



COMITÉ PERMANENT DES MÉDECINS EUROPÉENS
STANDING COMMITTEE OF EUROPEAN DOCTORS



Brussels, 23 November 2009

To: Members of the European Parliament

Concerning: Plenary vote on the “Motion for a Resolution on the EU strategy for the Copenhagen Conference on Climate Change (COP 15)”, 25 November

Bring health to the centre of climate change towards Copenhagen and beyond:

What’s good for climate is good for health

Dear Member of the European Parliament,

While we welcome the European Parliament’s resolution on climate change and its call for binding reduction emission targets, we would like to highlight one striking omission; a reference to tremendous impact climate change has on people’s health, and how actions to reduce emissions will have large, immediate benefits to people’s health in Europe.

The urgent call to include health more centrally in climate negotiations is being voiced not only by the World Health Organisation, but also also by our new campaign, The Prescription for a Healthy Planet, signed by over 70 organisations globally, represents millions of health professionals in more than 120 countries following endorsements from groups such as World Federation of Public Health Associations, International Council of Nurses, and Standing Committee of European Doctors.

During the international climate talks in Barcelona earlier this month, the UNFCCC negotiating draft also now explicitly recognises the need to include health protection, and amendments were considered to highlight the health benefits of strict emission targets.¹

As Parliamentarians, you also can ensure that your Resolution does not lag behind what is currently being discussed at UN level on health. On Wednesday, November 25, you will have an opportunity to support the “health” amendments tabled by Greens/EFA and ALDE that will help bring health back into the climate discussions in your plenary vote on the **Resolution on the EU Strategy for the Copenhagen Conference on Climate Change**.

We, the undersigned leading health organizations, together with some of the world’s largest medical, nursing and health organizations are calling on world leaders and you as EU decision-makers to take bold action to address climate change. This is crucial to avoid what could become a global public health crisis. The World Health Organization (WHO) estimates that climate change is already contributing to 150,000

¹ See HEAL/HCW/Climateand Health Council Letter on Barcelona negotiations: http://www.env-health.org/IMG/pdf/HCW/HEAL_CHC_Recomendations_to_UNFCCC_negotiators_for_Barcelona.pdf

deaths per year.² Recent science³ from European respiratory doctors has shown that for every one degree Celsius increase in temperature over a city-specific heat threshold, the death rate among respiratory patients increases six-fold⁴. As climate change advances, a "multiplier effect" will be seen on these and other conditions. Those already the most vulnerable will suffer earliest and most.

Please support amendments tabled by Greens/EFA and ALDE (see below) which bring health into climate change discussions and policy outcomes.

The latest 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. This would significantly improve people's health, reduce Member States' rising healthcare costs and protect our fragile ecosystems. Moreover, the co-benefits of tackling climate change will offset much of the costs according to the IPCC 4th Assessment report⁵.

Our four, clear recommendations for the Copenhagen treaty are set out in the "Prescription for a Healthy Planet"⁶(see attachment). They are: the protection of public health, strong targets on emission reductions, the promotion of clean energy, and a mandate for major funding for developing countries to address the climate crisis.

The "Prescription" is signed and supported by major health organizations and networks, including the International Council of Nurses (a global federation of national nursing organizations representing nurses in 128 countries), the International Society of Doctors for the Environment, the Standing Committee of European Doctors (CPME), which represents 27 medical associations in Europe, the European Respiratory Society (ERS), Climate and Health Council (CHC), Health Care Without Harm (HCWH), Health and Environment Alliance (HEAL) and many more. In the United States a parallel initiative from healthcare leaders representing hundreds of hospitals and nearly three million health professionals is calling on President Obama to support the points made in the "Prescription".

We strongly encourage you to vote in favour of the proposed amendments tabled by Greens/EFA and ALDE which would help strengthen the health aspect in your "Resolution" by ensuring better protection of public health from climate change.

Sincerely,



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

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)
ÄrztInnen für eine gesunde Umwelt, AeGU (ISDE Austria)
The Standing Committee of European Doctors (CPME)
European Public Health Alliance (EPHA).

² <http://www.who.int/heli/risks/climate/climatechange/en/index.html>

³ ERS Position Statement, Climate change and respiratory disease: European Respiratory Society position statement, J G Ayres et al, European Respiratory Journal 2009; 34: 295-302. <http://erj.ersjournals.com/cgi/content/full/34/2/295> (HTML), <http://erj.ersjournals.com/cgi/reprint/34/2/295> (PDF)

⁴ The European Respiratory Journal (ERJ), 'Climate Change and Respiratory Disease: European Respiratory Society position statement'; available at: <http://erj.ersjournals.com/cgi/content/full/34/2/295>.

⁵ IPCC Fourth Assessment Report – Chapter 8 – Human Health; <http://www.ipcc.ch/pdf/assessment-report/ar4/wg2/ar4-wg2-chapter8.pdf>

⁶ www.climateandhealthcare.org

Annex I

Please support the following amendments in the Plenary Vote on 25 November 2009

Amendment tabled by Greens/EFA Recital Ga new

Motion for a resolution

Amendment

Ga. Whereas a binding international framework leading to emission reductions on the necessary scale will also have large immediate co-benefits to global health, and that without such a framework progress towards meeting the Millennium Development Goals is at risk, and could be reversed;

Amendment tabled by ALDE Article 12

Motion for a Resolution

Amendment

12. Emphasises that an agreement in Copenhagen could provide the necessary stimulus for a 'Sustainable New Deal' boosting sustainable social and economic growth, promoting environmentally sustainable technologies, renewable energy and energy efficiency, reducing energy consumption and securing new jobs and social cohesion in both developed and developing countries; recalls the Stern Review on the Economics of Climate Change which demonstrates clear economic incentives for the international community to act as soon as possible to tackle climate change; recognises that upfront investments by the public sector in a sustainable energy infrastructure and in complementary research and development will reduce the social costs of climate change;

12. Emphasises that an agreement in Copenhagen could provide the necessary stimulus for a 'Sustainable New Deal' boosting sustainable social and economic growth, promoting environmentally sustainable technologies, renewable energy and energy efficiency, reducing energy consumption and securing new jobs and social cohesion in both developed and developing countries; **notes also that due consideration needs to be given to the public health aspects of climate change;** recalls the Stern Review on the Economics of Climate Change which demonstrates clear economic incentives for the international community to act as soon as possible to tackle climate change; recognises that upfront investments by the public sector in a sustainable energy infrastructure and in complementary research and development will reduce the social costs of climate change;