

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

2023 Report on the WHO-Civil Society Working Group to Advance Action on Climate and Health

March 2024

Dear Director-General Dr Tedros,

After a historical year for climate and health, with the first-ever Health Day at the UNFCCC Conference of Parties COP28, the WHO-Civil Society Working Group to Advance Action on Climate and Health is pleased to report on the vital role and influence of the ongoing collaboration between WHO and health civil society to address the critical global health challenge of climate change.

We would like to begin by congratulating you and expressing our gratitude for your presence at COP28, [your role on Health Day](#), and in the [World Climate Action Summit](#) for heads of state on the preceding day. In addition, we congratulate you on [your powerful remarks on fossil fuels and health](#), and regarding the need for a fossil fuel non-proliferation treaty, powerfully standing with the Pacific Island States and all of the twelve nation states now formally calling for a process to negotiate such a treaty.

We deeply appreciate the ongoing collaboration between WHO and civil society toward the shared goal of protecting and promoting all people's health in the era of the climate crisis.

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, as well as on integrating attention to climate change in health decision-making.

With the advent of a high-profile Health Day at COP28, 2023 was an unprecedented year for the climate and health community, putting heightened demands on both WHO and health civil society. It was a complex and demanding year, but the results speak for themselves, including many notable "firsts":

- A high profile [Health Day](#) on the opening day of COP28 and **49 Ministers of Health** attending COP28
- An inaugural **UNFCCC Interministerial on Climate and Health**, including Ministers of Health and representatives from ministries of finance and the environment
- COP28 UAE [Declaration on Climate and Health](#), endorsed by 148 countries (to date)
- COP28 UAE [Declaration on Sustainable Agriculture, Resilient Food Systems, and Climate Action](#), which included robust references to nutrition & food access, as well as the lives & livelihoods of smallholder farmers.
- Over **1900 representatives from the health sector** at COP
- **Progress in the negotiations that benefit health**: operationalization of a [loss and damage fund](#); explicit integration of [health into the Global Goal on Adaptation](#); call on Parties to [transition away from fossil fuels](#).
- Announcement of **\$1 billion in funding and finance commitments** for climate and health
- Announcement of **12 nation states formally calling for a Fossil Fuel Non-Proliferation Treaty**, following on support for such a treaty [by the health community](#) including WHO, alongside faith groups, youth, Nobel laureate scientists, and many more constituencies.

Additional 2023 Accomplishments

- **Input to support the development of WHO Communications Guide for Health Professionals** In 2023, the Working Group was consulted to provide valuable input into the development of WHO's Communications Guide for Health Professionals on Climate and Health, developed by WHO in collaboration with other partners, with support from Health Canada. ([Launch event](#): March 22, 2024.)
- **Input to support the development of the BBC Storyworks-GCHA short film series *The Climate and Us*:** With input and support from the WHO Working Group, BBC Storyworks and GCHA developed a series of over 20 short films telling compelling, human-centered stories of climate change impacts affecting people's health, and innovative solutions to tackle the challenge. The series was announced with the screening of a short film trailer in 2022 at your Strategic Roundtable on Climate and Health at the World Health Assembly and is now publicly available via [The Climate and Us](#) BBC website and [on GCHA's website](#). Films were screened at multiple venues during COP28, as well as at a launch event at BBC offices in New York during New York Climate Week.
- **Events at the WHO Health Pavilion at COP28:** For the third year in a row, the health community had a clear presence and 'footprint' within the Blue Zone at COP, thanks to the Health Pavilion hosted by WHO. [A rich program of events](#) over the two weeks of COP showcased the health arguments for ambitious climate action across many different sectors and topics. WG members organized sessions and served as speakers in Pavilion events. Because the Pavilion offered a hybrid meeting capacity, the sessions were internationally accessible for both speakers and audience. Recordings of COP28 health events can be found at the same link on the WHO website.
- **Climate and Health Networking Reception at COP28:** In order to continue offering a vital networking opportunity during COP for the international health community engaged with climate change at the global level, GCHA and the Climate and Health Foundation hosted the [Global Climate and Health Networking Reception](#) on the margins of COP28. Prior to the establishment of the COP Health Pavilion, annual Global Climate and Health Summits co-hosted by WHO and GCHA on the COP margins served as important community-building, networking opportunities for the health community. By providing the opening remarks for the COP28 health reception, WHO's Dr. Maria Neira ensured valuable continuity with the previous Summit receptions, thereby nurturing the interconnections amongst a vastly growing climate and health community. The Networking Reception brought together health civil society, WHO representatives, philanthropy, ministry representatives, and health professionals.

Credit is due to the UAE for offering the opportunity at COP of the first-ever Health Day and for working throughout the year to make this a meaningful event. We also believe that Health Day and the strong health presence at COP28 would not have been as impactful, and indeed would not even have been possible, without the long years of work by WHO to elevate the climate and health nexus in the COP context, and the close collaboration of WHO with a civil society community working energetically toward the same end.

The events and activities of 2023 resulted in substantial progress and commitments. Still, it is clear to all that the level of action on climate change and to prepare and protect communities in the face of climate change, is still far from adequate. Global time-bound targets for the health sector have yet to be quantified and met with concrete financial commitments, leaving a severe deficit in available funding for health-based adaptation in LMICs. The fund to support LICs facing health and other losses and damage from climate impacts has been operationalized, but has received less than 0.2% of the funding needed annually. And despite commitments to limit warming to 1.5-2C, and a commitment at COP28 to "transition away from fossil fuels", fossil fuel extraction and use is still growing.

Together, we continue to have important work to do to ensure that governments follow through on commitments made in 2023 and 2024 and deliver even more ambitious action. As the climate and health community continues its impressive growth, we have more voices to bring to the table, insisting that people's

health and well-being be at the center of climate decision-making and a cornerstone of future COP discussions. The members of the WHO Working Group look forward to continuing our important work together to deliver a safe, healthy, sustainable world for all people.

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**

Katie Huffling, DNP, RN, CNM, FAAN, Executive Director, **Association of Nurses for Healthy Environments**

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

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

Professor Vivekanand Jha, Executive Director; Chhavi Bhandari, Head, Impact and Engagement, **The George Institute for Global Health, India**

Jonathan Jennings, Executive Director, **Health in Harmony**

Prof Ruth Etzel, MD, PhD, Co-Chair, Committee on Environmental Health and Climate Change., Prof Jonathan Klein, MD, MPH, Treasurer; **International Pediatric Association**

Audrey Wong, Chairperson of Public Health 2022-23; Sarah Neggazi, Chairperson of Public Health 2023-24, **International Pharmaceutical Students' Federation**

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

José Félix Hoyo, MD; Javier Ramirez, Planning Coordinator, **Medicines du Monde**

Maria Guevara, MD, International Medical Secretary; **Médecin Sans Frontières**

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

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

Rosie Tasker, Global Advocacy Manager, **Union for International Cancer Control**

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

Hannah Marcus, 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**