



Brussels, 14 April 2010

**To:** Members of the European Parliament

**Concerning:** Plenary vote on the European Parliament Report on the European Commission White Paper: “Adapting to climate change: Towards a European framework for action’ (COM (2009)0147 - 2009/2152 (INI)).”

**Plenary vote on 21 April 2010**

**Strengthen health protection and include health co-benefits in adaptation policy**

Dear Member of the European Parliament,

We, the undersigned leading European health and medical organisations are writing about the forthcoming Plenary Vote on the European Parliament Report (**A7-0057/2010**) on the Commission White Paper: “Adapting to climate change: Towards a European framework for action (COM (2009)0147 - 2009/2152 (INI)”. We welcome that the Parliament’s Report contains its own chapter on ‘Health and social policies’, and contains recitals and articles that seek to take into consideration the range of climate-related health impacts, promote protection of public health, take into account health co-benefits, and recognise the important role of the health sector in adaptation.

We urge you to vote in favour of those recitals and articles (Annex I) in the Report (A7-0057/2010) that would strengthen health protection and include health co-benefits in adaptation policy.

**Please vote in favour of recitals D and H; and articles 47, 48, 50, 110.**

As you are aware, climate change will affect people, their economies and ecosystem in disproportionate ways. For example, those already ill, the poor and disadvantaged

populations, children and the elderly would be most at risk. The health sector will need to be at the forefront responding to the effects of climate change, and developing adaptation measures which do not add further to the climate problem. Increased awareness and resources are needed to ensure this happens and provide support for the sector's efforts in reducing its climate footprint as recently highlighted in the WHO/HCWH discussion paper: 'Healthy Hospitals, Healthy Planet, Healthy People: Addressing climate change in healthcare settings'<sup>1</sup>.

We are pleased to see that Parliament's Report (A7-0057/2010) acknowledges the need to halt global warming at 2°C, and that current pledges do not go far enough in order to prevent even more drastic health impacts from climate change, such as increased deaths from respiratory and vector borne disease, for example. Science suggests that a reduction in greenhouse gases by at least 40% below 1990 levels by 2020 is the *minimum* required to keep global warming well below the dangerous 2°C level. Action at this level would significantly improve people's health, reduce Member States' rising healthcare costs, and protect our fragile ecosystems.

Finally, we would ask you to support article 48 on ensuring that adaptation measures that are promoted are also those that provide "health co-benefits". The benefits to health of tackling climate change can offset much of the costs of global action, as is outlined in the IPCC's 4<sup>th</sup> Assessment report, chapter 8 on human health<sup>2</sup>. European studies have also clearly shown that stronger greenhouse gas emission reduction targets can protect health. For example, research commissioned by HEAL, CAN and WWF in 2008 has shown that a 30% target would result in estimated health benefits measured in monetary terms of up to 76 billion Euros per year from 2020 onwards.<sup>3</sup>

We look forward to working with you to ensure that health becomes a cornerstone of international and EU climate change mitigation and adaptation policy.

Sincerely,



Genon K. Jensen,  
Health and Environment Alliance (HEAL)

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<sup>1</sup> World Health Organization and Health Care Without Harm, April 2009. Healthy Hospitals, Healthy Planet, Healthy People: Addressing climate change in health care settings. Available at: [http://www.who.int/globalchange/publications/healthcare\\_settings/en/index.html](http://www.who.int/globalchange/publications/healthcare_settings/en/index.html).

<sup>2</sup> IPCC Fourth Assessment Report – Chapter 8 – Human Health; <http://www.ipcc.ch/pdf/assessment-report/ar4/wg2/ar4-wg2-chapter8.pdf>

<sup>3</sup>The co-benefits to health of a strong EU climate change policy, 2008, CAN Europe, Health and Environment Alliance, WWF [http://www.env-health.org/IMG/pdf/Co-benefits\\_to\\_health\\_report\\_-september\\_2008.pdf](http://www.env-health.org/IMG/pdf/Co-benefits_to_health_report_-september_2008.pdf)  
See also: recent study on health co-benefits: Lancet Series report on Health and Climate Change, 25 November 2009 <http://www.thelancet.com/series/health-and-climate-change>

**On behalf of:**

Health Care Without Harm Europe (HCWH Europe)

European Respiratory Society (ERS)

Climate and Health Council (CHC)

International Society of Doctors for the Environment (ISDE)

AerztInnen fuer eine gesunde Umwelt, AeGU (ISDE) Austria

The Standing Committee of European Doctors (CPME)

Association for Environmental Health(EGYESÜLET A KÖRNYEZET-SZSÉGÜGYÉRT – E.K.E.)

Partners voor Gezond Leefmilieu (PGL)

Platform Gezondheid en Milieu (PGM)

Bewonersgroep Waterland

Fédération Inter-Environnement Wallonie

Communities Against Toxics

Action for Breast Cancer Foundation

## Annex I

**Please support the following in the Plenary Vote on 21 April 2010**

### **Recitals D and H:**

- D. whereas the target of halting global warming at +2°C would still mean a warming scenario for Europe, marked by extreme regional climate changes, and whereas the current pledges notified to the UNFCCC would add up to warming of +3.5-4°C if implemented,
- H. whereas, according to the European Respiratory Society, for every Celsius degree increase in temperature over a given city-specific threshold, mortality amongst those with respiratory problems increases by 6%,

### **Articles 47, 48, 50 and 110:**

- 47. Welcomes the proposals of the Commission to develop guidelines and surveillance mechanisms on the health impact of climate change by 2011; underlines the increasing risk of propagation of vector-borne diseases, the serious impacts on respiratory health and the need to educate European citizens about effective preventive measures recommended by the European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control;
- 48. Notes that the health impacts of climate change are likely to impact the hardest on the most deprived communities, the poorest populations and the most vulnerable groups, such as children, the elderly and those who are already ill; regards it as essential for adaptation measures to be considered in the context of health inequalities, and for such measures to encourage action that promotes health co-benefits;
- 50. Recognises the role the health sector plays in adaptation; calls on the EU to support action to reduce the sector's carbon footprint, and to ensure adequate financing for adaptation measures in the health sector;
- 110. Supports the proposal of the Commission to set up an impact and adaptation steering group; stresses that it is important for this group to involve regional and local actors in addition to state representatives; asks the Commission to ensure that this group includes representatives of Parliament as observers, as well as private stakeholders in an expert capacity; calls on the Commission to ensure that the steering group pays particular attention to the most severe health impacts of climate change, such as increases in weather-related deaths and vector-borne disease;