

Dr. Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus  
Director-General, World Health Organization

**2022 Report on the WHO-Civil Society Working Group to Advance Action on Climate and Health**  
*December 2022*

Dear Director-General Dr Tedros,

Coming out of the year of “the African COP”, the WHO-Civil Society Working Group to Advance Action on Climate and Health is proud to report on the ongoing collaboration between WHO and health civil society to address the critical global health challenge of climate change. (You were missed at COP27, particularly given your commitment to attend COP, made during the September 5th [Dialogue on Climate and Health](#) with civil society.) The close collaboration between WHO and civil society strengthens with each year, and as the civil society partners in this collaboration, we appreciate the work we are able to do with WHO.

The WHO-Civil Society Working Group (WG) was established in 2019 in response to your request during COP23 in Bonn. It is co-convened by WHO and the Global Climate and Health Alliance (GCHA), and co-chaired by WHO’s Dr. Maria Neira, and GCHA executive director Dr. Jeni Miller. The WG serves as a formal structure to support collaboration between the WHO and health civil society, powerfully increasing our joint impact on climate decision making to protect health, and on integrating attention to climate in health decision-making.

Highlights from 2022:

- **UNFCCC Submissions from Health Community:** In 2022, WHO and health civil society for the first time systematically collaborated and coordinated on numerous submissions to the UNFCCC, ensuring that health considerations have been made part of UN deliberations on the Global Stocktake and the Global Goal on Adaptation, and that health community policy positions on key negotiating streams were heard by national COP negotiators. (Details below.)
- **Joint Call for a Fossil Fuel Non-Proliferation Treaty:** Building on the clear consensus by the health community in the 2021 Healthy Climate Prescription on the need to justly and rapidly phase out fossil fuels due to their role as drivers of climate change, air pollution, and myriad health harms, in 2022 WHO, leading health civil society organizations, and health professionals called for an [international fossil fuel non-proliferation treaty](#).
- **Call for Climate Change in Health Professional Curricula:** The Capacity Building Subcommittee of the WG drafted and released an [open letter](#) calling on education stakeholders to ensure health professionals are prepared to identify, prevent, and respond to the health impacts of climate change and environmental degradation. This open letter is a starting point to engage in further curriculum development and advocacy.

### **About the Working Group**

The WG comprises representatives from 19 member organizations. Membership in the WG rotates, with each organization serving two years, plus an advisory year, for a total of 19 active members at a time. After serving actively on the WG, members become Alumni and may continue to serve on subcommittees, receive updates and participate in major consultations and activities.

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The WG meets virtually bimonthly; and in-person once a year alongside the WHA. The WG has three subcommittees, Advocacy & Communications, Research and Capacity Building, meeting as needed.

Key objectives:

1. Increase health sector civil society mobilization and collaboration to strengthen national and international responses to climate change, with a focus on health.
2. Strategic communications to make health a central focus in responses to climate change.
3. Advise WHO on areas where additional evidence-based policy guidance may be needed.
4. Support and coordinate preparations for COP; and organize sessions at the WHO Health Pavilion at COP, and at WHO climate change and air pollution conferences.

