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Your reference:

Climate Change Secretariat
United Nations Framework Convention
on Climate Change (UNFCCC)
P.O. Box 260 124
53153 Bonn
Allemagne

24 November 2010

Dear UNFCCC Secretariat,

The World Health Organization (WHO) welcomes the mandate provided by the AWG-LCA whereby Parties and accredited observer organizations are invited to provide additional information, views and proposals on paragraph 1 of the Bali Action Plan, as may be required for each session.

Please find attached a submission which relates to health and environment in South-East Asia.

Yours sincerely,

Dr Maria Neira
Director
Department of Public Health and
and Environment

ENCL.: as mentioned.



World Health Organization

SUBMISSION BY THE WORLD HEALTH ORGANIZATION TO THE THIRTEENTH SESSION OF THE AWG-LCA ON PARAGRAPH 1 OF THE BALI ACTION PLAN

Introduction

1. The World Health Organization (WHO) welcomes the opportunity to submit additional information, views and proposals to the Ad Hoc Working Group on Long-term Cooperative Action (AWG-LCA) under the Convention for consideration by the Parties at the Sixteenth Conference of the Parties (COP-16) in Cancun, Mexico, December 2010.

Background

2. The Honorable Minister of Health and Family Welfare, Government of People's Republic of Bangladesh recently observed that it was necessary for the countries of WHO's South-East Asian Region (SEAR) to express their views collectively at COP-16 in relation to jointly-held concerns about the impacts of climate change on human health. Accordingly, a high-level meeting was organized jointly by WHO and the Ministry of Health in Dhaka, 19-21 October 2010. Ten of 11 SEAR countries were represented, these being Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Indonesia, Maldives, Myanmar, Nepal, Sri Lanka, Thailand and Timor Leste. Participants included four Ministers of Health, one Minister of Environment and senior officials of ministries of health and environment from the countries concerned.

3. WHO also supported a preceding meeting of parliamentarians from the region in Thimphu, Bhutan, 5-7 October 2010 to discuss the protection of human health from climate change. Parliamentarians attended from Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Indonesia, Nepal, Sri Lanka and Timor-Leste.

4. The COP-16 related outcomes of the meetings are as follows:

- a) A Parliamentarians' Call for Action on Protecting Human Health from Climate Change in the South-East Asia Region (copy attached).
- b) A Dhaka Declaration (copy attached).
- c) Participation of each of the Ministries of Health concerned in their respective government delegations to COP-16 and subsequent climate-change negotiations to ensure that health concerns are included in the negotiation process.
- d) Intended reference to the Dhaka Declaration in interventions made by SEAR countries at COP-16, and subsequent climate-change negotiations.

The Dhaka Declaration

4. South-East Asia is highly vulnerable to the effects of climate change, the most vulnerable SEAR populations being the poor, marginalized, and those living on small islands, in low-lying and coastal areas, in mountainous regions, in water-stressed areas and in urban slums.
5. The United Nations Framework on Climate Change (UNFCCC) explicitly recognizes the adverse impact of climate change on human health (cf. Article 1 which defines adverse effects of climate change).
6. The Declaration draws attention to Article 4 (f) of UNFCCC which urges Parties to formulate policies and actions to minimize the adverse effects of climate change on economy, public health and the quality of the environment.
7. Despite explicit reference to health issues in the original UNFCCC text, health issues and health co-benefits of mitigation policies have not been sufficiently emphasized at Conferences of Parties to the UNFCCC thus far.
8. The Dhaka Declaration commits WHO Member States of the SEA Region to a range of actions related to human health concerns in the context of climate-change and urges WHO to advocate and follow up the Declaration.

Negotiations under the AWG-LCA related to the Dhaka Declaration

9. Given the strong connections between climate change, environmental degradation and human health, WHO wishes to recall Article 1 of the UNFCCC, which defines adverse effects of climate change as "changes in the physical environment or biota resulting from climate change which have significant deleterious effects on the composition, resilience or productivity of natural and managed ecosystems or on the operation of socio-economic systems or on human health and welfare".
10. WHO agrees with the text that states that developing country Parties are faced with urgent and severe long-term challenges from the impacts of climate change, including those on human health, as per paragraph 5 of the shared vision in Chapter I.
11. Furthermore, WHO agrees with the text that states that enhanced action on adaptation should take into consideration vulnerable groups and communities and ecosystems, with a view to integrating adaptation into relevant public health and environmental policies and actions, where appropriate, as per paragraph 6 of the shared vision.
12. We believe, in addition, that there is a need to take the particular vulnerability of countries in South-East Asia affected by floods into account, and that this should be reflected in the text.

Contact Points

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