

Environmental matters

The protection of human health from threats related to climate change and stratospheric ozone depletion

The Executive Board,

Noting the report of the Director-General on WHO's recent activities in the area of climate change, stratospheric ozone depletion and human health, and its association with the work on the "climate agenda",¹

RECOMMENDS to the Fifty-first World Health Assembly the adoption of the following resolution:

The Fifty-first World Health Assembly,

Having considered the report of the Director-General on WHO's activities on the health effects of climate change and stratospheric ozone depletion, and its association with the work on the "climate agenda";

Recalling resolutions WHA46.20 and WHA48.13 on the endorsement of the WHO global strategy for health and environment in full compliance with "Agenda 21" adopted by the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development in 1992, and on WHO's efforts to combat emerging and re-emerging infectious diseases associated with greater human mobility, global environmental changes and spreading drug resistance;

Aware of the serious threat to the environment and health of the depletion of ozone from the earth's stratosphere due to emissions of chlorofluorocarbons and other gases with ozone-destroying properties, used for refrigeration and for other industrial purposes, that might increase the incidence of UVR-related diseases such as melanomas, non-melanomous skin cancers, immune defects and nutritional deficiencies;

Equally aware that the consequences of these phenomena for human health and well-being should be considered within the overall context of other global environmental changes, many of which are related, such as desertification, deforestation, transboundary air and water pollution and loss of biodiversity;

Acknowledging the leading role of WHO, in collaboration with WMO and UNEP, in bringing the potentially grave threats to human health of these global environmental phenomena to the attention of the

¹ Document EB101/20.

international community through mechanisms provided by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change and the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change,

1. ENDORSES WHO's participation in the "climate agenda" established by WMO, UNEP, UNESCO and its Intergovernmental Oceanographic Commission (IOC), FAO and the International Council of Scientific Unions (ICSU) to deal more effectively with climate-related issues among appropriate intergovernmental and international agencies;

2. URGES Member States:

(1) to consider the potential threats to human health of climate change and other factors in global environmental change and to take these into account in national planning for sustainable development;

(2) wherever appropriate, to consider new approaches to tackle these threats through greater use of weather and climate forecasts in disease prevention and control;

(3) to adopt other strategies, as appropriate, to face up to the human health consequences of climate change and other factors in global environmental change;

(4) to improve prevention of climate change and stratospheric ozone depletion-related health impacts through increased public awareness programmes and actions;

(5) to encourage applied research and capacity-building in all of these areas;

3. REQUESTS the Director-General:

(1) to develop further WHO's relations with WMO and other appropriate organizations of the United Nations system in order to ensure the continuation of international efforts to foster understanding of the correlation of climate and health and the pursuance of ways and means of mitigating public health effects of global environmental change;

(2) to collect and review epidemiological information on climate- and stratospheric ozone depletion-related risks to human health and to make it accessible to policy-makers and research institutions in Member States;

(3) to pursue the assessment of research needs and priorities in the area of climate- and stratospheric ozone depletion-related risks to human health and the environment, and to promote further research in this area, in particular in support of improved response strategies at the national level, in close cooperation with meteorological services;

(4) to secure, through voluntary contributions, adequate human and financial resources for these activities, in consultation with other agencies concerned and interested members of the donor community.

Sixteenth meeting, 27 January 1998
EB101/SR/16

= = =