COP 23 Side Event

CLIMATE CHANGE AND HEALTH IN SMALL ISLAND DEVELOPING STATES

Sunday, 12th of November 2017, 16:45 - 18:15
Bonn Zone (Room 7), open to all conference participants

1. Health leadership in Small Island Developing States to engage nationally and internationally in the climate change process

2. How to strengthen and scale up the work on climate change and health as requested during the Twelfth Pacific Health Minister Meeting, which was held in Rarotonga, Cook Islands, in August 2017, in the 2015 Yanuca Island Declaration on Health in Pacific Island Countries and Territories under the framework of the new WHO SIDS initiative and by Ministers of Health of Caribbean SIDs during the 29th Pan American Sanitary Conference

3. Financing mechanisms to provide support to SIDs for the implementation of Paris Agreement on climate change and health

4. Improve coordination amongst health, environment, disaster and humanitarian, and other sectors to deal with climate change and disaster risk management for health in PICs and other Small Developing Island State.
Background - Health impacts of climate variability and change in SIDS

Climate change undermines the environmental determinants of health: clean air and water, sufficient food and adequate shelter; and can increase the risks of extreme weather events and infectious disease.

Although all populations are at risk, some are more vulnerable than others. Small Island Developing States are in the front line, encompassing the range of acute to long-term risks, from more extreme floods and storms, to increased risks of water-borne and food-borne infectious disease, to sea-level rise threatening healthcare facilities situated in coastal areas.

Most small islands already present high burdens of climate sensitive diseases such as vector-, food- and water borne diseases. Climate change will manifest in increased average temperatures, increased incidence and severity of extreme weather events (such as floods, cyclones, storm surges and drought), sea-level rise, higher fresh-water temperature and decreased availability of water and food. All these hazards will translate into increased mortality and morbidity from extreme weather events (including mental health) and climate-sensitive diseases such as malaria, dengue, cholera, filariasis, leptospirosis, schistosomiasis, shellfish poisoning and ciguatera fish poisoning. Furthermore, there is robust evidence showing how global climate-related processes pose serious health risks to SIDs. These include air-borne dust, the spread of aquatic pathogens, the invasion of plant and animal species, and distant-source ocean swells from mid to high latitudes which may cause coastal inundation and erosion.

Lack of response to address the health impacts of climate change in SIDS

Ministries of Health of SIDS have documented their health vulnerabilities and clearly articulated their needs, and are increasingly vocal on the international stage. The international response, however, remains weak, both for health in general and in acknowledging and addressing the needs of Small Island Developing States in particular. Less than 1.5% of international finance for climate change adaptation is currently allocated to health projects.

Articles 4.1.f of the UNFCCC, related to commitments from Parties, request countries to minimize the impacts on public health for any adaptation and mitigation projects or measures implemented by them. Nevertheless, few countries are currently taking advantage of the opportunity to improve health at the same time as making the reductions in carbon emissions necessary to safeguard the future of the Small Island Developing States; only 15% of intended Nationally Determined Contributions submitted for the Paris Agreement mention health gains (e.g., reductions in air pollution mortality) that can be expected through mitigation.

Scope of the event

Within the global and comprehensive approach of its Health and Action Agenda, at COP23 WHO will launch a Special Initiative to protect and promote the health of the people of Small Island Developing States from climate risks, and to amplify the voices of the most vulnerable, for both climate change adaptation and mitigation.

The initiative aims at providing national health authorities in the Small Island Developing States with the evidence and financial and political support to better understand and address the effects of climate change on health including those mediated via climate change impacts on the main determinants of health (i.e. food, air, water and sanitation); improve the climate-resilience and environmental sustainability of health facilities; and to promote the implementation of climate change mitigation actions by the most polluting sectors (e.g. transport, energy, food and agriculture) that maximize health co-benefits.

During the proposed side event, participants will discuss WHO proposed special initiative for health and climate in SIDS and will have an opportunity to provide feedback on how to operationalize it.

Agenda

Chair
DR. ST JOHN, Cheryl Joy, ADG for Climate and Other Determinants of Health

Presentation
The WHO Special SIDS Initiative on Health and Climate Change  by Dr Diarmid Campbell-Lendrum, Scientist, Team Leader, EPE/Climate Change

HL moderated Dialogue on the 4 specific topics
MOH from Fiji
Cook Island
Prime Minister Saint Lucia
Mr Amjad Abdulla, OASIS Coordinator and Maldivian Chief Negotiator
Heads of delegations from SIDS countries in PAHO, AFRO, SEARO (TBD)

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