



Post-Copenhagen Position Statement

World leaders failed climate and people's health

Brussels, 8 January 2010 – The UN negotiations in December did not deliver the agreement so badly needed by the world.

Rather, world leaders managed only to come up with what UNFCCC Executive Secretary Yvo de Boer described as a “letter of intent.” The Copenhagen Accord is a non-binding declaration without clear commitments from any government. It falls far short of a legally binding and ambitious roadmap for reducing emissions to protect the climate and people's health.

While the Accord does commit (in a non-binding fashion) to US \$30 billion for developing countries to address climate change during the period 2010-2012 and to US \$100 billion per year by 2020, it does not stipulate how this money will be spent and still falls short of what is really needed.

Health Care Without Harm and Health and Environment Alliance, which led a delegation of public health and healthcare leaders in Copenhagen, will continue to mobilise public health experts and healthcare professionals around the world as leading advocates for a fair, ambitious and binding treaty—while moving to reduce the health sector's own climate footprint. (1)

Climate change is already responsible for hundreds of additional deaths each day around the world, and higher temperatures and more frequent extreme weather events are exacerbating some of the major causes of child mortality in developing countries, such as diarrhoeal disease.

Studies have clearly shown how stronger targets on climate change could protect health. One review has estimated that a 30% target on greenhouse gas emission reductions from 1990 levels by 2020 would result in health benefits of up to 76 billion Euros per year from 2020 onwards. The European Commission has itself estimated that savings of up to 51 billion Euros per year could be made from 2020 each year if a 20% target were implemented. (2)

More recently, the leading international medical journal, The Lancet has published a series of articles on the global co-benefits that can accrue as a direct result of many mitigation activities for greenhouse-gas emissions. It shows that changes in energy systems, methods of transport, and modifications in intensive food production practices and consumer choices can produce positive health consequences.(3)

The health sector is committed to a treaty that provides for public health, drastically reduces greenhouse gas emissions, promotes alternative, renewable energy and provides significant funding for developing countries to adapt and mitigate.

HEAL and HCWH are calling on world governments to turn the framework provided by the Copenhagen Accord into a binding agreement that delivers a fair, ambitious and binding commitment in 2010.

In collaboration with other health organisations, the two leading health groups are committed to strengthening their advocacy and efforts for climate change policies and actions that ensure the protection of public health and the environment.

References:

1. Healthy hospitals, healthy planet, healthy people: Addressing climate change in healthcare settings, 2009, World Health Organization, Health Care Without Harm http://www.who.int/globalchange/publications/healthcare_settings/en/index.html
2. The co-benefits to health of a strong EU climate change policy, 2008, CAN Europe, Health and Environment Alliance, WWF http://www.env-health.org/IMG/pdf/Co-benefits_to_health_report-september_2008.pdf
3. Lancet Series report on Health and Climate Change, 25 November 2009 <http://www.thelancet.com/series/health-and-climate-change>

***The Health and Environment Alliance (HEAL)** aims to raise awareness of how environmental protection improves health. It brings together more than 60 organizations working at the European level.*

***Health Care Without Harm** is a global network of more than 470 organizations in 52 countries working to transform the health care sector so it is no longer a source of harm to people and the environment.*