



SAVE THE DATE

Protecting Public Health from Climate Related Threats

Special Side Event on the occasion of the *High-level Political Forum (HLPF) 2021*

7 July 2021, 1:00 – 2:30 p.m. (EST)

Co-sponsored by

***Bangladesh, Chile, France, Kenya, Morocco, Qatar, Tajikistan,
UNEP, and United Nations Foundation (UNF)***

This special side event will provide an opportunity to discuss the intersection of two SDGs: climate change and public health. Using a One Health lens to examine the linkages between planetary health, animal health, and human health, the discussion will explore preventive approaches to pandemics driven by the consequences of climate change. Various preparedness measures will be considered, including necessary investments, social and physical infrastructure, and types of international cooperation needed to fight climate change and mitigate its impact on global health and create resilience.

Furthermore, the special side event also aims to identify the unique challenges faced by States, civil society, the global health community and other relevant stakeholders in combating the adverse effects of climate change on health – and to identify points of entry for greater collaboration between the health, development, and climate sectors, across myriad stakeholder groups and in line with One Health principles.

The side-event will address the following questions:

- What has the world learned from the COVID-19 pandemic? What lessons will be carried forward to help prevent the impact of climate change on global health?
- What good practices were evident in the pandemic, and how can they be institutionalized for future response efforts?
- What priorities must leaders across sectors focus on in order to reimagine and reshape the future of human health and climate management?
- How can the trillions of dollars being invested globally in economic support be optimized to serve public health and the environment in inclusive recovery?
- What are the most important challenges faced by States, civil society, the global health community and other relevant stakeholders in effectively addressing the adverse effects of climate change on health?
- What role is there for development actors? Private sector? How can climate change considerations be integrated into broader development plans, including public health? What sort of new alliances and climate commitments are needed across sectors and stakeholders?

https://us02web.zoom.us/meeting/register/tZUrceypjMuH9B4BPV_25bru4YLej00UctB

After registering, a confirmation email will be sent containing information about joining the meeting

#ClimateChangesHealth

PROGRAMME

Welcome Remarks by Co-sponsors

H. E. Bader Omar Ismail Al-Dafa, Special Envoy of the Minister of Foreign Affairs of the State of Qatar for Climate Change and Sustainability

H.E. Ms. Rabab Fatima, Permanent Representative of the People's Republic of Bangladesh to the United Nations

H.E. Mr. Omar Hilale, Permanent Representative of the Kingdom of Morocco to the United Nations

H.E. Mr. Jonibet Hikmat, Permanent Representative of the Republic of Tajikistan to the United Nations

H.E. Ms. Njambi Kinyungu, Deputy Permanent Representative of the Republic of Kenya

Issue framing and Keynote

Ms. Inger Andersen, Executive Director of the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP)

High-level Panel

Dr Maria Neira, Director, Environment, Climate Change and Health, World Health Organization (WHO)

H.E. Ms. Elizabeth M. Cousens, President and CEO of United Nations Foundation

Mr. Andrés Landerretche, COP25 Presidency Coordinator

Ms Gabriela Cuevas Barron, Co-Chair of the UHC2030 Steering Committee, and Co-Chair of the Task Force on Humanitarian Relief, Social Protection & Vulnerable Groups, The Lancet COVID-19 Commission

Ms. Petra Bayr, Member of the Inter-Parliamentary Union Advisory Group on Health, Member of the Austrian Parliament

Mr. Serge Morand, Research Director at CNRS/CIRAD; Faculty of Veterinary Technology Kasetsart University, Bangkok, Thailand; Visiting Professor at the Faculty of Tropical Medicine (Mahidol University)

Dr Marc Vermeersch, Executive Director, Qatar Environment & Energy Research Institute at Qatar Foundation (QEERI)

Mr. Nigel Sizer, Executive Director of the Preventing Pandemics at the Source Initiative

Moderator

Prof. Tahseen Jafry, Director Center for Climate Justice at the Glasgow Caledonian University

Bangladesh



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BACKGROUND

Climate change threatens human health and well-being in many ways. Increasingly frequent severe weather events, instances of extreme heat, increased air pollution, and changes in ecology can impact water and food supply and quality, and lead to poor health outcomes. According to the World Health Organization, climate change is expected to increase mortality from malnutrition, cardiovascular disease, malaria, diarrhoea and heat stress. Experts warn that some existing health threats will intensify and new health threats will emerge as the climate continues to change and humans continue to encroach on the natural environment. These impacts will manifest in varying ways in different parts of the world, with low- and middle-incomes likely to suffer the worst outcomes.

The Working Group II contribution to the Fifth Assessment Report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) noted that by 2050 climate change will mostly exacerbate existing health problems, and that populations currently affected by climate-related illnesses will also be at the greatest risk in the future. It is expected that climate change will lead to increases in ill-health in many regions, but these problems will be most exacerbated in Least Developed Countries (LDCs), where adaptive capacity and economic vulnerability limit adequate preparation for the impacts of climate change on health.

In this regard, climate change is projected to worsen existing problems, which communities already lack the infrastructure to address. For example, climate change-induced under-nutrition will occur in currently food-insecure areas as a combination of high temperature and humidity in some areas for parts of the year will further compromise food production. The IPCC report further notes that in several countries, including developed countries, climate change will directly influence health outcomes through increased exposure to heat and cold, air pollution, pollen, food safety risks, emerging infections, flooding and other threats such as water-borne diseases and increased exposure to UV radiation. Climate change will cause indirect impacts by changing prices of and access to food and energy, and disrupt access to and functioning of health services and facilities.

The 2018 report of the *Lancet Countdown on health and climate change: shaping the health of nations for centuries to come* noted that climate change represents the biggest global health threat of the 21st century. The Harvard Public School of Health has similarly stated that many of the root causes of climate change increase the risk of pandemics. Deforestation, which occurs mostly for agricultural purposes, is the largest cause of habitat loss worldwide. Loss of habitat forces animals to migrate and potentially contact other animals or people and share germs. Large livestock farms can also serve as a source for spill-over of infections from animals to people. Moreover, as human migration due to weather extremes brings people into closer contact with animals harbouring novel pathogens, humanity will face increasingly grave health risks, including future epidemics and pandemics.

COVID-19 has taught us that prevention is the best approach to protecting health, and has forced the question of how to prepare for pandemics. The response must be multifaceted, keeping populations healthy at the baseline, fighting illegal wildlife trade, preventing deforestation, and above all implementing the SDGs. As COVID-19 has demonstrated, disease knows no borders in an interconnected world.

One of the key messages of the Race to Zero Climate & Health Dialogue, held on 9 November 2020, was that in recovering from COVID-19, both state and non-state actors have a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to drive a healthy and equitable recovery by committing to healthy and ambitious climate response must commitments that are health-inclusive and health-promoting.