### Year Four Accomplishments

- **Joint & Coordinated Submissions to UNFCCC Processes:** In 2022, WHO and health civil society collaborated or coordinated on a number of submissions to UNFCCC processes, and on policy position statements, to bring health considerations into UNFCCC policy making and negotiating streams.
  - Submissions on the **Global Stocktake** to assess progress on the Paris Agreement ([Feb](#), also [Feb](#), [Mar 8](#), [Jun 9](#), [Jun 11](#), [June 20](#), [Aug 8](#))
  - Submission on the **Global Goal on Adaptation** ([Sep 5](#))
  - The **COP27 Health Community Policy Recommendations** (Nov 2022) from health civil society on five COP negotiating streams ([loss & damage](#), [mitigation](#), [adaptation](#), [finance](#), and [agriculture](#)). These policy briefs were developed and advanced by WG members and others from health civil society, in coordination with [WHO Policy Briefs](#) submitted on loss & damage, intergenerational equity, short-lived climate pollutants, and food systems.
- **Fossil Fuel Non-Proliferation Treaty:** In 2022, WHO and health civil society organizations [called for the establishment of a Fossil Fuel Non-Proliferation Treaty](#), to address the myriad adverse health impacts of the production and use of fossil fuels, including climate change. WG members drafted, reviewed, and disseminated the letter amongst health organizations. WHO support and [your strong statement](#) on the issue of fossil fuels resonated globally, making headlines in news outlets internationally (e.g. [EuroNews](#), [The Guardian](#), [This Is Africa](#), [DW](#)) and nationally (e.g. in [Cambodia](#), [Canada](#), [France](#), [Nigeria](#), [Philippines](#)). Following WHO and health groups' support, [Vanuatu](#) officially called for a Treaty on the UNGA floor. In the following weeks, the [EU Parliament](#) passed a resolution supporting a Treaty (which, prior to the health community's letter, it had rejected), and [Tuvalu](#) officially called for a Treaty at COP27. During COP27, WHO provided technical expertise at a Talanoa Dialogue about the establishment of a Treaty, attended by parties. WHO's Maria Neira has committed to serve as a [Treaty Champion](#).
- **Call for Climate Change in Health Professional Curricula:** Over several years, the call has been growing for training health professionals on climate change so that they are well-prepared to provide care in the climate era. To lend the full weight of the WG to this issue, the WG Capacity Building Subcommittee developed an [open letter](#) calling on education stakeholders to ensure health professionals are prepared to identify, prevent, and respond to the health impacts of climate change and environmental degradation. The committee is now in the process of identifying avenues to advance the issue, in the places where health professional curricula are discussed and decided.
- **Events at the WHO Health Pavilion at COP27:** For the second year in a row, the health community had a clear presence and 'footprint' within the Blue Zone at the COP, thanks to the WHO Health Pavilion. The WHO Pavilion featured a powerful sculpture of lungs that were

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also reminiscent of trees, creatively highlighting the ties between human health and the health of the rest of the planet. [More than 50 events](#) over the two weeks of COP showcased the health arguments for ambitious climate action across many different sectors and topics. WG members played key roles, organizing sessions and serving as speakers in Pavilion events. Because the Pavilion offered hybrid meeting capacity, the sessions were internationally accessible, for both speakers and audience. The events were [livestreamed on the GCHA YouTube channel for real-time access](#), and [recordings of all of the COP27 health events](#) can be found on the WHO website.

- **WHO Climate and Health Research Guidance:** In 2021, the WG Research Subcommittee produced the report, "[Climate change and health research: current trends, gaps and perspectives for the future](#)" identifying emerging research, gaps, and opportunities. WHO has now taken this as the starting point for developing an official WHO Guidance on climate and health research to guide and inform the global research community. The WHO process for this is under development, and the Research Subcommittee stands ready to support it.
- **Climate and Health Networking Reception at COP27:** Since 2011, WHO and civil society have collaborated to mount an annual Global Climate and Health Summit on the margins of COP, to elevate health visibility at the talks and build momentum for a healthy climate. The establishment of the official WHO Health Pavilion inside the COP venue formalized a platform and presence for health at COP, obviating the need for a conference for that purpose. The 2022 Pavilion was launched with a reception hosted by WHO and Pavilion sponsor, the Wellcome Trust. In addition, to offer more in-depth networking amongst the international health community gathered at COP (a function previously provided by the Summit and important to forging a vibrant, connected climate-health movement) GCHA and the Climate and Health Foundation hosted the [Global Climate and Health Networking Reception](#) on the margins of COP. Dr. Maria Neira as well as the COP27 Youth Envoy, Dr. Omnia El Omrani, provided opening remarks. The Networking Reception brought together health civil society, WHO representatives, philanthropy, ministry representatives, and health professionals.

None of these activities could have been accomplished at the same level, with the same impact, or in some cases, at all, without the close collaboration on climate change that the WG enables between WHO and health civil society.

