

## Decision IMCHE/3/1 to adopt the Strategic Action Plan 2019 – 2029, to Scale Up Health and Environment Interventions in Africa

1. We, the Ministers of Health and Ministers of Environment, having met in Libreville, Gabon from 6 to 9 November 2018 at the third Inter-ministerial Conference on Health and Environment in Africa;
2. *Aware that* our environment can influence our health through various channels, including exposure to physical, chemical and biological risk factors or by triggering behavioral changes;
3. *Mindful of* the growing awareness that humans, through their interventions in the environment, play a vital role in exacerbating or mitigating health risks;
4. *Deeply concerned that:*
  - I. Nearly 1 out of 4 of total global deaths and their associated cost is attributable to unhealthy environments and in Africa 23%<sup>1</sup> of premature deaths are linked to risks factors such as poor sanitation, air quality, poor access to safe drinking water, chemicals and waste, vector-borne diseases, and natural disasters;
  - II. the continent is facing a double burden of communicable and non-communicable diseases<sup>2</sup> which imposes a very heavy economic and social cost, and makes it more difficult to achieve national development goals including poverty reduction and health targets;
  - III. In 2016, 9 out of 10 people breathed air in which the concentration of air pollutants is above the limit set up by the WHO guidelines, and about 7 million people died of diseases attributable to air pollution<sup>3</sup>. About 3.8 million deaths globally were attributed to household air pollution, with 734,000 of those deaths occurring in Africa because of domestic use of solid fuels and kerosene for cooking, lighting and heating. Ambient air pollution caused approximately 439,000 deaths in the region;
  - IV. In Africa alone, climate change could reduce crop yield by up to 20% by 2050<sup>4</sup> as population nearly doubles as well as threaten to irreversibly damage natural systems which underpin the livelihoods of billions of people and also sustain all life forms on earth;
  - V. Biodiversity is under threat as never before. Animals and plants, including species vital to many poor communities, continue to be exposed to harmful effects of air, water and land pollution, including from the vast amounts of untreated waste emanating from households and industry;

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<sup>1</sup> Preventing Diseases Through Healthy Environments: A global assessment of the burden of diseases from environmental risks. World Health Organization 2016

<sup>2</sup> Health transition in Africa: practical policy proposals for primary care. *Bulletin of the World Health Organization* 2010;88:943-948

<sup>3</sup> Ambient air pollution: a global assessment of exposure and burden of disease, second edition. Geneva: World Health Organization; in press. [is cited in Children and AP doc] WHO Global Health Observatory, Air pollution

<sup>4</sup> The Africa Adaptation Gap Report 2 by the UN Environment Programme 2015

## 5. *Recalling*

- I. The Libreville Declaration on Health and Environment in Africa (2008) which represents the umbrella policy framework upon which African governments committed to address together with development partners the environmental determinants of human health and ecosystems integrity in an integrated manner;
- II. The Luanda Commitment (2010) which sets top environment and health priorities for the continent;
- III. The Agenda 2063, “the Africa we want” adopted by African Union as a regional strategic framework to optimize the use of African resources for the benefit of all Africans (2015);
- IV. The United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), "Transforming our World: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development", as adopted by the General Assembly (2015);
- V. The Paris Agreement on Climate Change (2015) and
- VI. the Marrakech Ministerial Declaration on “Health and Environment and Climate Change (2016);
- VII. the Addis Ababa Action Agenda adopted at the Third International Conference on Financing for Development Conference in Addis Ababa, (2015);
- VIII. the Bamako Convention on the Ban of the Import into Africa and the Control of Transboundary Movement and Management of Hazardous Wastes within Africa (1998) ;
- IX. Tunis Declaration on accelerating the implementation of the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015-2030 and the Africa Regional Strategy for Disaster Risk Reduction adopted at the Sixth High Level Meeting on Disaster Risk Reduction, (2018);
- X. The Helsinki Statement on Health in All Policies adopted at the 8th Global Conference on Health Promotion (2013);
- XI. Astana Declaration on Primary Health Care: From Alma-Ata towards Universal Health Coverage and the Sustainable Development Goals (2018) ;
- XII. The Ngor Declaration on Sanitation and Hygiene Adopted by the African Ministers responsible for sanitation and hygiene(2015);

## 6. *Welcoming*

- I. The work of the World Health Organization (WHO) on environment and health issues, such as air pollution, chemicals and waste, including on heavy metals, and appreciating relevant World Health Assembly resolutions and the current 13<sup>th</sup> General Programme of Work;
- II. The outcome of the second session of the United Nations Environment Assembly (UNEA-2) under the overarching theme “Healthy Environment, Healthy People” which recognizes the importance of the nexus between environment and health and the need to act urgently;
- III. The UNEA-3 report and Ministerial Declaration “Towards a Pollution Free Planet” which further provides startling evidence of a polluted planet that impacts air, land,

