

Health at the UN Climate Summit

New York, September 20, 2014

This Document

On September 23, the UN Secretary General will host a day-long Climate Summit in New York, designed to build momentum towards the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC).

Climate Week 2014 will see [over 120 heads of state](#) converge upon New York for a climate summit convened by UN Secretary General Ban Ki-Moon. With at least 7 health-focused events taking place during the week, it will also see many health leaders – including US Surgeon General Boris Lushniak, EPA Chief Gina McCarthy, Gro Harlem Brundtland, Editor-in-Chief of the Lancet Richard Horton, and the World Health Organisation’s Maria Neira - speak out about the significant threats to health posed by unmitigated climate change, and the clear health benefits of many climate solutions.

This document is designed for health professionals and public health organizations, and contains:

- An overview of key messages and implications of the Climate Summit for human health
- A variety of communications resources, including: recent health-relevant articles, blogs and reports; quotes from health professionals; useful images, graphics and videos; sample tweets
- Information about health and climate events held in New York this week

Key messages

1) Climate change is fast becoming a mainstream public health concern

The World Health Organization’s [Conference on Health and Climate](#) in August sought to raise the profile of this crucial public health issue before the UN summit in New York, and the Conference of the Parties in Lima this December. Following the conference, WHO Director General Dr. Margaret Chan has [written an article](#) calling for urgent action to protect health from climate change, “the defining issue for the 21st century’. Dr Chan states in the article’s conclusion that “climate change, and all of its dire consequences for health, should be at centre-stage... whenever talk turns to the future of human civilizations. After all, that’s what’s at stake.”

In England, a health-system wide approach has been adopted, as demonstrated by the [cross-system statement](#) for the UN Summit, which is a world first.

2) *Clean energy and active transport can save lives, carbon and money*

Dramatic health benefits and associated cost savings would result from a global transition to clean energy, avoiding millions of early deaths each year through improved air quality. As highlighted by the ActiveEarth initiative, which will be launched at the civil society event, active transportation also offers significant physical and mental health benefits, as well as reducing air pollution. The cost savings associated with these benefits have also been demonstrated by the New Climate Economy project report, '[Better Growth, Better Climate](#)'.

3) *We need to make investment choices which benefit health*

One area which has become the subject of much discussion within the health community in recent months is the role of healthy investments in building a sustainable future which promoted health. In June, members of the [British Medical Association voted in favour](#) of an end to its investments in fossil fuels and increased investment in clean energy, and last week, HESTA (the Health Employees' Superannuation Trust Australia) announced [a restriction on investments in thermal coal](#). A number of health NGOs released a statement at the WHO Conference, emphasising the need for health organisations to consider the climate and health impacts of their investments, and make investment choices that benefit both by reducing local air pollution, helping to build low-carbon health systems, and strengthening community resilience.

Quotes

"The evidence is overwhelming: climate change endangers human health. Solutions exist and we need to act decisively to change this trajectory." – Dr. Margaret Chan, Director General of the World Health Organization (during WHO August conference)

"Here is my strong view: climate change, and all of its dire consequences for health, should be at centre-stage, right now, whenever talk turns to the future of human civilizations. After all, that's what's at stake." – Dr. Margaret Chan (in her Huffington Post article)

"Climate change is not the equivalent of a disease: it is a symptom. The cause is our unbridled dependence on fossil fuels." Christiana Figueres, Chair of the UN Framework Convention on

Climate Change

"Greenhouse gas pollution, through its contribution to global climate change, presents a significant threat to Americans' health and to the environment upon which our economy and security depends." – US EPA Chief Gina McCarthy

"We've now got a plan: it's quite recent, but it's a plan that we've committed to. It's about reducing our carbon footprint, it's about being better prepared for extreme events. And crucially, about how we invest - now - in what we're doing, and about how that's going to affect future generations. ... We know that how we act today has an impact on the future, and we're taking this extraordinarily seriously." - Duncan Selbie, CEO of Public Health England on behalf of the health system in England.

"Our patients' health is being harmed by changes to our climate. The health effects of these changes are very clear. Health professionals must understand these effects and must advocate to reduce them and the consequent deleterious health effects. Actions that we can take directly and in our working environments include adopting clean energy sources and ensuring that our health systems aim to reduce dangerous emissions." - Dr. Margaret Mungherera, President of the World Medical Association.