### Looking Ahead

- As of January 2023, the WG welcomed a new cohort of members, with previous members rotating off and becoming Alumni. New members this year add diversity of health sector representation, and add representation from the Western Pacific.
- The WG will meet in person at WHA76 in Geneva in May, at a breakfast event that will include a brainstorming session to begin to establish the direction and ambition of the WG for the next 2-3 years.
- WG members are collaborating to call for a new WHA Resolution on climate change, air pollution, and health in 2024 at WHA77. Having developed [recommendations for a proposed WHA Resolution](#), the group is actively reaching out to Member States. Kenya has shown early interest in leading the process, while Ghana, the UK and Germany have already expressed interest in supporting it.
- The WG will contribute to and support WHO's COP28 Health Pavilion to ensure diverse and impactful programming, and will support health civil society to embed health in sessions at other pavilions to reach a broader, cross-sectoral set of stakeholders.
- Thanks to the advocacy efforts of this WG and many other organizations, the COP28 presidency has announced that they will consider health issues in depth this year at COP and will organize a dedicated [Health Day](#) as well as a ministerial meeting. Because of this unique and historic opportunity, the WG will play an even bigger role and continue to be the vehicle for coordination and alignment of health civil society in 2023, throughout the year, as well as

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in the run up to and during COP28. We hope that the health focus at this year's COP can be leveraged to [set a new norm for integration of health into COPs](#) and climate policy making going forward.

The movement of health organizations engaging on the issue of climate change continues to grow. Working together, we can ensure that health groups newly entering the climate space are supported to understand and effectively engage with climate policy processes, that we continue to embed climate awareness into health systems, health funding and health programs and policy; and that the new perspectives and capacities of the growing movement help strengthen and deepen global work on climate and health.

Work on climate and health is only more and more crucial, as we see the real-time impacts of climate change on people's health around the world, and as we better understand the risks of irreversible tipping points without ambitious climate action. The health community's involvement is essential now more than ever, to ensure a healthy, equitable and sustainable future for humanity. We hope that in 2023 we can count on your presence at COP28 in Dubai, UAE ensuring that health is highly visible and influential at the COP28 climate negotiations.

Sincerely,

*Jeni Miller, PhD, Executive Director, **Global Climate and Health Alliance** (co-chair)*

*Githinji Gitahi, MD, CEO; Martin Muchangi, Director, Population Health & Environment, **Amref Health Africa***

*Courtney Howard, MD, Former Board President; Claudel Pétrin-Desrosiers, MD, **Canadian Association of Physicians for the Environment***

*Jacqueline Ponzo, MD; Paola Rava, MD, **Confederación IberoAmericana de Medicina Familiar (CIMF)***

*Kristin Aunan, project coordinator, **Enbel Project***

*Genon Jensen, ED; Anne Stauffer, Deputy Director, **Health and Environment Alliance***

*Donna Murray, CEO; Paul Gibson, Director of Policy and Research **Indigenous Allied Health Australia***

*Lasha Gogvadze, Senior Health Officer, IFRC; Nathalie Bassaler, Head of Policy & Advocacy, French RC; Emanuele Capobianco, Director Health & Care, IFRC; Maarten van Aalst, Director, RCRC Climate Centre, **International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies***

*Howard Catton, RN, CEO; Gill Adynski, PhD, RN, Nursing and Health Policy Analyst, **International Council of Nurses***

*Mohamed Eissa, Liaison for Public Health, **International Federation of Medical Students' Associations***

*Prof Ruth Etzel, MD, PhD, Chair, Environmental Health Strategic Advisory Group, Prof Jonathan Klein, MD, MPH, Treasurer; **International Pediatric Association***

*Audrey Wong, Chairperson of Public Health, **International Pharmaceutical Students Federation***

## 2022 WHO-Civil Society Working Group Report

*Julia Shu-Li Wang, PhD, Chair, **International Society for Environmental Epidemiology - Asia & Western Pacific Chapter***

*Maria Guevara, MD, International Medical Secretary; Carol Devine, Climate & Environment Lead, MSF Canada, **Médecin Sans Frontières***

*Megan Arthur, PhD; Rhiannon Osborne, MD, **People's Health Movement***

*Lwando Maki, MD **South African Medical Association***

*Sumi Mehta, Vice President, Environmental and Climate Health;; Shashwat Raj, Communications Lead **Vital Strategies***

*Liz Hanna, RN PhD, Chair Environment Working Group; Marta Lomazzi, PhD, Executive Manager, **World Federation of Public Health Associations***

*Kelcey Armstrong-Walenczak, Policy and Advocacy Manager; Elvis Achiri Ndikum, Air Pollution and Climate Change Expert Group Member, **World Heart Federation***

*Lujain Alqodmani, MSc MBBS MIHMEP, Former Co-chair of Environment Caucus, President-elect **World Medical Association***