



Brussels, 16<sup>th</sup> May 2017

## Open letter

### G20 Health Ministers' meeting: Climate change and our health

Dear Minister,

We very much welcome the first G20 Health Ministers' meeting to be held in Berlin on 19-20 May, which is a crucial step in granting global health the space it is entitled to within the G20 framework and acknowledging it as a significant driver of socioeconomic stability and sustainable development.

The meeting offers a unique opportunity to highlight the threat to global health arising from climate change as well as the significant opportunities in moving to a low carbon economy. Health ministers can **play a key role in shaping the health of billions of people worldwide by illustrating how G20 key focus areas such as antimicrobial resistance or global health security threats and crisis management will be highly impacted by a warming climate, creating a serious threat to global health worldwide.** This could help set the direction for future G20 health meetings.

WHO estimates that, in 2012, 12.6 million deaths (23% of all deaths worldwide) were attributable to modifiable environmental factors, many of which could be influenced by climate change or are related to its driving forces. This threat has already been recognised by a number of Health Ministers during the 2016 UN Climate Change negotiations in Morocco, resulting in the [Marrakesh Declaration](#) for Health, Environment and Climate Change.

But in order to protect global health, we must keep global temperature rise below 1.5 degrees. Within the G20 there are multiple opportunities to act for the climate and therefore for health. For example when setting a deadline to the phase out of harmful fossil fuel subsidies which could reduce worldwide premature deaths from air pollution by at least 50% and free up billions in funds that could be used for public health promoting purposes.

You will already display your commitment for environmental health through the adoption of the Ostrava Ministerial Declaration at the upcoming WHO Sixth Ministerial Conference on Environment and Health that mentions climate change and air pollution as two of the six priority areas to work on in the future.

With this letter we ask you to **highlight the interconnectedness of health and climate during the Health Ministers' meeting by either making an intervention or by reflecting this commitment in the joint final declaration.** Now is the time for **health leaders to signal that international agreements such as the Paris Agreement are taken seriously,** and to prioritise climate change and environmental factors to ensure the health and safety of citizens worldwide.

Every environmental decision taken is simultaneously a decision for health. The good news is that we can use this global health crisis and transform it into an opportunity.

Yours sincerely,

**Genon Jensen**  
**Executive Director, Health and Environment Alliance (HEAL)**

**On behalf of:**

*Action for Breast Cancer Foundation*  
*Ärzte der Welt (Doctors of the World Germany)*  
*Ärztinnen und Ärzte für eine gesunde Umwelt*  
*Cancer Prevention and Education Society*  
*Centre for Sustainable Healthcare*  
*Clean Air Action Group*  
*European Federation of Allergy and Airways Diseases Patients' Associations (EFA)*  
*European Lung Foundation (ELF)*  
*European Respiratory Society (ERS)*  
*France Nature Environnement*  
*Fundación Alborada*  
*International Association of Mutual Benefit Societies*  
*Portuguese Society of Environmental Health (PSEH)*  
*Réseau Environnement Santé*  
*Verein demokratischer Ärztinnen und Ärzte (VDÄÄ)*  
*Women Engage for a Common Future (WECF)*  
*Women's Environmental Network*

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