

Decision to adopt the Strategic Action Plan to Scale Up Health and Environment Interventions in Africa 2019 - 2029

1. We, the Ministers of Health and Ministers of Environment, having met at the third Inter-ministerial Conference on Health and Environment in Africa, held in Libreville Gabon from 6-9 November 2018;
2. *Aware that* our environment can influence our health through a variety of channels including exposure to physical, chemical and biological risk factors or by triggering behavioral changes;
3. *Mindful of* the growing awareness that humans, through their interventions in the environment, play a vital role in exacerbating or mitigating health risks;
4. *Deeply concerned that:*
 - I. Nearly 1 in 4 of total global deaths and their associated cost is attributable to avoidable environmental risks factors and in Africa 23% of premature deaths are attributable to unhealthy environments;
 - II. the continent is facing a double burden of communicable and non-communicable diseases which imposes a very heavy economic and social cost, and makes it more difficult to achieve key development goals, including poverty reduction and health targets;
 - III. every day 9 out of 10 people breathe air in which the concentration of air pollutants is above the limit set up by the WHO guidelines, and more than 7 million people will die prematurely as a consequence. In 2012, 4.3 million deaths globally were attributable to indoor air pollution with 580,000 of those deaths occurring principally in Africa as a result of domestic use of solid fuels for eating, lighting and cooking;
 - IV. In Africa alone climate change could reduce crop yield by up to 20% by 2050 as population nearly doubles as well as of protecting the natural systems which, not only underpin the livelihoods of billions of people, but also sustains all life on Earth;
 - V. Biodiversity is under threat as never before. Animals and plants, including species vital to many poorer communities, are suffering from the effects of pollution, including from the vast amounts of untreated waste emanating from households and industry;
5. *Recalling*
 - I. The Libreville Declaration on Health and Environment in Africa (2008) which represents the umbrella policy framework upon which African governments committed to address together with development partners the environmental determinants of human health and ecosystems integrity in an integrated manner;
 - II. The Luanda Commitment (2010) which sets top environment and health priorities for the continent;

- III. The United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), "Transforming our World: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development", as adopted by the General Assembly (October 2015);
- IV. The Paris Agreement on Climate Change (December 2015) and
- V. the Marrakech Ministerial Declaration on "Health and Environment and Climate Change (November 2016);

6. *Welcoming*

- I. The work of the World Health Organization (WHO) on environment and health issues, such as air pollution, chemicals and waste, including on heavy metals, and appreciating relevant World Health Assembly resolutions and the current 13th General Programme of Work;
 - II. The outcome of the second session of the United Nations Environment Assembly (UNEA-2) under the overarching theme "Healthy Environment, Healthy People" which recognizes the importance of the nexus between environment and health and the need to act urgently;
 - III. The UNEA-3 report and Ministerial Declaration "Towards a Pollution Free Planet" which further provides startling evidence of a polluted planet that impacts air, land, fresh water, marine and coastal areas including crosscutting pollution sources of chemicals and wastes;
 - IV. The recent agreement between UN Environment and WHO to join their efforts mutually to address, in a significant manner, environmental health risks through a formal agreement on developing a joint work programme and holding an annual high-level meeting to evaluate progress and make recommendations for continued collaboration;
 - V. Multilateral Environmental Agreements (MEAs), in particular the Basel, Rotterdam and Stockholm Conventions on hazardous chemicals and wastes, whose common objectives are to protect human health and the environment, through the decisions of their governing bodies, and emphasize the relevance of addressing the health and environment linkages in implementing their respective mandates; and
 - VI. The Agenda 2063, adopted by African Union as a regional strategy to optimize the use of African resources for the benefit of all Africans.
7. *Affirming* the strong inter-linkages between environment and health, including health inequalities, and the importance to address them jointly, including by fully implementing the the SDGs of the UN 2030 Agenda;
8. *Stressing that* directly tackling the inter-linkages between environment and human health presents new and interwoven key opportunities to meet the SDGs, as environment and health is reflected across the various goals and targets of the 2030 Agenda.
9. *Remaining concerned that*, while successful responses to pollution may exist, their scope, scale and effectiveness remain limited owing to a lack of institutional capacity or resources,

10. *Convinced that:*

- I. The realization of these various global objectives on environment, health and development, requires the strong commitment and involvement of political leadership in every country at all levels in their implementation and in the creation of the necessary conducive and enabling conditions.
- II. The Health and Environment Strategic Alliance in Africa adopted by African Ministers during the second inter-ministerial conference on health and environment in Africa held in Luanda, Angola, in 2010 constitutes a key platform to support the concerted and coordinated implementation of these international agendas and agreements.

11. *Having considered* the Strategic Action Plan to Scale Up Health and Environment Interventions in Africa 2019 - 2029;

12. ENDORSES the proposed Strategic Action Plan.

13. URGES all Member States to:

- I. Provide stewardship and leadership; forge partnerships with development partners, multilateral agencies, the private sector and civil society;
- II. Increase allocation of resources and scale up domestic investments on platforms, initiatives and programmes that address the impact of environmental factors on health;
- III. Promote intercountry stakeholders' dialogue and public-private partnerships including with intergovernmental organizations, development banks and regional economic communities, research institutions and the academia;
- IV. Set the research agenda; consolidate scientific evidence and share experiences and lessons learned on managing health and environment issues in Africa
- V. Focus their attention and interventions on the following set of strategic health and environment priorities:
 - a) Devise, in collaboration with partners, national policies and plans for implementation of the strategic action plan as appropriate, and to establish appropriate policy frameworks and institutional mechanisms for its implementation, monitoring and evaluation;
 - b) Access to safe drinking water and safe sanitation;
 - c) Air pollution and clean energy;
 - d) Management of chemicals (particularly pesticides) and wastes (including plastic, biomedical, electronic and electrical wastes);
 - e) Climate change and health;
 - f) Healthy Settings relevant to urbanization and health;
 - g) Biodiversity conservation; and

14. Call upon the UN Environment and WHO to:

- I. Set and disseminate norms and standards, policy advice and implementation guidelines, including methodologies and protocols to support country actions;
 - II. Facilitate capacity building and technical assistance for the development and implementation of national plans for joint action;
 - III. Catalyze mobilization of domestic and external resources, and support development of national business cases for investment in priority health and environment interventions;
 - IV. Advocate for heightened commitment, increased visibility, prioritization, and understanding of health and environment linkages within and beyond WHO and UN Environment; and
 - V. Promote regional stakeholders' dialogue and public-private partnerships including with other intergovernmental organizations, development banks and regional economic communities, research institutions and the academia.
15. Call on development partners and other stakeholders to recognize the sustainable development value of health and environment interventions, to include them into their agendas and to provide the technical and financial resources required to support the implementation of the strategic action plan to scale up health and environment interventions in Africa.
16. Call on his Excellency Ali Bongo Ondimba, President of the Republic of Gabon, host country, to present for endorsement, the present the Strategic Action Plan to Scale Up Health and Environment Interventions in Africa 2019 – 2029 to the African Union.