

Experts highlight health dimension of climate change at Copenhagen meeting

The health impact of climate change is a critical issue that policy-makers should be aware of while setting priorities for action and investment to mitigate the impact of global climate change. This is the key message that WHO experts delivered at the Climate Change Global Risks, Challenges and Decisions conference in Copenhagen 11–12 March.

Three key health arguments were identified to be put at the center of discussions at the forthcoming Conference of the Parties (COP-15) which will take place in Copenhagen later this year, and to ensure that in the new post-Kyoto agreement we will all share in the health and economic benefits that can accrue from countering climate change. The three key arguments include: climate change has adverse consequences for health; reducing green house gas emissions can be beneficial to health; the health impacts of climate change are felt unequally: effective response requires global action.

Commitment by partners at the Windhoek meeting

A meeting of partners on the implementation of Libreville Declaration on Health and Environment in Africa took place in Windhoek, Namibia from 25–27 February 2009. Partners reiterated their full commitment to the declaration and indicated unanimously that it was timely in addressing development issues as they related to health and environment. Participants considered and agreed on a proposed implementation roadmap. They endorsed and committed to their participation in the Health and Environment Strategic Alliance (HESA) through the “Windhoek statement of partners”. They requested countries to take the necessary measures to ensure a participatory approach in the implementation of the Libreville Declaration, and requested the WHO-UNEP Joint Task Team (JTT) to provide support functions to the HESA.

29th International Conference on Occupational Health (ICOH)

“As the global voice of health, WHO is in a position to mobilize the public health community and to strengthen health systems for action on workers’ health. In addition, we can put forward health arguments and advocate among economic sectors to protect and promote the health of workers.

ICOH, the global voice for the profession of occupational health is in a position to mobilize the profession to assist the ministries of health in the development of capacity in all countries to provide basic occupational health services and to meet their obligations under the Global Plan of Action on Workers Health.”

Excerpt by Dr Maria Neira, Director, WHO department of Public Health and Environment, at the ICOH opening session.

WHO consultation on harmonization of medical countermeasures against radiation emergencies

A panel of experts from China, France, Germany, Japan, Russia, the UK and the USA reviewed best practices and the evidence base for the acute radiation syndrome (ARS) and multiple organ dysfunction syndrome (MODS) management strategy. With recent developments in medicine, new methods are being applied for treatment modalities, including the use of cytokines and mesenchymal stem cells. There is still however a lack of evidence, as it is impossible to carry out controlled clinical trials in this field for obvious reasons. For the first time in the history of the subject, ethical principles of providing palliative care to the victims under scarce resources were addressed.

The meeting took place in Geneva, 16–18 March 2009.

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

Quote of the month

While climate change is, by its nature, a global phenomenon, its consequences will not be evenly distributed, Dr Chan said, noting that scientists agree that developing countries will be the first and hardest hit.

“Anything we can do now to reduce existing burdens of disease will increase national and international capacity to cope with the new stresses that come with climate change,” said Dr Chan.

She also noted that up to now, the polar bear has been the poster child for climate change. “We need to use every politically correct and scientifically sound trick in the book to convince the world that humanity really is the most important species endangered by climate change.”

Dr Margaret Chan, address at the 23rd Forum on Global Issues, Berlin, Germany

Source: [UN Newswire, 20 March 2009](#)

Upcoming events

[7th April, World Health Day
Health Facilities in Emergencies](#)

[28 April, World Day for Safety and
Health at Work](#)

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- Links to our Public Health and Environment Regional Offices

FACTS AND FIGURES



Almost 10% of the global disease burden could be prevented by improving water supply, sanitation, hygiene and management of water resources. Estimated number of deaths that could be prevented:

- 1.4 million child deaths from diarrhoea;
- 500 000 deaths from malaria;
- 860 000 child deaths from malnutrition;
- 280 000 deaths from drowning.

[Read more about safe water, better health](#)

[Water Safety Plan manual: Step-by-step risk management for water suppliers](#)

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. Since this time, governments and regulators, water suppliers and practitioners have increasingly embraced this approach, but they have also requested further guidance. This much-anticipated workbook answers this call by describing how to develop and implement a WSP in clear and practical terms. Stepwise advice is provided through 11 learning modules, each representing a key step in the WSP development and implementation process.

[Are you prepared? Triage, monitoring and treatment \(TMT\) handbook now available](#)

The main objective of the TMT Handbook project is to provide a practicable handbook for the effective and timely triage, monitoring and treatment of people exposed to radiation following a malevolent act. It is envisaged that the handbook will be used in European national emergency response plans. End users of the handbook are emergency response organizations with specific functions to plan, coordinate and execute the national, regional and/or local public health and medical response for actual, or potential events of malevolent use of radiation.

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

- [Indoor air pollution](#)
- [Outdoor air pollution](#)
- [Electromagnetic fields](#)
- [Quantifying environmental health impacts](#)
- [Ionizing radiation](#)
- [Occupational health](#)
- [Ultraviolet radiation](#)
- [3rd WHO International Conference on Children's Health and Environment](#)
- [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

Publications

[World Meteorological Day 2009 – Weather, climate and the air we breathe](#)

[Seoul Statement – Towards the promotion of environmentally sustainable transport \(EST\) for a low carbon society and green growth](#)

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