

Civil Society Meeting ahead of WHO EB 144
Geneva, Ecumenical Centre, 23 January 2019



Morning sessions: Selected items on the EB agenda

Health, environment, climate change

- Referring to WHO EB 144, agenda item 5.6
- Initial input: Alexandre Gajardo, PHM WHO Watch
- This session will end at 11.00 hrs



EXECUTIVE BOARD
144th session
Provisional agenda item 5.6

EB144/15
5 December 2018

Health, environment and climate change

Draft WHO global strategy on health, environment and climate change: the transformation needed to improve lives and well-being sustainably through healthy environments

Report by the Director-General

1. In decision EB142(5) (2018), the Executive Board at its 142nd session requested the Director-General inter alia to develop a draft comprehensive global strategy on health, environment and climate change, to be considered by the Seventy-second World Health Assembly in May 2019, through



EXECUTIVE BOARD
144th session
Provisional agenda item 5.6


EB144/16
11 December 2018

Health, environment and climate change

Draft global plan of action on climate change and health in small island developing States

BACKGROUND

1. Climate change undermines the environmental determinants of health – clean air and water, sufficient food and adequate shelter – and can increase the risks of extreme weather events. Although all populations are at risk, some are more vulnerable than others. Small island developing States are in the front line, encapsulating the full range of acute to long-term risks, including (a) more extreme floods, storms and drought; (b) increased risks of water-, vector- and food-borne infectious diseases; (c) increased risks of noncommunicable diseases; (d) sea-level rise threatening fragile health care facilities, mainly but not exclusively situated in coastal areas. These additional stresses presented by climate change combine with the existing challenges of communicable and noncommunicable diseases



Item 5.6: Health, Environment and Climate Change

WHO-Watch
144th Executive Board
Civil Society Meeting



Headlines

1. Context
2. Item 5.6 - WHO Documents
3. PHM Position
 - a. General
 - b. The Draft Global Strategy (EB144/15)
 - c. The Draft Global plan of action on SIDS(EB144/16)
4. Recommendations



1. Context

- UN Sustainable Development Goals
- Paris Agreement
- COP 24 in Katowice
- Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change Special report
- US withdrawn and Brazil reconsidering its position regarding climate change
- WHO GPW 13



2. Item 5.6 - WHO Documents

- Agenda Item 5.6 is dedicated to discussing **strategies for addressing the health effects of the unfolding ecological crisis** (not only of climate change but its a very important component).
- Two documents have been tabled that relate to this agenda item
 - **The Draft WHO global strategy on health, environment and climate change: the transformation needed to improve lives and well-being sustainably through healthy environment (a report by the DG) (EB144/15); and**
 - **The Draft global plan of action on climate change and health in small island developing states (EB144/16);**



2. WHO Documents - Objectives

- **The Global strategy aims**
 - to respond to environmental health risks and challenges until 2030;
 - to ensure safe, enabling and equitable environments for health by **transforming our way of living, working, producing, consuming and governing.**
- **The draft global plan of action on Small Island Developing States aims**
 - to rapidly scale up political, technical and financial support for a group of countries with unique and severe challenges
 - to lead the way in transforming health services in small island developing States away from a model of curative services with escalating costs and towards a model based on disease prevention, climate resilience and sustainability.



3. PHM Position - a. General

- PHM considers that WHO's work in this area rightly acknowledges the **multi-dimensional nature of the ecological crisis**, and the fact that “[t]echnology can buy time, but nature's bottom-line accounting cannot be evaded. We must live within Earth's limits”.
- The Global strategy is a **very good draft**, but the Global plan of action for SIDS is **quite unclear and somehow incomplete**.
- Peoples Health Movement (PHM) welcomes WHO's recognition of climate change as a global challenge.



b. The Draft Global Strategy

- We commend WHO's global strategy **focus on prevention**, the ambition to **address the social determinants of health**, the increased efforts to **integrate health in all policies**, and a broader focus on **managing global environmental challenges outside of climate change**, notably electronic waste, nanoparticles, microplastics, and endocrine disrupting chemicals
- In light of the ecological crisis, PHM welcomes WHO's call to secure the right to health by **"transforming our way of living, working, producing, consuming and governing"**.



