

Ministerial Declaration on “Health, Environment and Climate Change”

On the occasion of the 22nd session of the Conference of the Parties to the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC COP 22) in Marrakech, on 15 November 2016, we the Ministers and high-level representatives, acknowledge that almost one quarter of the global burden of disease, and approximately 12.6 million deaths each year, are attributable to modifiable environmental factors¹.

We also acknowledge that global, environmental and social changes, including climate change, are driving many of these risks, and impacting directly on human health.

Despite the strengthening evidence of the effects that environmental and climate risk factors have on health, the political action and investment currently underway is not yet at a sufficient scale to address these challenges globally. This contributes to rising healthcare costs around the world.

Further *acknowledge* that public health interventions related to climate change should take into account environmental risk factors, as well as the negative effects of climate change on health. We therefore, *recognise* the need to improve national health capabilities on prevention and treatment of environment-related illnesses.

We also recognise, however, an important opportunity for action. While the state of the environment has major impacts on human health and well-being, health gains are among the most socially and economically valuable benefits of environmental and climate protection, and therefore strong motivating forces for public support and political action for such measures. The major environment and development agreements and frameworks, from the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the Paris Agreement on climate change reached at the 21st Session of the Conference of the Parties to the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), include clear reference to the connections between environmental degradation, climate change and health.

The protection and enhancement of health is an essential pillar of sustainable development, and of the response to climate change. In short, a more integrated and inter-sectoral approach to enhancing health, reducing inequalities, promoting sustainable food production and consumption, and protecting the environment, should promote policy coherence, efficiency and equity.

We recognise that well-designed policies to address environmental risks, including those that reduce emissions of climate pollutants, have the potential to improve public health substantially, including through reducing the global burden of disease, addressing the rise of non-communicable diseases such as heart disease, stroke, cancer and chronic respiratory disease, and reducing environmental pressures that may contribute to migration and its effects on health and wellbeing. These benefits highlight that what is good for the environment is often also good for health.

Moreover, we acknowledge that both the World Health Assembly and the United Nations Environment Assembly have respectively passed a number of resolutions to mobilize the health and environment sectors to address major environmental risks, including climate change, air pollution, water and sanitation, food safety, waste and exposure to hazardous and toxic chemicals, as well as on the linkages between environmental degradation and poor health and well-being.

We appreciate the respective capabilities of the World Health Organization (WHO), the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) the World Meteorological Organization (WMO), the UNFCCC Secretariat, and other UN bodies, in relation to health, environment, and climate change.

¹ WHO, 2016. Preventing disease through healthy environments: A global assessment of the burden of disease from environmental risks. World Health Organization, Geneva

Furthermore, we recognise that the ongoing efforts to address health, environment and climate change linkages will benefit from the active involvement of national governments, intergovernmental organizations, environment and health organisations and other civil society groups, and other key actors including the private sector and the research community.

We recognise that the outcome of the Second WHO Global Conference on Health and Climate, which took place in Paris, on 7-8 July 2016, significantly advanced the global effort on health and climate change, and highlighted a strong health community that is ready to implement the Paris Agreement.

In addition we acknowledge the ongoing efforts by states, organizations, and partnerships to address environmental degradation, climate change and related public health issues, including regional Health and Environment Ministerial conferences and commitments, and on specific environment and health themes, such as the Climate and Clean Air Coalition on Short-Lived Climate Pollutants, the Global Framework for Climate Services, and the New Urban Agenda resulting from the 2016 Habitat III conference in Quito.

We encourage organisations and processes at all levels to stimulate and scale up the sharing of best practices, experiences and technical expertise aiming at enhancing health, improving health monitoring and protecting the environment, to invest resources as appropriate, and to promote cooperation on this matter.

We encourage countries to include health considerations within their Nationally Determined Contributions, their National Adaptation Plans and their National Communications within the framework of the UNFCCC.

We, the Ministers and high-level representatives, note that there is currently no global high-level alliance which addresses the comprehensive set of linkages between health, environment and climate change.

We appreciate the efforts of WHO, UNEP, WMO and the Secretariat of the UNFCCC, together with the Moroccan Government, in launching a global initiative on Health, Environment and Climate Change to promote better management of environmental and climate risks to health, and low carbon, climate resilient, sustainable and inclusive development aimed at ensuring good health and well-being.

We call on WHO, UNEP, WMO and the UNFCCC Secretariat to work with countries as well as relevant entities of the United Nations, regional Health and Environment ministerial conferences, regional organisations, other relevant stakeholders and interested parties, to identify and recommend the most effective mechanisms to accomplish this aim.