

April 2010

ACTION ALERT

**COUNTRY-LEVEL SUPPORT FOR THE INCLUSION OF HEALTH IN
GOVERNMENTAL CLIMATE CHANGE TALKS**

Copenhagen agreement & after:

Despite a strong mobilisation of civil society, the final Copenhagen agreement does not include reference to health. Furthermore, the Copenhagen agreement does not optimise increasingly well-evidenced public health benefits of climate change mitigation activities.

Further to the Copenhagen agreement, negotiations are continuing between State Parties with the aim of achieving at the UN Climate Change Conference in Cancun a “functioning architecture for implementation that launches global climate change action, across the board, especially in developing nations” according to UNFCCC Executive Secretary Yvo de Boer.

Main discussion items:

1. Mitigation targets and action;
2. Package on adaptation;
3. Financial arrangements in particular to support developing countries;
4. Protection of tropical forests (ways to deal with deforestation)

Calendar of UN global meetings:

- 9-11 April 2010: The **1st round of UN climate change talks** since Copenhagen took place in Bonn mid of April. It was agreed to intensify the negotiating schedule in order to achieve a strong outcome in Mexico at the end of the year. 2 additional sessions will take place between June and November 2010.
- 31.05-11.06: The **32nd session of the UNFCCC Convention subsidiary bodies** will take place from the 31st of May to the 11th of June 2010 in Bonn, Germany.
- 29.11-10.12: **UN Climate Change Conference, Mexico**

Action alert:

It is critical that WMA's members act at the country-level *now*, alerting their governments on the **well-evidenced impact of climate change on health and on the public health benefits of climate change mitigation activities**. Based on the skills, experience and knowledge of their members, medical associations can have a powerful voice in making health an inherent component of governmental talks in Bonn and Cancun.

Please act NOW:

- Write a letter to your Minister of environment with copy to the health Minister (model letter with main items to raise attached);
- Ask for a meeting with the Minister and members of the delegation that is participating in the UN governmental talks;
- Raise the points included in the model letter with adjustments according to the situation in your country.

Thank you for keeping me informed of your actions.
Kind regards

Clarisse Delorme

Attached to the action alert:

- Model letter
- Factsheet
- Highlights of WMA Delhi Declaration

THE WORLD MEDICAL ASSOCIATION, INC.

L'ASSOCIATION MEDICALE MONDIALE, INC
ASOCIACION MEDICA MUNDIAL, INC



Model Letter

To the attention of the Minister of Environment

Dear Minister,

Re.: Health at the core of UN climate change talks

I am writing to you on behalf of the (name of your organization + short description).

The (name of your organization) is member of the World Medical Association (WMA), the global federation of National Medical Associations representing the millions of physicians worldwide.

At its annual General Assembly in New Delhi in October 2009, the WMA approved a Declaration expressing its profound concerns on the risks of increased malnutrition, death, disease and injury, particularly among the most vulnerable populations, due climate change effects.

The Declaration includes a package of proposals to the attention of the delegations to the UN Climate change negotiations, with the aim of bringing health to the forefront of the global warming debate and mitigating the serious health risks facing the world.

The impact of climate change on health will be disastrous for patients and populations unless an effective agreement on climate change is reached *now*. It is critical that this agreement addresses health-related issues in a comprehensive way and that health actors, including physicians, are fully involved in the process.

On behalf of the (name of the organization) and the World Medical Association, I therefore urge to make the utmost in the context of the coming climate change negotiations:

- **To ensure that the public health impacts are given central consideration in climate change discussions** (instead of its current marginalized position) - as advocated by the World Health Organization (WHO)
- **To commit to at least 30% domestic greenhouse gas emissions reductions by 2020, based on the evidence based knowledge that climate change mitigation efforts result in public health benefits and cost savings.**

I would also like to bring your attention to the opportunity to include a representative of (name of your organization) in your delegation to the coming climate change meetings, in order to assist your team in the negotiations.

You will find enclosed the WMA Delhi Declaration on Health and Climate change, as well as an executive summary highlighting its main proposals directed to the UN negotiators.

I would welcome the chance to meet with you, or a member of your team, to discuss this matter further with you.

With kind regards

Name and title

Cc: Minister of health

FACTSHEET ON THE IMPACT OF CLIMATE CHANGE ON HEALTH

“Even the minimum predicted shifts in climate for the 21st century are likely to be significant and disruptive”¹ UN International Panel on Climate Change (IPCC)

According to the IPCC, climate change currently contributes to the global burden of disease and premature deaths. At this early stage the effects are small but are projected to progressively increase in all countries and regions.

Emerging evidence of climate change effects on human health shows that climate change has (confidence levels in brackets):

- Altered the distribution of some infectious disease vectors (*medium*);
- Altered the seasonal distribution of some allergenic pollen species (*high*);
- Increased heat wave related deaths (*medium*).

The IPCC authors' project climate change related human health impacts as follows (confidence levels in brackets):

- Increased malnutrition and consequent disorders, including those relating to child growth and development (*high*).
- Increased numbers of people suffering from death, disease and injury from heat waves, floods, storms, fires and droughts (*high*).
- Continued change in the range of some infectious disease vectors (*high*).
- Mixed effects on malaria; in some places the geographical range will contract, elsewhere the geographical range will expand and the transmission season may be changed (*very high*).
- Increased burden of diarrheal diseases (*medium*).
- Increased cardio-respiratory morbidity and mortality associated with ground-level ozone (*high*).
- Increased numbers of people at risk of dengue (*low*).
- Social and health inequalities due to possible desertification, natural disasters, changes in agriculture, feeding and water policy that will have consequences on both human health and human resources in health.

The authors note that climate change could bring some benefits to health, including fewer deaths from cold, although these will be outweighed by the negative effects of rising temperatures worldwide, especially in developing countries (*high confidence*).

Early research suggests that mitigation of the effects of climate change may have a link with prevention such that mitigation might have significant health benefits for both individuals and populations.

¹ United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change. <http://unfccc.int/2860.php> downloaded 1 September 2008