

Medicus Mundi International

Meeting: Executive Board 142

Agenda Item: 3.5 Health, environment and climate change

Statement:

MMI welcomes this opportunity to speak on agenda item (3.5). This statement is supported by PHM. We welcome the draft comprehensive global strategy on health, environment and climate change. Environmental factors contribute to a quarter of global mortality. Yet, the health impacts of climate change and environmental pollution receive little attention. SDG 13 speaks to the urgent necessity of combating climate change and its impacts. However, global inaction on this issue undermines efforts to improve the health of populations.

Climate change threatens food security and environmental pollution is widespread, adding to the burden of both communicable and non-communicable diseases. Hazardous substances such as microplastics and endocrine disrupting chemicals are universally present in the environment. Extreme weather events and climate refugees are additional dimensions of the health harming effects of climate change.

These threats affect social determinants of health at a global scale and their impact is felt most by the poor who pay for mindless consumption promoted by global Capital. Instead, powerful political and economic actors linked to the fossil fuel, transport and agricultural sectors need to assume the major burden placed on the planet by climate change.

In order to address climate change and pollution, binding agreements similar to the Montreal protocol on CFCs are necessary. We urge MS to align themselves with the goals and targets of the Paris Climate Agreement, and set ambitious goals in the draft global action plan, to be translated into national goals to protect people's health. This should include the establishment of progressive carbon taxation and removal of subsidies to fossil fuel industries, with the historically high polluting nations of the North taking the lead. This would free up public funds invested in health-harming industries, which could then be invested in prevention, health systems, research and mitigation of health impacts.