b. The Draft Global Strategy

- However, in relation to climate change, the **report needs to exhibit a greater degree of urgency**, including reference to the findings of the IPCC special report on “[Global Warming of 1.5 °C](#)” (not mentioned in EB144/15) → **The Global strategy seems to assume that the objective of 1.5° will be respected, but, what if not? Is the Global Strategy adequate in case of such a raise in temperature? Need more anticipation if the objectives are not respected.**
- A more **nuanced analysis is needed of the precise nature of the economic, political, and social dynamics** – particularly the embrace of neoliberal capitalism, extractivism, and financialisation in recent decades – that have led not only to a steady rise in global temperatures over the past centuries, but to the unraveling of “Earth’s ecological and other biophysical life-support systems”



b. The Draft Global Strategy

- The risk remains that the health effects of the ecological crisis will be managed in an **incremental fashion**
 - This risk is reflected by the **vague scope of the Draft global strategy**, which, according to the document is focused “especially on the part of the environment that can reasonably be modified” (EB144/15 para 3)
- Vulnerable populations are mentioned in the strategy, but **indigenous peoples and peasants are not explicitly included in this category.**



b. The Draft Global Strategy

- Another critical area which is not discussed in the draft global strategy is **funding of action** on environmental health and climate change in the context of huge inequalities in wealth (individual, national) globally → Funding is the **critical vulnerability of this draft global strategy**



c. The Draft Global Plan of Action for SIDS

- PHM appreciates the setting up of a Global plan of action for SIDS
- However, it is not always clear whether the plan is **talking about action by WHO or by health leaders in SIDS**, or whether it is talking about action **within or beyond SIDS**.
- We appreciate the “vision” of the global plan of action that all health systems in small island developing States will be **resilient to climate variability and change**.
- However, one element of adaptation of particular relevance for small island states is provision for orderly migration should it become necessary. **While this is controversial the possibility of such a scenario needs to be recognised and anticipated.**



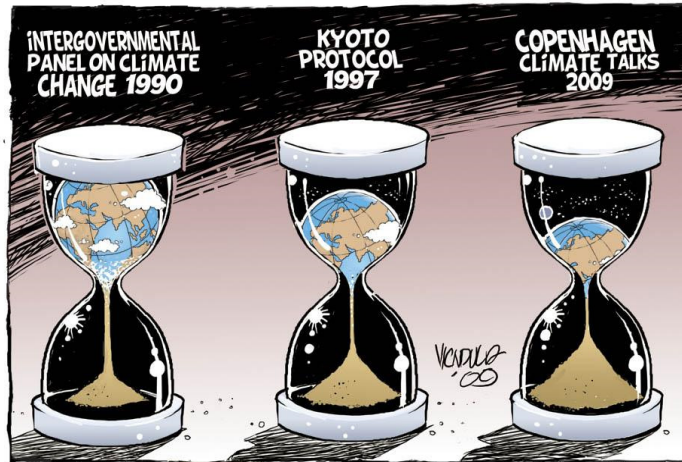
4. PHM Recommendations

- PHM urges Member States to **implement the draft global strategy and to ask the Secretariat to review and revise the structure and text of the plan of action**
- PHM urges the Secretariat to include in the Draft Global Strategy, a **clear reference to the urgency of the situation regarding climate change** (Cf. IPCC Special Report) and to the **underlying dynamics** that have led to the current ecological crisis
- **PHM urges Member States** to adequately and sustainably fund the global strategy and the global plan of action for SIDS
- PHM urges WHO and Member States to support the Human Rights Council's current efforts to develop a **legally binding instrument on transnational corporations and other business enterprises with respect to human rights**



4. PHM Recommendations

- PHM urges WHO and Member States to promote **international solidarity** by encouraging the **transfer of technology**, including clean and sustainable sources of energy
- PHM urges the WHO to promote the **rights of indigenous peoples, peasants and other people working in rural areas**, with a clear reference to the recently adopted UN Declaration on the Rights of Peasants and Other People Working in Rural Areas and to the UN Declaration on the rights of indigenous peoples, in its work on climate change and health
- Both documents should **better anticipate** the possibility that the objective of 1.5°C be not respected and to propose concrete actions in this case.



THANK YOU FOR YOUR ATTENTION !