

5.6 Health, environment and climate change

We welcome WHO's action to address the impacts of climate change on health. However, we are concerned about the absence of urgent actions in both documents. The most recent IPCC report highlights the limited time we have to ensure 1.5C level is not reached. It, therefore, illustrates the need to take measures in adaptation and not solely in mitigation. As it appears very unlikely that this objective be respected, both documents need more anticipation in the case of a higher rise in temperature.

The framing of the strategy and the action plan does not address the need to adapt health care systems to deal with the urgent impacts of climate change. Instead, they touch on the need to make healthcare systems more resilient to future events, and ignore the current climate impacts on healthcare systems that are already being faced by MS, both developed and developing.

Furthermore, the objectives outlined in the Strategy are very optimistic and ambitious. Whilst we encourage health sectors to raise the importance of health impacts with other sectors, these objectives shift the current focus from adaptation to mitigation planning, and ignore the need for short-term objectives for MS.

Additionally, the vague and broad description used to describe environmental risks confuses the Strategy, and the exclusion of formal definitions of "chemical, biological, physical and work-related" risks further add to its complexity. Using such terminology in this global strategy fails to distinguish the direct risks imposed by climate change on health, thereby diminishing what WHO currently labels as "the greatest threat to global health in the 21st century".

We urge the WHO to amend the strategy, to further clarify the draft action plan for SIDS, to incorporate the need for adaptation measures and produce contextual guidelines for MS who need to undertake immediate measures to protect their healthcare systems.