

# A Prescription for a Healthy Planet

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The World Health Organisation predicts that climate change will lead to a series of significant health impacts, including: higher levels of some air pollutants and concomitant increased respiratory disease; the spread of infectious diseases; the compromising of agricultural production and food security in some of the least developed countries leading to greater malnutrition; an increase in extreme weather events.

Overall, the health impacts of climate change will be disproportionately felt by the most vulnerable populations - the poor, the very young, the elderly and the medically infirm.

Yet health is largely missing in climate change discussions.

**The health sector on the front line.** Healthcare providers and public health practitioners will be on the front lines, confronting and adapting to this changing landscape and shifting burden of disease. Such adaptation will come at a cost: the more severe the health-related symptoms of climate change, the greater the outlay of financial and human resources that will be required to treat them.

The health sector itself also makes a significant contribution to the problem of climate change. Health care is a major consumer of energy, water, computers, chemicals, pharmaceuticals, food and other resources. This consumption leaves a significant climate footprint.

**The solution.** The Health and Environment Alliance (HEAL) and Health Care Without Harm (HCWH) have launched the Prescription for a Healthy Planet.

The Prescription for a Healthy Planet adds the health sector's voice to the climate debate. It sets out policies for decision-makers to help secure climate commitments that protect health. By endorsing the Prescription, the health sector will make itself heard in the climate negotiations and help ensure health is central to the climate agenda.

The Prescription is part of an effort to bring the health community into the negotiations leading up to Copenhagen and help build a Global Network for Climate Friendly Healthcare beyond Copenhagen.

## What can MEPs do? Bring health to climate change negotiations

1. Support a strict emission reduction target of - 40% domestic CO<sub>2</sub> emissions reductions compared to 1990 levels, by 2020. A strict CO<sub>2</sub> emission reduction target, would result in greater public health protection from air pollution and other effects of climate change, less ill health, and healthcare savings.
2. Urge EU leaders to agree on an EU climate finance contribution of at least €35 billion per year to fund global adaptation and mitigation by 2020. This should be in addition to overseas development assistance and other existing finance mechanisms to developing countries
3. Support policies that promote a shift towards renewable energy and foster energy savings and energy efficiency of buildings, including in healthcare buildings. These policies should be accompanied by incentives to make their implementation a reality. They should be in line with the EU's climate and energy objectives.

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The Prescription for a Healthy Planet is a joint initiative of Health Care Without Harm and the Health and Environment Alliance

