

Protecting Health from Climate Change
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We have to make sure that health would be considered and would be a very important part of the climate change agenda. We still need to make a major effort to put health at the forefront of the this agenda. The evidence that these changing climatic conditions will effect health in a very negative way are there. We have the proof. We also have enough evidence demonstrating that. Therefore we need to make sure that this is perfectly understood at the international environment and to move ahead with this agenda.

We need to have the best possible, highest quality evidence based information and that's why we are putting together this research agenda to identify gaps, to make sure we will address those gaps, and particularly to make sure we will provide not only the best possible evidence but as well recommendations regarding the most effective and efficient actions that needs to be taken to protect health from climate change. The most effective and efficient measure that countries need to take to adapt themselves to those negative effects for the health of the people that in any case will occur; how to reinforce disease control systems; how to strengthen health systems; how to forecast in advance those diseases like malaria, dengue or cholera that will probably be exacerbated from climatic conditions that are coming in the next years.

In Copenhagen next year the countries and the leaders of the world will be meeting to define what will be after the Kyoto protocol what is the climate change agenda. We need to be ready to feed into this agenda and make sure health components of the climate change will be considered and they will have available a plan for action.

The health implications of climate change are so huge that I will invite everybody to join us and to join this movement which is not only to fight climate change and reduce climate change and protect the health of the people but also a movement to create healthier environments and therefore improving the health and well being of the people.

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Up until recently climate change has mainly been seen as an environmental issue, high level sea rise, polar bears and in some cases the economic effects of climate change and all those are valid concerns. What we are pointing out to is that on top of all those issues the fundamental issues that we all concerned about is the effects of all these changes on

human health and well being. People are concerned about the natural environment, but at heart most people are most concerned about in their health and well being, and the health and well being of their children. So what we are making sure we are going to do is to give the best evidence not only of what they should be concerned about, but how best we can protect health now and in future generations and exactly what actions need to be taken both to adapt to climate change but also to reduce climate change in order to protect people's health and well being.

Many of our largest diseases are already affected by climatic hazards. One of the main threats that we see is that we already have these very large problems particularly in developing countries and its particularly the developing countries and the poorest populations in developing countries but also in many cases the poor populations in rich countries that are most vulnerable to the health effects of climate change. So we are most concerned for example about populations that have a high burden of diarrhoeal disease or have a high burden of malaria and climate change is going to have an additional stress on most of those populations and on the health services that are trying to protect those populations. So we see a very serious problem of inequality and basically inequity that the populations that are most vulnerable to the health impacts of climate change are those who contribute the least to the problem of climate change. So we believe its our role as WHO to speak up on behalf of those who are most vulnerable to these effect and to make clear that we have a shared global responsibility to those that are most vulnerable need the assistance from those populations that have most resources and in many cases that have contributed to the hazards that we are now facing.
