured.

[World health statistics 2009](#)

## Water safety plan meeting

At a meeting on water safety plans (WSPs), experts agreed to three main objectives. These include: further development of a tool designed to assist water suppliers and regulators assess progress in the development and implementation of WSPs; critical review of how the WSP framework can be applied as a cost-effective preventive approach to mitigate climate related risks to water and sanitation; and agreement on advocacy for the WSP approach among stakeholders.

In 2004, the WHO [Guidelines for drinking water quality](#) recommended that water suppliers develop and implement "water safety plans" (WSPs) in order to systematically assess and manage risks. The meeting, attended by 25 experts, representing geographical and institutional diversity, was held in Geneva 23–25 March 2009.

## Worker's health and primary health care – Global consultation

The Government of Chile and WHO convened a global consultation on workers' health and primary health care from 4 to 7 May 2009 in Santiago de Chile. Experts from Brazil, Chile, China, Finland, Italy, the Netherlands, South Africa, Thailand, the United Kingdom, and the United States of America presented the experience of their countries in organizing health services for workers. The meeting identified avenues for improving coverage with and quality of occupational health services as set forth in the [WHO Global plan of action on workers' health 2008–2017](#), using the values and principles of primary health care. The meeting will be followed by case studies and further consultations with international stakeholders.

## Selected health topics from WHO's public health and environment web sites:

[3rd WHO International Conference on Children's Health and Environment](#)

[Children's environmental health](#)

[Outdoor air pollution](#)

[Ionizing radiation](#)

[Global environmental change](#)

[Health impact assessment](#)

[Ultraviolet radiation](#)

[Water, sanitation, health and hygiene](#)

[Click here for all WHO's environmental health topics](#)

## Regional public health and environment links

WHO African Region: [www.afro.who.int/des/phe/index.html](http://www.afro.who.int/des/phe/index.html)

WHO South-East Asia Region: [www.searo.who.int/en/Section23.htm](http://www.searo.who.int/en/Section23.htm)

WHO Western Pacific Region: [www.wpro.who.int/environmental\\_health/](http://www.wpro.who.int/environmental_health/)

WHO Region of the Americas: [www.paho.org/Selection.asp?](http://www.paho.org/Selection.asp?)

WHO Eastern Mediterranean Region: [www.emro.who.int/ceha/](http://www.emro.who.int/ceha/)

WHO European Region: [www.euro.who.int/envhealth](http://www.euro.who.int/envhealth)

## Links to publications

**NEW**

[WHO manual: The public health management of chemical incidents](#)

[Protecting health from climate change – Global research priorities](#)

[Healthy hospitals, healthy planet, healthy people – Addressing climate change in health care settings](#)

[Protecting health from climate change – Top 10 actions for health professionals](#)

[Pandemic influenza preparedness and response](#)

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