

Concept Note

WHO-WIPO-WTO Trilateral Symposium

Hosted by WHO, 14th November 2023 at UNOG Room XVII

(Hybrid & UN TV webcast)

TITLE

Facing the future: human health and climate change

OBJECTIVES

- To explore the interrelatedness of human health and climate change.
- To improve understanding of existing and emerging priorities and approaches for meeting human health care needs due to the impact of climate change.
- To explore how the Trilateral cooperation can support countries to address health challenges arising as a result of climate change.
- To provide a forum for the exchange of multiple stakeholders' views.
- To provide useful contributions to the health and trade related events at The United Nations Climate Change Conference (COP 28).

CONTEXT

The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) are the blueprint to achieve a better and more sustainable future for all. They address the interconnected global challenges we face and recognize that action in one area affects outcomes in others. There is an alarming stagnation in progress towards achieving SDG-related health outcomes, including Universal Health Coverage (UHC), with over 30% of the global population – or 2.4 billion people – unable to access a basic package of health services and over two billion people suffering extreme financial hardship in seeking access to health care.

Progress in achieving global health goals is hampered by an increasingly complex environment due to accelerating changes in demographics, disease patterns, physical environment, economy, science and technology. All countries face a rise in aging populations, a growing prevalence of noncommunicable diseases and mental health conditions, and threats from drug resistance and epidemic and pandemic-prone pathogens. Many countries are also faced with ongoing challenges of malnutrition and communicable diseases, while migration and humanitarian crises affect others.

Climate change affects the social and environmental determinants of health – clean air, safe drinking water, sufficient food and secure shelter for people around the globe. It has profound implications for health, wellbeing and healthcare systems everywhere.

Climate change is the single biggest health threat facing humanity, it is also driven by human activity and the resulting environmental degradation. Between 2030 and 2050, climate change is expected to cause approximately 250 000 additional deaths per year, from malnutrition, malaria, diarrhoea and heat stress alone. The direct damage costs to health are estimated to be between US\$ 2–4 billion per year by 2030. The climate crisis threatens to undo the progress made over the last fifty years in development, global health, and poverty reduction, while further widening existing health inequalities between and within populations. It severely jeopardizes the realization of UHC in various ways, including by compounding the existing burden of disease and by exacerbating existing barriers to accessing health services.

As a result of the climate crisis, the demand for health services and products is increasing, underscoring the imperative need for stronger and resilient health systems to address ongoing issues and pre-empt and prevent future crisis. As made evident by the COVID-19 pandemic, providing sustainable and equitable access to life-saving medical care is a fundamental necessity for all those affected. Substantially strengthening preparedness and responsiveness of the health care architecture everywhere could also be a means to address the growing incidence of humanitarian crises caused by climate change, with a record of more than 340 million people requiring assistance in 2023 across every WHO Region.

The three organizations' contributions to the topic

The impact of climate change on human health, especially among the world's most marginalized populations, is a devastating reality that warrants urgent and unified action. The three collaborating agencies aim to assist Members in making effective use of health, trade and intellectual property tools to mitigate and adapt to climate change and address its impacts on human health.

WHO's Fourteenth General Programme of Work (GPW14) (2024-2028) plans for a dramatically different world and the imperative to address the profound implications for health due to climate change and other demographic, environmental, epidemiological, and economic changes. WHO's priorities include not only addressing climate change and health and the related determinates and root cause of ill health, but also providing health in the face of changing global political priorities. WHO's work addresses the deep interconnectedness between climate change, biodiversity, and health. WHO supports countries in building climate-resilient health systems and tracking national progress in protecting health from climate change, as well as in assessing the health gains that would result from the implementation of the existing Nationally Determined Contributions to the Paris Agreement, and the potential for larger gains from more ambitious climate action.

WIPO's mission to develop a balanced and inclusive global intellectual property (IP) ecosystem to promote innovation and creativity for a better and more sustainable future for all guides its activities in promoting IP as a catalyst of innovation and access. Specialized programs and initiatives at WIPO, such as WIPO [GREEN](#) (an online platform for green technology exchange), ongoing work on patent information and landscaping, technical

assistance for Member States, as well as WIPO's alternative dispute resolution (ADR) mechanism are relevant to addressing challenges at the intersection of climate change and human health.

In addition, WIPO's work on IP frontier technologies, including Artificial Intelligence, is also relevant. By promoting innovation, creativity and access, WIPO aims to ensure that stakeholders have the necessary tools to understand the role of the IP system in addressing global challenges.

The WTO's mission is to help its members use trade as a means to raise living standards, create jobs and improve livelihoods, based on the sustainable use of resources and preservation of the environment. Many, if not most, WTO agreements thus provide Members with a framework under which health and climate change-related issues can be addressed. Trade and its rules are inextricably linked to the effects of climate change. This is underpinned by the ongoing work in a number of WTO bodies. The 2022 [World Trade Report](#) as well as the 2023 [Public Forum](#) explore how trade rules can contribute to addressing climate change.