"The health care sector is waking up to the reality that climate change is a massive public health crisis and they need to join the movement to address it," said Gary Cohen, president and founder of Health Care Without Harm. "Health care can lead by example in addressing its own climate footprint as well as build resiliency into its own facilities and operations. Health care professionals can raise their voices to demand policies that put a price on carbon and invest in clean energy solutions that will prevent a whole array of climate change related health impacts."

"Reducing greenhouse gases produces unplanned, but very beneficial side effects for health. ... The US and Chinese governments have already embraced the message of better health in support of their recent actions against pollution from coal power plants." said Genon Jensen, the Health and Environment Alliance (HEAL)'s Executive Director. "We hope that the health co-benefits model will be used more extensively to drive up national climate targets in all regions of the world."

Articles and blogs

Dr. Margaret Chan 'How Climate Change Can Rattle the Foundations of Public Health' (15 September 2014). Online at: http://www.huffingtonpost.com/dr-margaret-chan/how-climate-change-can-ra_b_5822950.html

Climate change and health—action please, not words Editorial 20 September 2014 (Vol. 384, Issue 9948, Page 1071). DOI: 10.1016/S0140-6736(14)61656-1. Online at: [http://www.thelancet.com/journals/lancet/article/PIIS0140-6736\(14\)61656-1/fulltext](http://www.thelancet.com/journals/lancet/article/PIIS0140-6736(14)61656-1/fulltext)

Andy Haines, Kristie L Ebi, Kirk R Smith, Alistair Woodward Health risks of climate change: act now or pay later. *The Lancet* - 20 September 2014 (Vol. 384, Issue 9948, Pages 1073-1075) DOI: 10.1016/S0140-6736(14)61659-7 [http://www.thelancet.com/journals/lancet/article/PIIS0140-6736\(14\)61659-7/fulltext?rss=yes](http://www.thelancet.com/journals/lancet/article/PIIS0140-6736(14)61659-7/fulltext?rss=yes)

UN Climate Summit - Cross System Statement from the Health System in England <http://www.sduhealth.org.uk/policy-strategy/engagement-resources/un-climate-summit.aspx>

Partnership for Maternal, Newborn and Child Health - Knowledge Summary 32: Protecting Women's and Children's Health from a Changing Climate (2014 edition) Available to download at <http://www.climateandhealthalliance.org/asset/download/178/KS32%20Climate%20Change.pdf>

'BMA annual meeting: Representatives vote to spread the word about the benefits of shunning fossil fuels' *BMJ* 2014; 348 doi: <http://dx.doi.org/10.1136/bmj.g4307> (27 June 2014) <http://www.bmj.com/content/348/bmj.g4307>

Anthony J McMichael, Stephen R Leeder et al. Open letter to the Hon Tony Abbott MP. *Med J Aust* 2014; 201 (5): 252. Available to download at: <http://www.mja.com.au/journal/2014/201/5/open-letter-hon-tony-abbott-mp>

Josh Karliner and Gary Cohen. The role of health care in preventing climate catastrophes McClatchy-Tribune News Service. <http://newsok.com/the-role-of-health-care-in-preventing-climate-catastrophes/article/feed/728325>

Videos

Global Climate and Health Alliance - Climate Change: Health Threat or Opportunity? <http://youtube.com/watch?v=ZrwqwuNNX4I>

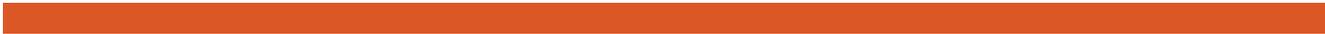
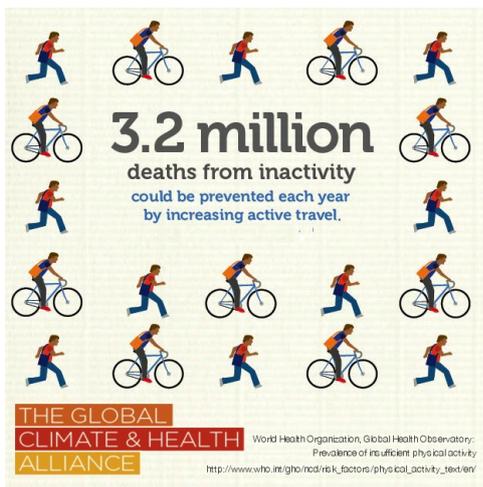
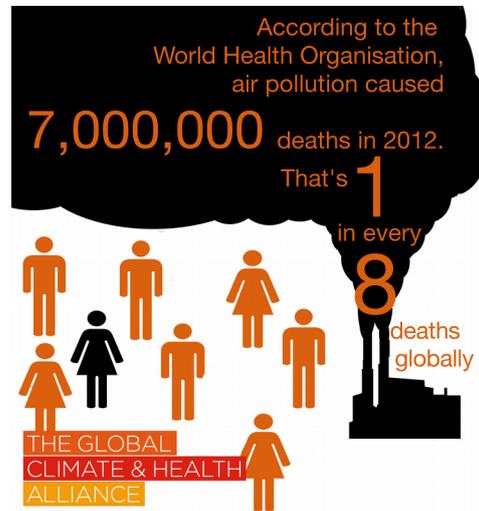
International Federation of Medical Students' Associations (IFMSA): 'Medical Students Take a Stand on Climate Change' <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Yvi0JCLO2rY>

