



NorWHO 2014

~

Resolution on Climate Change and Health

Approved by WHO Delegates at the final plenary session
Saturday, 16 August 2014

Preamble

The 2014 NorWHO World Health Assembly,

Recalling resolution WHA61.19 on Climate change and health, WHA51.29 on the protection of human health from risks related to climate change and stratospheric ozone depletion, Kyoto Protocol to the UNFCCC, and the Copenhagen summit on climate change;

Recognising the importance of sustainability for future health outcomes implemented by ensuring water security; managing air quality; conserving and managing natural resources and biodiversity; ensuring human and environmental bio safety;

Recognising that the effects of climate change generally have the biggest impact on low-income economies, can stand in the way of the economic and social development of these countries, as well as detrimentally affect the health status of populations;

Alarmed by the increasing spread of communicable diseases around the world;

Taking note that member states face unique and individual health and climate challenges;

Acknowledging that freedom from hunger is a fundamental human right and that food insecurity is one of the gravest affronts to human dignity, and that with climate change, food security is becoming increasingly compromised;

Deeply concerned that climate change can be a threat to the very existence of low-lying countries and taking into consideration that natural disasters such as flooding and cyclones have increased in frequency and severity (and will continue to increase), as a result of climate change;



Noting with deep concern that the current amount of aid directed towards adaptation to and mitigation of climate change related health risks is hugely inadequate;

Mindful of the significant debilitating effects of climate-induced disaster and migration on the mental health of such populations and recognizing that greenhouse gases are a fundamental threat to health;

Deeply concerned that in 2012 an estimated 7 million people died as a result of air pollution exposure;

Emphasizing that mitigation and adaptation action on climate change will create health co-benefits;

Noting with regret that, even though planning for adaptation is already being integrated in some countries, the implementation of such measures is varied between regions and countries;

Considering the need for sustainable investments to deal with environmentally damaging emissions;

Acknowledging that one size does not fit all, and national, regional, and local adaptation of the health care system is necessary to tackle climate change quickly and effectively;

Alarmed by the information gap regarding climate change between the scientific community, policymakers and the general public;

Fully believing that policies should be based on the best available evidence and deeply concerned with the current status of sustainable development practices;

Noting the WHO's estimates that climate change since the 1970's has caused 140,000 deaths annually;

Recognising the qualities of the healthy city approach, and believing in its interaction with the adaptation process on the health related climate change effects;

Recognising that current estimates indicate that malnutrition causes 3.5 million deaths, diarrhoea 2.2 million, malaria 900,000, extreme weather 60,000 and outdoor air pollution 3.7 million deaths per year and that these numbers are likely to increase due to climate change;

1. With regards to the health effects of climate change:
 - 1.1. *Calls upon* all WHO member states to strengthen health systems to prevent and treat communicable diseases directly linked to climate change such as vector-, water- and foodborne diseases, along with diseases, which are worsened by climate change (e.g. HIV/AIDS). This should be done through partnerships with local civil societies, government institutions and medical professionals;
 - 1.2. *Encourages* the implementation of improved surveillance and monitoring systems in particular for vector borne diseases, in a way that citizens know the danger zones and better disease management can be implemented;
 - 1.3. *Commits* the WHO to work with Member States to build capacity to adapt to, and reduce vulnerability to, climate change;



- 1.4. *Urges* Member States to strengthen health systems to prevent and treat non-communicable diseases linked to climate change, such as cardiovascular diseases, pulmonary diseases, cancer, diabetes and mental health conditions;
- 1.5. *Encourages* further international collaboration in regards to information and knowledge sharing and the exchange of technical knowledge between WHO members on mitigation of the adverse effects of climate change in relation to its impacts on health and in the pursuit of sustainable practices;
- 1.6. *Strongly recommends* the creation of a research alliance and encourage the sharing of good and best practices in this area, including the global exchange of experts about adaptation to new health challenges of climate change;
2. With regards to policies on education:
 - 2.1. *Urges* education through structured teaching sessions on the health hazards of climate change to be incorporated into medical and general curricula in member states;
 - 2.2. *Recommends* Member States to similarly initiate a program of public awareness of climate change and climate change-related health risks appealing to all members of society through innovative use of both public and social media;
 - 2.3. *Strongly urges* the global community to help capacity building in the local, rural communities of developing countries, in order to help them deal with the results of climate change using mobile phones as a possible tool to reach out to communities;
3. Regarding the supply of water and sanitation:
 - 3.1. *Further reminds* that safe water supply systems need to be implemented in order to decrease disease prevalence and outbreaks;
 - 3.2. *Affirms* the importance of desalination of seawater:
 - 3.2.1. As a highly promising solution for droughts, given the vast volumes of salt water in proximity to some of the most drought-affected regions representing an untapped resource for drinking and irrigation water;
 - 3.2.2. As a solution to saline intrusion into rivers and groundwater caused by rising sea levels;
 - 3.3. *Calls* for public and private investment in technologies for desalinated water and better collaboration between these sectors of business in the creation of these technologies;
 - 3.4. *Declares* the necessity of comprehensive public health monitoring, especially in rural communities, through innovative use of technologies to prevent the devastating effects of droughts and encourage the integration of data from multiple affected regions to allow informed decisions for better action prior to droughts that would yield greater system resilience;
 - 3.5. *Encourages* Member States to promote water recycling as a way of saving water and decreasing the misuse and waste of water supplies;
 - 3.6. *Encourages* governments and international donors to invest in sanitation to combat communicable diseases and guarantee high hygiene standards across member states;



