

PRESS RELEASE

COP19: The road towards addressing the greatest global health threat

Warsaw 15/11/2013 – Health and medical organizations from around the world are convening in Warsaw this week to emphasize the urgent need to prioritize the protection and promotion of health within global and national policy responses to climate change.

The *Global Climate and Health Summit 2013* will take place on 16 November 2013, during the UNFCCC's COP19 meetings in Poland, and is organized by the Global Climate & Health Alliance (GCHA) together with the World Medical Association and with support from the World Health Organization.

The Summit will highlight the dangerous impacts of climate change on human wellbeing, the health benefits of mitigation and current efforts to make the health system more sustainable. It will build a road-map for the international health community to work towards in the run-up to the 2015 climate negotiations in Paris.

Research shows that climate change already contributes to over 400,000 deaths every yearⁱ. If there is a continued lack of political will, these figures are expected to increase dramatically as the impacts of climate change worsen:

- Populations at risk of infectious diseases such as malaria may grow to 170 million in Africa by 2030ⁱⁱ whilst those at risk of dengue fever may increase to over 2 billion globally by 2080ⁱⁱⁱ.
- Climate change will worsen the impact of urban air pollution which is already directly responsible for over 1.2 million deaths each year^{iv}.
- The impact of coal plant emissions in Europe alone contributes to 18,000 premature deaths and four million lost working days – with all health costs combined totaling nearly 43 billion Euros every year^v.
- By 2080, over 100 million more people each year risk being exposed to coastal flooding by predicted sea level rises^{vi}.

Human health is profoundly threatened by our global failure to halt emissions growth and curb climate change. GCHA argues that strategies to achieve rapid and sustained emissions reductions and to protect health must be implemented in a specified time frame to avert further loss and damage.

In addition to calling on governments to commit to a binding treaty at the 2015 COP in Paris, GCHA is also encouraging the international community to ensure the resulting political, legislative and financial frameworks reflect the full impacts of climate change on health and ensure public health is protected by governments around the world.

The GCHA Summit will take place on 16th November, 2013 in Warsaw, Poland. To attend, please register at www.climateandhealthalliance.org/summit. For more information about GCHA, please contact Nick.Watts@climateandhealthalliance.org

or call +44 7568356513. You may find additional resources on climate change and health [here](#).

Notes to editors:

Made up of health organizations from across the globe and united by a shared vision for a sustainable future, the GCHA was formed in Durban in 2011 to tackle climate change and to protect and promote public health.

Through providing leadership, advocacy, policy and research, the Alliance aims to ensure health impacts are integrated into global, national and local responses to climate change and to encourage the health sector's mitigation and adaptation efforts.

Quotes:

"Representatives of the health community are gathering in Warsaw to demand that governments unblock this political gridlock in order to agree a comprehensive deal on climate change at COP21 and safeguard the health of present and future populations."
Nick Watts - Convenor, Global Climate and Health Alliance

"The GCHA can help reframe the climate debate from a 'cost to industry' to a 'benefit for health'. The Alliance calls for more attention to be given to the massive improvements for public health that can be reaped from cleaner air associated with reduced greenhouse gas emissions. More investment is needed to involve medical and health experts in drawing on the research that exists which quantifies the benefits for lung and heart health of reducing emissions overall and of phasing out coal in electricity generation in particular."
Genon Jensen - Executive Director, Health and Environment Alliance (Europe)

"People around the world are already being adversely impacted by climate change, and these impacts will worsen due to climate influenced extreme weather and the spread of disease. The international community needs to also recognise these effects undermine the social and economic foundations of human society. We urge the world's governments to work together on the transformation of the global carbon intensive economy to one which supports, not undermines, health and well-being."
Dr. Liz Hanna - President, Climate and Health Alliance (Australia)

"Health professionals have a clear responsibility to address climate change challenges, given its alarming impact on health. In terms of advocacy, leadership, education and capacity building, we have one message: what is good for the environment is also good for health. For a sustainable world for all, we therefore strongly believe that the health component must urgently be mainstreamed into bold environmental policies on climate change."
Prof. Vivienne Nathanson – Co-Chair of the Environment Caucus, World Medical Association

"As unmitigated climate change will lead to a significant increase in illness and death, the protection of human health needs to be taken seriously. By integrating health into national and global policies, health systems will be strengthened and better equipped to provide safe, adaptable, and sustainable communities"
Grazia Cioci - Policy Director, Health Care Without Harm Europe

GCHA experts in Warsaw:

World Medical Association

Vivienne Nathanson - Co-Chair of the Environment Caucus - vnathanson@bma.org.uk

Health and Environment Alliance

Genon Jensen – Executive Director - genon@env-health.org

Łukasz Adamkiewicz – Coal and Health Adviser – lukasz@env-health.org, +48 792 468 018

Climate & Health Alliance

Dr. Liz Hanna – President - Liz.Hanna@anu.edu.au

Climate and Health Council

Dr. Robin Stott – Co-Chair – stott@climateandhealth.org

Health Care Without Harm Europe

Grazia Cioci – Policy Director – grazia.cioci@hcwh.org

ⁱ [DARA Climate Vulnerability Monitor](#)

ⁱⁱ Hay SI et al. [Foresight on population at malaria risk in Africa: 2005, 2015, and 2030](#). London, Office of Science and Innovation, Foresight Project, 2006:40

ⁱⁱⁱ Hales Sea. [Potential effect of population and climate changes on global distribution of dengue fever: an empirical model](#). The Lancet. 2002;360:830-834.

^{iv} World Health Organization. [Global health risks: mortality and burden of disease attributable to selected major risks](#). Geneva; 2009.

^v Health and Environment Alliance. [The Unpaid Health Bill: How coal power plants make us sick](#). 2013.

^{vi} Parry ML, Canziani OF, Palutikof JP, van der Linden PJ, Hanson CE, editors. [Contribution of Working Group II to the Fourth Assessment Report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change](#). Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press; 2007.