Statement for the UN Climate Summit - Duncan Selbie's message on behalf of England's Health and Social Care System

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uWzsPax26N0>

Images

(Link to download of all these graphics: <http://bit.ly/1subo2a>
Or click on an image and download in order to use them on facebook/twitter)



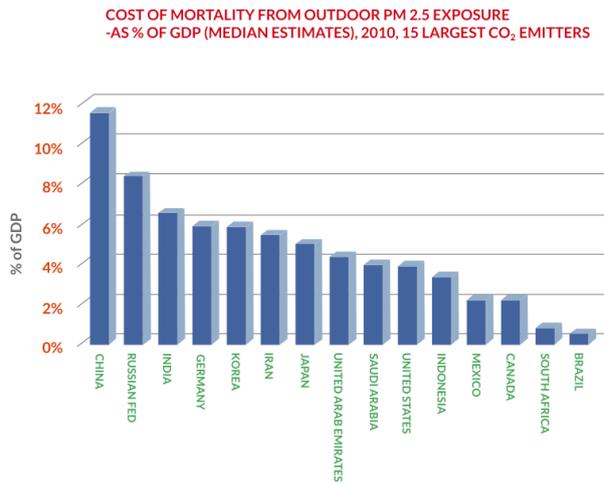


Image from the New Climate Economy report, "Better Climate, Better Growth": Cost of mortality from outdoor air pollution, 2010 – New Climate Economy (Figure 3).

The GCHA's IPCC AR5 WGII report infographics can be downloaded freely at <http://www.climateandhealthalliance.org/asset/download/128/GCHA-Assets.zip>

and the long banner infographic accessed at <http://www.climateandhealthalliance.org/resources/ipcc-resources/banner-infographic>

Sample tweets

US Surgeon General, WHO, PAHO, NIEHS & more take part in #CWNYC, showing that #climate is fast becoming a mainstream public #health issue



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Climate change is becoming a key public health issue – health leaders meet in New York on the eve of UN Leaders' Summit <http://bit.ly/Wn6YkE> #CWNYC

Dr. Chan, @WHO Director General: "How #climate change can rattle the foundations of public #health" <http://m.huffpost.com/us/entry/5822950> v @GCHAlliance

Cleaner energy leads to cleaner air, a safer climate, better health & lower healthcare costs. pic.twitter.com/1l74vAulme Image: @CCACoalition

#Climate strategies can improve #health: @ACSMNews @UWMadison @PHIdotorg & @GCHAlliance convene thought leaders in NY <http://bit.ly/Wn6YkE>

MT @GCHAlliance: can we turn our greatest health threat into one of our greatest opportunities for health? <http://youtube.com/watch?v=ZrwqwuNNX4I>

#cleanenergy = healthier hearts and lungs & a safer climate #CWNYC #ClimateHealthAction @ClimateWeekNYC <http://bit.ly/Wn6YkE>

Health and Climate Events: 19-27 September 2014

For the complete listing of civil society events, please see:
<http://www.climateweeknyc.org/events/>

Sunday, 21 September

Event Title: *People's Climate March – UWS to Union Square*

Media coverage/billed as major public event: coinciding with 1500 other marches and actions in over 130 countries elsewhere in the world.

See <http://peoplesclimate.org/> for a complete list and further information.