4. Being mindful of Agriculture and fishing practices *urges* Member States:
 - 4.1. to empower and explore new methods of sustainable agriculture to secure food supply and support Member States in adapting agriculture methods to climate change;
 - 4.2. to encourage cross plant breeding as a method of adapting to climate change and conducting more research on the health impacts of genetically modified food;
 - 4.3. to incentivise local farmers who use sustainable agriculture through tax relief and providing more opportunities for them in local and regional markets;
 - 4.4. to establish a more systematic and integrated surveillance of the global marine environment in order to secure a sustainable fishing industry;
 - 4.5. to adopt strategies to deal with weather variations that includes crop diversification and storage of rainwater for additional irrigation;
 - 4.6. to improve crops' resilience to climate change related risks, in order to decrease crop failure;
5. With consideration to natural disasters and extreme weather events:
 - 5.1. *Calls* for a more proactive and collaborative approach between health system providers in countries alongside emergency services and disaster risk reduction policy makers in tackling natural disasters due to the multifaceted nature of these disasters and extreme weather events;
 - 5.2. *Urges* Member States for immediate technological and financial support to in implementing initiatives to build their resilience to flooding, cyclones, droughts and rising sea levels which can include (not exclusively):
 - 5.2.1. Enhancing Early Warning Systems in case of extreme weather events;
 - 5.2.2. Proactively building shelters to secure individuals' protection in cases of extreme weather events;
 - 5.2.3. Upgrading of flooding protection and coastal embankments;
 - 5.2.4. Building of dams and reservoirs in places where the environmental impact is low but natural disaster resilience can be maximised;
 - 5.2.5. Securing possibility of getting emergency aid to regions subject to emergencies, including raising some roads and tracks;
 - 5.2.6. Improving transportation routes between local areas to help facilitate evacuations;
 - 5.3. *Recommends* increased research aiming to predict natural disasters, in order to prepare communities for emergency situations;
 - 5.4. *Calls* for an assessment of the efficiency of cooperation between both private and public actors when providing aid in emergency situations;



6. Reminded of the increasing incidences of climate induced migration:
 - 6.1. *Draws the attention* to the need for international collaboration on dealing with the issue of climate induced migration movements within and between affected countries and regions;
 - 6.2. *Recommends* that the WHO and other organisations concerned with mental health develop specific responses to the increased incidences of mental health problems that relate to climate induced migration;
7. With regards to policies working towards a future of sustainable development:
 - 7.1. *Calls* upon the member states to meet targets already agreed in other forums such as the UNFCCC regarding renewable energy sources;
 - 7.2. *Urges* Member States to encourage the use of renewable energies by lowering barriers to the green market while encouraging industry and academia to partner with the aim to gradually replace the use of fossil fuels with green technology;
 - 7.3. *Calls* upon the global community to provide knowledge, technology and sufficient incentives for developing countries to pursue climate-friendly means of energy production;
 - 7.4. *Urges* member States to collaborate with private and public institutions who have an interest in sustainable development in advocating policy change related to sustainable development;
 - 7.5. *Further recommends* Member States to strengthen their public transport systems and cycling infrastructures;
 - 7.6. *Encourages* Member States to provide urban planning that ensures a clean, safe physical environment of high quality (including housing quality);
8. Remembering the importance of safe and efficient health systems:
 - 8.1. *Urges* Member States to strengthen their health systems throughout and invest in resilient societies, by means of education, and increased knowledge sharing;
 - 8.2. *Urges* mitigation of greenhouse gas emissions in the health sector by Member States;
 - 8.3. *Calls* for a transition to more sustainable hospital systems within Member States through actions that include:
 - 8.3.1. The measuring and monitoring of health systems' climate footprints through CO2 emissions;
 - 8.3.2. Identify potential co-benefits of climate mitigation efforts;
 - 8.3.3. Create an infrastructure for action by developing priorities and preparing guidelines for politicians and policymakers;
 - 8.3.4. Support the use of local and regional material and products both in the construction of health facilities and the delivery of healthcare to patients to reduce transportation and energy costs;



- 8.3.5. Install onsite renewable energy sources at hospitals and healthcare institutions;
- 8.3.6. Mandate sustainable elements in the construction of hospitals and healthcare facilities;
- 8.3.7. Adopt waste reduction, composting and recycling practices at health care facilities;
- 8.3.8. Invest in solar panels and wind turbines in urban environments;
- 8.3.9. Reduce the consumption of meat in the health sector;
- 8.3.10. Transportation both from health facilities to rural communities but also from rural communities in general to sources of clean water and food;
- 9. Mindful of the usefulness of research and development in the creation of future sustainable systems:
 - 9.1. *Encourages* the formation of robust and effective national and international, multidisciplinary teams of climate change experts to develop research based solutions to the health effects of climate change, comprising of members from various government ministries, departments and agencies, research institutions, academia, and selected NGOs.

Fourth plenary meeting, 16 August 2014

= = =