



NEWSLETTER



WHO COLLABORATING CENTRE FOR AIR QUALITY MANAGEMENT
AND AIR POLLUTION CONTROL at the GERMAN ENVIRONMENT AGENCY

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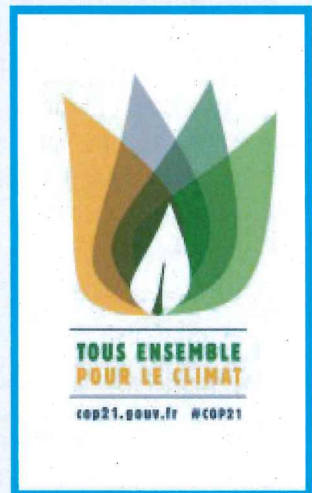
EDITORIAL

Taking Global Action on Climate Change to Improve Human Health

Climate change is one of the greatest threats to global health in the 21st century. Global warming, induced by climate change, affects some of life's essential requirements for human health: water, food, and air.

Air pollution is a good example of the link between climate change and health. Fuel combustion of fossil fuels and biomass creates health-relevant gases (e.g. SO_2 , NO_2) and particulate air pollution (e.g. PM_{10} , $\text{PM}_{2.5}$). Furthermore, such anthropogenic processes generate long-lasting climate-relevant pollutants (e.g. the greenhouse gas CO_2), which remain for decades in the atmosphere, as well as so-called short-lived climate air pollutants/SLCPs (e.g. black carbon, methane and ozone). The latter ones produce strong warming effects and persist in the atmosphere only for periods ranging from days to about one decade. Because SLCPs both are responsible for a substantial fraction of climate change and for a significant proportion of air-pollution related diseases and deaths, global actions on climate change to improve human health have to be taken as soon as possible.

Thus, the WHO support within its Health and Climate Change campaign "Road to COP21" clean air initiatives to abate emissions of greenhouse gases (GHG) and SLCPs, as well as to invest in low-carbon technologies (e.g. renewable energy production). Even the health system is responsible for GHG emissions from various sources, such as health care facility infrastructures, health system related transports and procurement of food, medical devices, medicine and services. The health sector has the challenge and opportunities to improve critical health facilities, in particular for clean and more reliable energy and power systems, and to switch to a new green health care system. Respective GHG mitigation measures should be addressed to and incorporated into relevant national health system policies and plans where the health sector has primary control and responsibility of GHG emissions. Co-benefits to health from climate change mitigation and national responses have been described in WHO's first climate change and health country profiles (<http://www.who.int/global-change/resources/countries/en/>), which had been issued in advance of the 2015 United Nations Conference on Climate Change in Paris (COP21) this month.



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