<http://www.climateweeknyc.org/events/peoples-climate-march>

Health group: <http://peoplesclimate.org/health/>

Monday, 22 September

Event Title: *Action in Climate Change and Health*

When: 0800 – 1400, 22 September

What: A day long health and climate summit on achieving the health benefits of mitigation.

Hosted by the Global Climate and Health Alliance, American College of Sports Medicine, Public Health Institute, and the University of Wisconsin.

Speakers include:

- Boris Lushniak, US Surgeon General
- Gina McCarthy, Administrator, Environmental Protection Agency
- Richard Horton, Editor of the Lancet
- Maria Neira, Director, World Health Organization Department of Public Health and Environment
- Jeff Thompson, CEO of Gundersen Health

Where: Grand Hyatt Hotel, New York. 109 East 42nd Street at Grand Central Terminal

<http://climatehealth-sideevent.org>

<http://www.climateweeknyc.org/events/action-in-climate-change-and-health>

Event Title: *Sustaining Health: Linking Environment, Nutrition and Health*

When: 1430 – 1800, 22 September

What: An evening event on the relationship between environment, nutrition, and health. Co-organised by the Wellcome Trust, Meteos, and Columbia University's Mailman School of Public Health & International Research Institute for Climate and Society.

Where: Columbia Club, 15 W 43rd Street, New York

<http://www.climateweeknyc.org/events/sustaining-health-linking-environment>

Event Title: *Business, Health and Climate: Join the Conversation*

When: 1830 - 2030, 22 September

Organized by: University of Wisconsin Global Health Institute & Gundersen Health

Speakers include:

- Jonathan Patz, U of Wisconsin 2007
- Jeff Thompson, CEO of Gundersen Health System,
- Moderator: Kizzy Charles-Guzman, former Director of Climate & Health Program for NY City Department of Health

Where: Cornell Club, 6 E. 44th St., New York, NY 10017

Event details:

<http://www.climateweeknyc.org/events/business-health-and-climate-join-the-conversation>

Tuesday, 23 September

Event Title: *UN Climate Summit*

Key Times:

- 0800 – 0830: Opening Ceremony – General Assembly Hall
- 0845-1315: National Action & Ambition Announcements – with joint conclusion in General Assembly Hall
- UN Secretary General Press Conference (currently just before Lunch, TBC)
- CCAC Press Conference & CCAC Initiative Press Conferences (early afternoon, TBC)
- 15:30-18:30 – National Action and Ambition Announcements

Full programme at: <http://www.un.org/climatechange/summit/programme/>

Event Title: *Climate, Health and Jobs*

When: 1530 – 1645, 23 September

What: Thematic session as part of the UN Climate Summit, co-organized by the WHO and ILO

Speakers include:

- Co-Chairs: Presidents of Finland and Gabon
- Moderator: Richard Horton, Editor of the Lancet
- Gro Harlem Brundtland, former Prime Minister of Norway; former Director General of the World Health Organization
- Sharan Burrow, General-Secretary, International Trade Union Confederation

Where: Room 1, UN HQ Climate Summit

Wednesday, 24 September

Event Title: *EATx Event – Stockholm Food Forum*

Where: UN HQ

Speakers Include:

- Børge Brende, Minister of Foreign Affairs of Norway
- [Ertharin Cousin](#), Executive Director of the United Nations World Food Programme
- David Nabarro, UN Special Representative on Food Security and Nutrition
- Jeffrey D. Sachs, Director of The Earth Institute, Columbia University
- Omar Abdi, Deputy Executive Director, UNICEF

What: More than 200 invited thought leaders and practitioners, including representatives from academia, governments, international agencies, business and civil society, will gather to discuss concrete solutions – policies and investments – and how to leverage healthy, sustainable diets for climate change mitigation, environmental protection and public health benefits and ultimately, how to transform awareness and ambitions into an agenda for action.

<http://www.eatforum.org/stockholm-food-forum/>

Thursday, 25 September

Event Title: *Indoor Air Pollution – mobilizing partnerships & increasing awareness*

Where: UN HQ

When: 0900-1700, 25 September

What: Mobilizing partnership and Increasing awareness on the impact of indoor air pollution among women and low income households in Africa. Call for action. Mobilizing partnership and Increasing awareness on the impact of indoor air pollution among women and low income households in Africa. Call for action. <http://www.climateweeknyc.org/events/indoor-air-pollution>