

Proposal: Choose Pollution As The Theme For UNEA 3

THE WORLD IS NOW AT A CRISIS POINT where all forms of pollution, not just highly visible air pollution, pose a grave threat to human health, with the most harm falling on babies' in-utero, infants and children under 6.

DISEASE CAUSED BY POLLUTION is a massive, under-recognized global problem responsible for at least 9.6 million deaths per year; three times more than HIV/AIDS, tuberculosis and malaria combined.

POLLUTION DISPROPORTIONALLY AFFECTS THE POOR. 92% of pollution-related disease (PRD) occurs in low and middle-income countries (LMICs), and in the hardest hit countries, PRD causes over 35% of all deaths.

THE ESCALATION OF AIR, WATER, SOIL AND CHEMICAL WASTE POLLUTION in LMICs in recent decades has been tolerated because of the benefits of economic growth. But this aggregate pollution is now responsible for significant economic losses, with an increase in health care costs being one of many. Investments in pollution control and green growth policies will spur economic growth and national productivity.

THIS ISSUE HAS RECEIVED FAR LESS ATTENTION and funding than others in the environmental and health agendas.

POLLUTION AMPLIFIES THREATS BROUGHT BY CLIMATE CHANGE. In addition to coal-fired power plants, massive, burning garbage dumps emit methane and multiple toxic chemicals into the air. Chemical wastes are polluting groundwater that is rapidly being depleted by climate-related drought.

THE NEUROLOGICAL DAMAGE ASSOCIATED WITH PEDIATRIC EXPOSURES TO TOXIC POLLUTION, have long-lasting, damaging consequences for societies. Mental impairment caused by exposures to many toxicants, including lead, in young children can lead to a reduction in average IQ levels and are associated with higher rates of crime and violence.¹

THE LANCET WILL PUBLISH A LANDMARK REPORT BY THE GLOBAL COMMISSION ON POLLUTION AND HEALTH in April 2017. This report will present, for the first time, the global burden of disease from all forms of pollution in combination with an economic analysis of productivity losses by pollutant, region, income group and more. Co-authored by GAHP with significant input from UNEP, the report will also have a strong focus on practical solutions.

BY CHOOSING POLLUTION AS THE THEME OF UNEA3, the conference can capitalize on the momentum generated by this report, and lead with a focus on actions and solutions.

¹ Delaney-Black, Virginia, et al. (2002) "Violence exposure, trauma, and IQ and/or reading deficits among urban children." Archives of pediatrics & adolescent medicine 156.3: 280. and "Wright JP, Dietrich KN, Ris MD, Hornung RW, Wessel SD, et al. (2008) Association of Prenatal and Childhood Blood Lead Concentrations with Criminal Arrests in Early Adulthood. PLoS Med 5(5): e101. doi:10.1371/journal.pmed.0050101