



PRESS RELEASE

Strong climate agreement sets positive context for future health action

Brussels, 14 December 2015 – The health community welcomes the agreement of COP21 as a solid stepping stone for future action, says the Health and Environment Alliance (HEAL).

The Paris agreement signed on Saturday is binding and commits signatories to limiting global warming to well below 2 degrees Celsius. The more ambitious 1.5 degrees Celsius goal is also named as a serious aspiration. The agreement includes a commitment to a long-term goal to bring emissions down to zero and a regular review of national commitments every five years to check progress. This review mechanism, which will start in 2018, is vital if the 2-degree target is to be reached. (1)

Genon K. Jensen, HEAL Executive Director says:

“Achieving this good agreement among 195 states was an extraordinary feat – and offers a springboard for using health arguments to propel soaring levels of action. Focussing on health resonates with experts and public alike because it makes obvious the vision of a better future – bluer skies from cleaner air, more liveable cities, better food, and fewer lung and heart problems and less allergy and asthma. Something we all want.”

Nevertheless, much more needs to be done. Ms. Jensen continues:

“The real work will start now - encouraging countries to live up to their commitments for stronger climate action. As a public health community, our job will be even more important back home: to speed up activities, increase ambition, and monitor and articulate how people’s daily health and wellbeing will benefit from rapid implementation of the Paris Agreement.”

Healthy energy

Among HEAL’s calls to the negotiators (2) was a recommendation for a 100% phase out of fossil fuels and a 100% phase in of renewables by 2050 at the latest. The text calls for “greenhouse neutrality” in the second half of the century, which is widely recognised as a statement that will help catalyze a transition to a decarbonised economy.

Anne Stauffer, HEAL Deputy Director states:

“The Paris agreement is the clear signal that the age of fossil fuels, particularly coal, is coming to an end in Europe and worldwide. Germany, as a climate action leader, should now urgently set a date for the phase out of coal power generation. It is also clear that if we are to keep global warming significantly below 2 degrees, no new coal power plants can be built. Turkey, a country with one of the world’s largest coal expansion plans, should take home this message and ramp up investments in healthy energy – it’s time to say goodbye to yesterday’s energy.”

The health community was more visible in Paris than at any previous COP event. HEAL was the local partner for the Global Climate and Health Summit, organised by the Global Climate and Health Alliance (GCHA) and the World Health Organization (WHO). A global medical consensus for urgent action was

presented in the form of declarations representing over 1,700 health organisations, over 8000 hospitals, and 13 million doctors, nurses and health professionals in every part of the health sector and in every continent. (3)

HEAL's 25-person delegation amplified the voice of medical and health professionals at COP21 working closely with medical associations around the world and the WHO. HEAL jointly organised a high-profile meeting at the French medical association with the World Medical Association (WMA) and the International Federation of Medical Students' Associations (IFMSA) (4) plus an official side event (5) and a press conference with the WHO.

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Notes for journalists:

1. Adopted Paris agreement: <http://unfccc.int/resource/docs/2015/cop21/eng/l09r01.pdf>
2. HEAL's message for the climate negotiators, "Tackling climate change means boosting health" http://env-health.org/IMG/pdf/151120_heal_message_for_cop21_final.pdf
3. Global Climate and Health Alliance, Health and climate in 2015 and beyond <http://www.climateandhealthalliance.org/resources/health-and-climate-in-2015-and-beyond>
HEAL was the local organisers for GCHA's Climate and Health Summit on 5 December where HEAL presented declarations on climate, energy and health from health professionals in Germany and Turkey.
4. Press release, World's doctors tackle climate and energy, 4 December, <http://www.env-health.org/resources/press-releases/article/cop21-press-release-world-s> (Video from webstream of the event will be available soon)
5. HEAL organised an official side event with the Scientific Centre of Monaco on 9 December, Health in central to climate change action. It was opened by HSH Prince Albert II of Monaco, and addressed by WHO's Regional Director <http://www.euro.who.int/en/about-us/regional-director/news/news/2015/12/health-is-central-to-climate-change-action> See also <http://www.iisd.ca/climate/cop21/enbots/9dec.html#event-9>

*The **Health and Environment Alliance (HEAL)** is a leading European not-for-profit organisation addressing how the environment affects health in the European Union (EU). With the support of more than 70 member organisations, HEAL brings independent expertise and evidence from the health community to different decision-making processes. Our broad alliance represents health professionals, not-for-profit health insurers, doctors, nurses, cancer and asthma groups, citizens, women's groups, youth groups, environmental NGOs, scientists and public health research institutes. Members include international and Europe-wide organisations as well as national and local groups. Website www.env-health.org Follow us on Twitter [@HealthandEnv](https://twitter.com/HealthandEnv) [@EDCFree](https://twitter.com/EDCFree) [@CHM HEAL](https://twitter.com/CHM_HEAL) & like us on [Facebook](https://www.facebook.com/HealthandEnv)*