- fresh water, marine and coastal areas including crosscutting pollution sources of chemicals and wastes;
- IV. The recent Memorandum of Understanding between UN Environment Programme and WHO to join their efforts mutually to address, in a significant manner, environmental health risks through developing a joint work programme;
  - V. The Multilateral Environmental Agreements (MEAs), in particular the Basel, Rotterdam and Stockholm Conventions on hazardous chemicals and wastes, as well as the Bamako and Minamata Conventions, whose common objectives are to protect human health and the environment, through the decisions of their governing bodies, and emphasize the relevance of addressing the health and environment linkages in implementing their respective mandates;
  - VI. The recent Memorandum of Understanding between the World Meteorological Organization and the World Health Organization to join efforts to mutually address, in a significant manner, health risks related to air pollution and climate change through the development of a joint work programme;
7. *Affirming* the strong inter-linkages between environment and health, including health inequalities, and the importance to address them jointly, including by fully implementing Agenda 2063 and the Sustainable Development Goals;
  8. *Stressing that* directly tackling the inter-linkages between environment and human health presents new and interwoven opportunities to meet the SDGs as environment and health is reflected across the various goals and targets;
  9. *Remaining concerned that*, while successful responses to pollution and biodiversity loss may exist, their scope, scale and effectiveness remain limited owing to a lack of institutional capacity or resources,
10. *Convinced that:*
- I. The realization of these various global objectives on environment, health and development, requires the strong commitment and involvement of political leadership in every country at all levels in their implementation and in the creation of the necessary conducive and enabling conditions.
  - II. The Health and Environment Strategic Alliance in Africa adopted by African Ministers during the second inter-ministerial conference on health and environment in Africa held in Luanda, Angola, in 2010 constitutes a key platform to support the concerted and coordinated implementation of these international agendas and agreements.
11. *Having considered* the Strategic Action Plan to Scale Up Health and Environment Interventions in Africa, 2019 - 2029;
12. ENDORSES the proposed Strategic Action Plan.
13. URGES all Member States to:
- I. Provide stewardship and leadership; forge partnerships with development partners, multilateral agencies, the private sector and civil society;

- II. Increase allocation of resources and scale up domestic investments on platforms, initiatives and programmes that address the impact of environmental factors on health and scale up primary health care;
- III. Promote intercountry stakeholders' dialogue and public–private partnerships including with intergovernmental organizations, private sector, development banks and regional economic communities, local authorities, research institutions and the academia;
- IV. Set the research agenda; consolidate scientific evidence and share experiences and lessons learned on managing health and environment issues in Africa;
- V. Focus their attention and interventions on the following set of strategic health and environment priorities:
  - a) Devise, in collaboration with partners, national policies and plans for implementation of the strategic action plan as appropriate, and to establish appropriate policy frameworks and institutional mechanisms for its implementation, monitoring and evaluation;
  - b) Access to safe drinking water and safe sanitation;
  - c) Air pollution and clean energy;
  - d) Marine and coastal pollution
  - e) Sound management of chemicals of public health concerns in particular those covered under the MEAs and wastes including plastic, biomedical, electronic and electrical wastes, and radioactive materials, solid and liquid waste;
  - f) Climate change and health;
  - g) Healthy settings relevant to urbanization, urban planning and health;
  - h) Biodiversity conservation and natural resource management
  - i) Management of natural and human-induced disasters
  - j) Establish a sustainable financing mechanism

14. Call upon the UN Environment Programme, WHO, WMO and other relevant UN agencies to:

- I. Set and disseminate norms and standards, policy advice and implementation guidelines, including methodologies and protocols, monitoring and evaluation to support country actions;
- II. Facilitate capacity building and technical assistance for the development and implementation of national plans for joint action;
- III. Catalyze mobilization of external resources, and support development of national business cases for investment in priority health and environment interventions;
- IV. Advocate for heightened commitment, increased visibility, prioritization, and understanding of health and environment linkages within and beyond WHO and UN Environment Programme;
- V. Promote regional stakeholders' dialogue and public–private partnerships including with other intergovernmental organizations, development banks and regional economic communities, research institutions and the academia;
- VI. Promote targeted and specific advocacy, including on education, gender, youth, parliamentarians, and local authorities and mobilize leadership on health and environment actions in Africa.

15. Call on development partners and other stakeholders to recognize the sustainable development value of health and environment interventions, to include them into their agendas and to provide the technical and financial resources required to support the implementation of the strategic action plan to scale up health and environment interventions in Africa.
16. Call on his Excellency Ali Bongo Ondimba, President of the Republic of Gabon, host country, to present for endorsement, of the Strategic Action Plan to Scale Up Health and Environment Interventions in Africa 2019 – 2029 to the next Summit of the African Union.