



Sixth Ministerial Conference on Environment and Health in Ostrava, 13-15 June 2017

HEAL interventions and speeches during WHO ministerial conference plenary sessions

Session 2: Status of and perspective on environment and health in Europe

Isabel Proano, European Federation of Allergy & Airways Diseases Patients' Association (EFA) and HEAL Executive Committee

HEAL and its 75 members welcome this process, as well as the effort to think health when shaping environmental policies. But we are here in a delegation of 12 representatives because a declaration is not enough. It is imperative for European countries and the European Union to take urgent action. Now. There are two specific issues addressed in this session that we note with concern:

1st is coal-power generation, because

- *this declaration places indoor and outdoor air quality as the unneglectable first priority area of action for Europe's health and environment, (and thats a strong message) but*
- *There are no specific action points on transition from fossil to renewable energy*
- *It is paramount that each state signing this declaration adopts specific plans to phase out coal power plants*
- *Coal power plants are polluting our environment and leading vulnerable groups towards great respiratory health problems like asthma. There is no choice but to stop them coal power plants. Not only we will save lives and protect the climate but we will also save money.*

2nd point focuses on inequalities

- *Inequalities strike all over Europe but vulnerable groups more exposed to environmental hazards, and have less access to healthcare. On top of that, their exposure to unhealthy substances is often poorly monitored (or not at all).*
- *The thing is inequalities can only be reduced by empowering citizens.*
- *So when planning at national level there should be dedicated investment into health and environment literacy.*
- *And this should also include comprehensive and comparable data to ensure your policies are effective across all target groups, to really tackle inequalities*

Session 3: Finishing the unfinished business: sound environmental policies as the most effective public health tool for a sustainable future in Europe

Valerie Xhonneux, Inter-Environment Wallonie and HEAL Executive Committee

We're disappointed that one of today's biggest threats to children's lives, Endocrine disruptors chemicals, appear only in the annex of the declaration as a topic for which we need common research guidelines. This declaration should include specific actions to protect and minimize EDC exposure, before and after birth.

Adopt strong, health protecting identification criteria for EDCs is one priority step. A huge opportunity is in front of us to tackle unfinished business. Half of the countries in this room representing the European Union could be leading the way in adopting strong criteria on EDCs for pesticides and biocides next month, not only to lead just the European region, but the entire world.

An economic and peer-reviewed [analysis](#) by leading global experts found exposure to EDCs and health impacts likely costs the EU 157 billion a year (revised to €163 billion/yr (1.2% GDP).

Making sure that those criteria allow a quick ban of EDC from products used in children's environment is a second priority step.

We want also to stress out the need to reinforce in the declaration actions to end children's exposure to air pollutants and noise. Those pollutants have unacceptable long terms effects on children's health, undermine their abilities to learn, and amplify social inequalities.

Session 5: Maximizing the benefits for people of international and national environment and health policies

Génon K. Jensen, Executive Director, Health and Environment Alliance (HEAL)

With its member organisations, partners and strong global, national, local grass roots connections, grounded in scientific networks and partners, HEAL Executive Director shared 2 examples of how our civil society network have contributed to building up this two way channel and increase participation in environmental policy making.

Ms. Jensen highlighted HEAL's collaboration work with citizens and civil society through the EDC-Free Europe coalition with over 70 campaign partners across Europe and HEAL's landmark report the Unpaid Health Bill – How coal power plants are making us sick. This enables HEAL to share: increasing evidence on health impacts related to EDCs and coal power generation, the growing mobilisation from the health community and opportunities for prevention and public health gain through public participation. For transitioning out of coal, this has contributed to a commitment to phase out coal in the UK by 2020 and halting the construction of 3 new coal power plants in Poland for example

She encouraged national governments to increase protection for vulnerable groups, particularly current and future children by extending their stakeholder engagement to national chapters of the International Federation of Gynecology and Obstetrics (FIGO). The FIGO statement on addressing the risks to babies and mothers associated with everyday exposure to toxic chemicals recommends that health professions advocate for policies to reduce exposure and champion environmental health justice.

Session 7: Exploiting less and producing more: economy of environment, health and well-being

Marie Christine Dewolf, Hygiene Publique in Hainaut, Belgium and HEAL Vice-President

It's important that we do not overlook the multiple and hidden exposures of populations via products, packaging, furniture's, food, etc...

We are exposed to multiple sources of chemicals on a daily basis over a lifetime from pre-conception. In varying degrees, these chemicals have been found to have various health effects, including to the next or even the few next generations.

So I would like to stress the importance

- *To seriously consider a toxic free environment, so that we don't reinter previously banned chemicals in the circular economy;*
- *To be fully accountable for any product, equipment, etc... we allow on the market from cradle to grave or from cradle to cradle in order not to impact new generations but also other populations on the planet by letting e-wastes (for example) being shipped away and handled inappropriately.*

Another opportunity for improvement could be also to extend the life cycle of products and equipments by tacking the programmed obsolescence concept.

May I also emphasize on the importance that we do not use the resources of the planet beyond its capacity and that we use the resources in an equitable way across the globe.