



Eleventh meeting of the Working Group on Health in Climate Change

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Virtual session
29 October 2024

14 October 2024
Original: English

Scope and purpose

Climate change continues to be recognized as one of the most pressing health challenges of our time, and recent global and regional developments underscore this urgency.

The 2023 Declaration of the Seventh Ministerial Conference on Environment and Health (Budapest Declaration) sets out a broad spectrum of commitments by Member States in the WHO European Region to address the health impacts of climate change. The Working Group on Health in Climate Change (HIC), established under the European Environment and Health Task Force, continues to facilitate dialogue among countries and stakeholders to promote the implementation of the commitments taken in the Budapest Declaration, facilitating the dissemination of state-of-the-art knowledge and supportive initiatives, promoting synergies, and facilitating coordination at the international level. The Partnership for Health Sector Climate Action, launched at the Conference, aims to facilitate the building of a regional community of practice to share approaches, experience and research as countries chart pathways and solutions to developing climate-resilient, low-carbon health systems.

At the global level, the first ever health and climate change declaration, endorsed at the UN Climate Change Conference (COP28) in 2023, presents a historic milestone. The 2024 World Health Assembly resolution on climate change and health and the prioritization of climate change as one of the six strategic pillars of WHO's Fourteenth General Programme of Work for 2025-2028 set strong ambitions for Member States and WHO in the area of climate change and health.

Knowledge generation is a key element needed to unlock climate action. The scale of research on climate change and health has increased in recent years alongside the rapidly expanding engagement of research institutions and health professionals in climate and health work. Achieving WHO's ambitious climate and health goals requires a shift in how research is conducted and evidence is generated. To address this need, WHO is currently developing a global Research Agenda for Action on Climate and Health (REACH), to serve as a blueprint for future research and policymaking.

The eleventh meeting of the HIC Working Group aims to update participants on current developments and to share knowledge and experiences. The meeting also aims to consult the HIC Working Group as part of the process to identify regional research priorities to drive forward WHO's strategic objectives on climate change and health. Specifically, the meeting will:

- Provide information on ongoing global and regional initiatives and developments in health and climate change, including on the UN Climate Change Conference (COP29), and provide updated information on the implementation of the Budapest Declaration;
- Summarize the key findings from the 2024 Europe report of the Lancet Countdown on Health and Climate Change and other key reports, with a focus on regional data and evidence;
- Present the latest developments in heat-health action planning and warning systems, and share insights and lessons learned from recent initiatives in various countries;
- Explore the knowledge base, emerging experiences and capacity needs to facilitate climate action in the areas of mental health and climate-resilient and sustainable health systems; and

- Introduce the REACH framework and consult with the HIC Working Group to identify key research needs and priorities across WHO's core focus areas in climate change and health (see separate documents attached for further information: the REACH scope and purpose, REACH background information and the REACH summary of research themes and priorities).

This meeting is expected to deliver key updates on WHO's work in climate change and health, take stock of recent evidence and experiences, and outline research priorities for the WHO European Region. These discussions will offer Member States a comprehensive view of progress in climate and health policy, scientific developments, and key areas for advancing research which can setting a common direction for future efforts on shared priorities in this area.