New Delhi Declaration

8 September 2008

World Health Organization
Regional Office for South-East Asia

Twenty-sixth
Meeting of Ministers of Health

New Delhi, 8-9 September 2008

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on the impacts of climate change
on human health

We, the Health Ministers of Member States of the WHO South-East Asia Region participating in the 26th Health Ministers Meeting in New Delhi, appreciate the efforts being made by countries and partners in the South-East Asia Region for addressing the challenges posed by global warming and climate change. However, we are concerned about the potential adverse impacts on health, which could be sudden, unpredictable and irreversible and thus overwhelm the response capacity of the health sector and jeopardize progress in achieving the Millennium Development Goals in general, and the health-related Millennium Development Goals, in particular.

Aware of the fact that the most vulnerable populations in the SEA Region are the poor, the landless, the homeless, the very young, the elderly, the medically frail and people with disabilities, in particular those living on islands, in mountainous regions, in water-stressed areas, in urban slum areas, and in coastal areas;

Recognizing that global warming and climate change pose a major threat to public health in the SEA Region;

Recognizing the need for accelerating actions to reduce the health impacts from climate change in the Region;

Acknowledging the urgent need for strengthening health systems in the Region and especially the capacity of programmes aimed at climate-sensitive diseases;

Realizing that adaptation to climate change is urgent and failure to respond now will be costly in terms of disease, health-care expenditure, food security and lost productivity;

Understanding that reducing the adverse impacts of climate change can have direct and immediate health benefits;

Realizing **the dearth of data and recognizing the need for action-oriented research in this area in all SEA Member States;**

Noting **the lack of health workforce in the health system and, in particular, workforce specialized in addressing the challenges from climate change in the Region;**

Further noting **the importance of incorporating the health concerns in ongoing processes at national, regional and global levels;**

Acknowledging **the strategic role of Revitalizing Primary Health Care to support local communities in becoming more resilient to climate change;**

Reiterating **our commitment to the World Health Assembly resolution WHA 61.19, on climate change and health and to the regional framework for action plan to protect human health;**

We, the Health Ministers, commit ourselves to strive to:

(1) Implement the World Health Assembly resolution WHA 61.19, on climate change and health and the regional framework for action to protect human health to develop and implement effective and efficient strategies and measures relating to climate change;

(2) Strengthen health systems capacity and notably that of public health programmes that are already addressing health effects of climate change;

(3) Increase awareness of health consequences of climate change within the health sector and in collaboration with other key sectors such as education, but also with nongovernmental organizations, in particular youth groups and consumer organizations and networks;

(4) Develop the capacity of health-sector professionals in addressing the challenges posed by global warming and climate change;

(5) Promote applied research and pilot projects to assess health vulnerability to climate change and the scale and nature thereof;

(6) Engage in supporting the empowerment of local communities to become more climate change resilient and thus reduce the potential burden of disease linked to it;

(7) Collaborate with other key sectors to assess health impacts of preventive and corrective measures undertaken and ensure that health concerns are integrated in an appropriate manner;

(8) Increase awareness of health consequences of climate change and reduce the health sector's carbon footprint;

(9) Participate in national and international processes such as UNFCCC, fostering cross-disciplinary partnerships and ensuring monitoring and evaluation of delivery.

We, the Health Ministers of WHO's South-East Asia Region, urge all Member States as well as the WHO Director-General and the Regional Director for the South-East Asia Region to continue to provide leadership and technical support in building partnerships between governments, the United Nations and various global health initiatives and partnerships, academia, professional bodies, NGOs, the private sector, the media and civil society, to jointly advocate and effectively follow-up on all aspects of this New Delhi Declaration on climate change and human health in the South-East Asia Region.

New Delhi, 8th September 2008

World Health Organization
Regional Office for South-East Asia
World Health House
Indraprastha Estate,
Mahatma Gandhi Marg,
New Delhi-110002, India
Website: www.searo.who.int