

## 53rd DIRECTING COUNCIL

### 66th SESSION OF THE REGIONAL COMMITTEE OF WHO FOR THE AMERICAS

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Provisional Agenda Item 8.6

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#### A. STRATEGY AND PLAN OF ACTION ON CLIMATE CHANGE

##### Background

1. This report provides an update on the progress made during the first two years of the implementation of the Strategy and Plan of Action on Climate Change (1). The report focuses on the progress achieved towards the four overall objectives: evidence; awareness raising and education; partnerships; and adaptation. The report is based on the findings of two key workshops that addressed implementation of the Strategy and Plan of Action at the end of 2013: one held in Mexico for all countries in the Region, with 24 participating countries; and the other in Barbados for the Caribbean, with 14 participating countries. The report also draws on information from a questionnaire sent to countries regarding their implementation of actions (18 responses to date). All combined, this includes input received from 33 countries.

##### Update on Progress Achieved

2. The Strategy provides an agreed set of common activities needed to advance work on climate change. The Strategy has motivated countries where no or very few activities were being carried out. Table 1 shows factors that are facilitating implementation of the plan of work, factors that are hindering progress, and factors required to overcome difficulties, as identified by the countries (not all factors apply to all countries).

3. **Evidence** (*Promote and support the generation and dissemination of knowledge to facilitate evidence-based actions to reduce health risks associated with climate change*): Guides on vulnerability assessment and adaptation have been developed and disseminated widely in English, Spanish, and Portuguese. Ten countries in the Region submitted national communications to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) during 2012-2013; all of them included reports on health, some with detailed analyses (2). There has been limited progress on the evaluation of greenhouse gas emissions in the health sector. However, the Smart Health Facilities

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Initiative includes the reduction of carbon emissions in its aims for safe and green facilities.

4. ***Awareness Raising and Education*** (*Raise awareness and increase knowledge of the effects of climate change on health in order to facilitate public health interventions*): Several courses and awareness-raising activities were supported, including a course for MERCOSUR countries in Uruguay and one for Andean countries in Ecuador; a module in the Pan American Health Organization's (PAHO) Edmundo Granda Ugalde Leaders in International Health Program; as well as many national courses. Several countries have developed awareness-raising campaigns aimed at the general population. The workshops in Mexico and Barbados were useful in increasing knowledge and awareness among key participants from ministries of health. A community of practice on health and climate change was launched in partnership with the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) and the National Institute of Public Health in Mexico, and work started with online seminars.

5. ***Partnerships*** (*Promote policies and interventions in and between countries in coordination with other agencies and sectors*): PAHO collaborated effectively with other UN partners, including UNEP in a workshop in Mexico. Activities were developed and implemented with national agencies (e.g. a multi-country training workshop in Ecuador); with Collaborating Centers (e.g. with NIEHS at a side event during the UNFCCC Conference of the Parties in 2013); with the Amazon Cooperation Treaty Organization (e.g. an ACTO workshop on climate change and health in Manaus); and with the Convention on Biological Diversity regarding the interlinkages between climate change, biodiversity, and health (e.g. two Regional workshops, one for the Americas and one in collaboration with AFRO). PAHO also contributed to the reports submitted by the World Health Organization (WHO) to the UNFCCC. Continuing work with partners includes development of instruments to compile and disseminate information as well as networks for information exchange.

6. ***Adaptation*** (*Support the evaluation of the population's vulnerability to climate change and identify adaptation interventions*): PAHO supported countries in their vulnerability assessments under different projects and with other partners. Several countries include health in their national adaptation plans, and some have completed or started health sector-specific adaptation plans. PAHO is contributing to the work of the newly created WHO/World Meteorological Organization joint office for climate and health with regional pilot projects.

### **Action Necessary to Improve the Situation**

7. Based on the consultations, PAHO will continue to work to identify success factors and best practices as highlighted in Table 1, in particular during the next biennium. This work will focus on implementing feasible actions required for success under: *a*) evidence, the development of vulnerability indicators and vulnerability assessments; *b*) awareness Raising and Education, supporting national and regional

capacity-building efforts; *c*) partnerships, strengthening newly established networks; and *d*) adaptation, continuing the support for national adaptation plans.

### Action by the Directing Council

8. The Directing Council is requested to take note of this progress report and make any observations it considers pertinent.

**Table 1. Summary factors influencing progress in implementing the Strategy and Plan of Action in the Region**

	<b>Facilitating factors</b>	<b>Hindering factors</b>	<b>Factors required for success</b>
Evidence	Increasing scientific evidence on climate change and health links. Increased understanding of the concepts of social and environmental determinants.	Insufficient country-level evidence. Current evidence not fully utilized in the health sector. Insufficient involvement of government institutions.	Health vulnerability indicators and vulnerability assessments to guide actions. Strengthening of norms to reduce vulnerability and risks. Public health-based criteria to guide investments.
Awareness raising and education	Increasing political will. Increased information and outputs by scientific groups. Actions led by international agencies, including limited but targeted funding.	Insufficient human resources and frequent movement of personnel. Lack of appropriate information dissemination. Limited participation of youth and of social networks. Lack of leading institutions in the topic area.	Regional human resource development. Educational programs tailored to decision makers, children, and the community at large. Regional seminars on the topic. Empower the health sector to be more inclusive and proactive.
Partnerships	Increased national interagency activities. Increased activities of current international alliances.	Population not involved in the issues. Delay in policy implementation. Lobbying by greenhouse gas producers.	Health in all policies. Improve intersectoral participation. Local government involvement, with community participation. Networks to facilitate action.
Adaptation	National adaptation plans increasingly include health. Some countries are developing health sector-specific action plans.	Some countries stress mitigation over adaptation. Plans lack funding. Lack of a sector approach. Low budgets for health.	Stress preventive action. A health agenda included in climate change policies. Develop action plans based on successful examples.

## References

1. Pan American Health Organization. Strategy and plan of action on climate change [Internet]. 51st Directing Council of PAHO, 63rd Session of the WHO Regional Committee for the Americas; 2011 Sep 26-30; Washington (DC), US (Document CD51/6) [cited 2014 April 14]. Available from: [http://www.paho.org/hq/index.php?option=com\\_docman&task=doc\\_download&gid=14471&Itemid](http://www.paho.org/hq/index.php?option=com_docman&task=doc_download&gid=14471&Itemid)
2. United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change. Non-Annex 1 national communications [Internet]. Bonn (Germany): UNFCCC; 2014 [cited 2014 Apr 14]. Available from: [https://unfccc.int/national\\_reports/non-annex\\_i\\_natcom/items/2979.php](https://unfccc.int/national_reports/non-annex_i_natcom/items/2979.php)

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