The protection and enforcement of intellectual property rights, as provided by the WTO's Agreement on Trade-Related Aspects of Intellectual Property Rights (TRIPS), provides a balanced framework for innovation and diffusion of climate adaptation technologies. A couple of WTO bodies, including the Committee on Agriculture, as well as the ongoing negotiations on updating the WTO's rulebook on agricultural trade, serve as fora for discussions of the impact of climate change on food and agricultural production, trade, and consumption patterns around the world, as well as the required adjustments in policies and regulations to help ensure food safety, food security and nutrition. At the WTO's 12th Ministerial Conference, WTO Members agreed a landmark [Ministerial Declaration on the Emergency Response to Food Insecurity](#). At the same conference, the [Sanitary and Phytosanitary \(SPS\) Declaration](#) launched a work programme addressing inter alia the effect of climate change on food production, shifting pest- and disease pressures, and the role of innovation in tools and technologies. The SPS Committee is due to present a report and recommendations to the WTO's 13th Ministerial Conference in February 2024. To explore how climate change is altering and increasing the challenges faced in food production, the Standards and Trade Development Facility organized a series of [webinars](#) in 2022. Among other things, they addressed the impact of climate change on food systems, emergence and transmission of animal diseases and pest outbreaks, which are intrinsically related to human health. Under the Agreement on Technical Barriers to Trade (TBT), the TBT Committee regularly discusses climate-related regulations and standards to mitigate the impact on human health.

Who can attend?

Participation is open to all interested individuals, government delegations and organizations. In-person attendance is subject to availability of space. Registered participants without United Nations accreditation must present an official and valid form of identification. The symposium will be held in English only; no interpretation will be available.

PROGRAMME

SESSION I: OPENING

11:00 – 11:30

Opening remarks by the three Directors-General

Dr. Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus, WHO Director General

Dr. Ngozi Okonjo-Iweala, WTO Director-General

Mr. Daren Tang, WIPO Director General

11.30 – 11.50

Keynote speaker: Health impact of climate change

Dr. Ambrosio Yobanolo del Real, Vice-Chair Technology Executive Committee of the UNFCCC

11:50 -12:00

Q&A

LIGHT LUNCH BREAK WILL BE PROVIDED OUTSIDE THE ROOM

12:00 -12:45

SESSION II

THE IMPACT OF CLIMATE CHANGE ON HUMAN HEALTH

12:45 – 13:45

Moderator: Dr Yukiko Nakatani, WHO Assistant Director General on Access to Medicines and Health Products Division WHO ADG

Speakers:

Dr. Maria Neira, WHO's Director of the Department of Environment, Climate Change and Health

Minister Ahmad Irfan Aslam, Federal Minister for Climate Change & Environmental Coordination, Law & Justice & Water Resources, Pakistan

Dr. Maria Guevara, Doctors Without Borders (MSF)

Ms. Wilma Mendoza Miro, Confederation of Indigenous Women from Bolivia (CNAMIB) and Mr. Marcos Nordgren Ballivian, Climate Action Network Latin America (CAN-LA)

Q&A

SESSION III

THE ROLE OF IP FOR INNOVATION AND ACCESS: CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES

13:45 – 14:45

Moderator: Dr. Edward Kwakwa, Assistant Director General, Global Challenges and Partnerships Sector at WIPO

Speakers:

Prof. Caroline Ncube, DSI/NRF SARChI Research Chair in Intellectual Property, Innovation and Development in the Department of Commercial Law at the University of Cape Town (UCT)

Ambassador Guilherme Patriota, Permanent Representative of Brazil to the WTO and other Economic Organizations in Geneva

Ms. Michelle Childs, Policy Advocacy Director, Drugs for Neglected Diseases Initiatives (DNDi)

Mr. Justin Pine, Senior Director of international Affairs, Global IP and Digital Policy, Biotechnology Innovation Organization (BIO)

Q&A

SESSION IV

CLIMATE CHANGE, HUMAN HEALTH AND TRADE

14:45 – 15:45

Moderator: Mr. Antony Taubman, Director, Intellectual Property, Procurement and Competition Division, WTO

Speakers:

Dr. Peter Berry, Climate Change and Innovation Bureau, Healthy Environments and Consumer Safety Branch, Health Canada

Dr. Renata Clarke, Sub-Regional Coordinator for the Caribbean, Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO)

Dr. Lutz Hegemann, President, Global Health and Sustainability, Novartis

Mr. Vicente Paolo Yu, Independent Expert, Founding Partner of the Clean Energy Innovations Partnerships

Q&A

SESSION V

CLOSING OVERVIEW: TAKEAWAYS FOR TRILATERAL COOPERATION AND ENGAGEMENT

15:45 – 16:00

Dr. Clive Ondari, Director of Health Products and Standards, Access to Medicines and Health Products Division WHO