

Conference adopts Busan Pledge for Action on Children's Health and the Environment

Health and environment experts unanimously adopted [The Busan Pledge for Action on Children's Health and the Environment](#) at the Third WHO Conference on Children's Health and the Environment. The Pledge calls for urgent action by governmental decision-makers, health providers, educators and scientists to end unnecessary deaths of children from preventable environmental hazards. The pledge specifically identifies the need for strengthened advocacy, communications, training and research. The Pledge outlines ten areas for action, including calls for raising public and policy-maker awareness of the need for strengthening public health systems to monitor and reduce new risks to children, from early exposures and climate change. It also highlights the need for further research on the impact of early childhood exposures and subsequent learning difficulties, as well as social and behavioural problems in adolescence.

The three day event held in Busan, in the Republic of Korea, was the first WHO "Green" conference – requesting among other measures, participants to contribute to a carbon offset fund, recycle and reuse. This is particularly important as the world moves towards green growth and sustainability for better health outcomes. By doing so, we will create a series of health, economic and social co-benefits that improve the health and well-being of our future generations.

Global Initiative on Children's Environmental Health Indicators

Children's environmental health indicators are aimed at improving the assessment of children's environmental health, monitoring the effects of interventions to improve children's health in relation to the environment and reporting on the state of children's environmental health. This new publication presenting [Children's environmental health indicators: Presenting regional successes – learning for the future](#) summarizes the process, outcomes and key findings of the projects implemented as part of the Global Initiative on Children's Environmental Health Indicators (CEHI).

This initiative was launched at the World Summit on Sustainable Development in 2002 with partners from governments, nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) and international organizations, and is funded with the support from the Office of Children's Health Protection at the United States Environmental Protection Agency (USEPA).

WHO updates country data on the effects of the environment on health

The [WHO environmental burden of disease estimates](#) for its 193 Member States have just been updated. The data show huge inequalities but also demonstrate that in every country, people's health could be improved by reducing environmental risks including pollution, hazards in the work environment, UV radiation, noise, agricultural risks, climate and ecosystem change. Environmental hazards are responsible for about a quarter of the total burden of disease worldwide, and more than 13 millions deaths could be prevented every year by making our environment healthier. Much of this death, illness and disability could be prevented through well-targeted interventions such as promoting safe household water storage, better hygiene measures and the use of cleaner and safer fuels. Other interventions include increasing the safety of buildings and promoting safe use and management of toxic substances at home and in the workplace. The country profiles will be available online by July 16 at www.who.int/quantifying_ehimpacts/countryprofiles

Be 'sun wise' this summer: protect and prevent

With summer in full swing in some parts of the world, it's the perfect chance to be outside as much as possible – but be mindful of protecting your skin against the harmful rays of the sun. While skin cancer, cataracts and other damage from the sun are common, the good news is that they are largely preventable. Adopting the following simple precautions, adapted from the [Sun Wise School Programme](#) can make all the difference. Shade, clothing and hats provide the best protection – applying sunscreen is essential on those parts of the body that remain exposed like the face and hands. [Watch the UV](#) index, and last but not least [children](#) are more susceptible to environmental threat and require special protection.

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

Quotes of the Month

"The Busan Pledge for Action provides a much needed boost to global, regional, national and local efforts to address and prevent much disease and many tragic and unnecessary children's deaths from environmental hazards. We know what is causing these deaths and we know how to prevent them. The pledge aims to renew and enhance political commitment to action."

Dr Maa Nee Lee, Minister of Environment, Republic of Korea.

"This conference has gone a long way towards generating new synergies of action and complementarity between health and environment for sustainable development. Its overall message is clear, for all those concerned about the environmental health of children, the time to translate knowledge into action is now."

Mr Young Hak Yoo, Vice-Minister for Health, Welfare and Family Affairs, Republic of Korea.

[Closing press release](#)

Upcoming events

6-9 July, [United Nations Economic and Social Council \(ECOSOC\)](#), high level segment

16-22 August, [World Water Week](#), Stockholm

Regular features

- Links to specific news and recent publications
- Links to our Public Health and Environment Regional Offices

Mobile phone antennas



Around the world, public concern about the health impact of mobile telephony networks continues unabated. Over 60 representatives from 35 national authorities, several international organizations and collaborating centres gathered in Geneva on 11-12 June 2009, to advise the WHO International EMF Project and to share experiences on national research efforts, legislation and risk communication regarding electromagnetic fields and radiation protection. For more information, contact emfproject@who.int

Call for public and peer review comments

Responding to the needs of regulators and other risk assessors to estimate human health risks from combined exposures to chemicals, including chemical mixtures, the World Health Organization has prepared a [Draft Framework for Risk Assessment of Combined Exposures to Multiple Chemicals](#).

The draft framework, along with two illustrative case studies, is now available for public and peer review comments, from the website above.

Comments need to reach WHO before 30 September 2009.

Mass lead intoxication from lead acid battery recycling, Dakar, Senegal

In June 2008, WHO was a key partner in the investigation and public health response to a mass lead intoxication of an estimated 950 individuals in Dakar, Senegal. The incident occurred as a result of the informal and unsafe recycling of used lead acid batteries (ULAB) over many years. Lead is a toxic metal and its widespread use has caused extensive environmental contamination and health problems in many parts of the world. WHO has estimated that lead exposure accounts for almost 1% of the global burden of disease, with the highest burden in the developing world. A scientific publication describing the results of the investigation in Dakar has been published online by the journal [Environmental Health Perspectives \(EHP\)](#).

Selected health topics from WHO's Public Health and Environment web sites:

[Public Health and Environment home page](#)

[Quantifying Environmental Health Impacts](#)

[Chemical Safety](#)

[Occupational health](#)

[Health and Environment Linkages](#)

[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

WHO South-East Asia Region: www.searo.who.int/en/Section23.htm

WHO Western Pacific Region: www.wpro.who.int/environmental_health/

WHO Region of the Americas: www.paho.org/Selection.asp?

WHO Eastern Mediterranean Region: www.emro.who.int/ceha/

WHO European Region: www.euro.who.int/envhealth

New publications

[Children's environmental health indicators: Presenting regional successes — learning for the future](#)

[WHO country profiles - Update country-by-country data on the effects of the environment on health](#)

[Protecting Health from Climate Change—global research priorities](#)

[Healthy Hospitals, Healthy Planet, Healthy People—addressing climate change in health care settings](#)

[TMT Handbook: Triage, Monitoring and Treatment of people exposed to ionising radiation following a malevolent act](#)

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