

Young Reporter for the Environment Competition

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Air pollution causing thirteen deaths to occur per minute globally due to air pollution, according to WHO report

by Oisin McCourt

In the build-up to the United Nations Climate Change Conference, which was held on Monday 11th October, the unveiling of the Special Report on Climate Change and Health has resulted in the process of acting for the impact of climate change.

This process will uncover the truth of the missing links that may be present in our awareness and understanding of climate and health.

Dr Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus, World Health Organization Director General, noted that *“the COVID-19 pandemic shone a light on the intimate and delicate links, humans, animals and the environment”*.

“The same unsustainable choices that are killing our planet are killing people”, he further commented.

“WHO calls on all countries to commit to decisive action at COP26 to reduce global warming to 1.5 degrees Celsius not just because it’s the right thing to do, but because it’s in our own interests.”

“WHO’s new report highlights 10 priorities for safeguarding the health of people and the planet that sustains us”, he concluded.

This type of Special Report is launched at the same time in open-letter format, and it is signed by two-thirds of the world’s health workforce; most of whom consists of nurses and doctors.

It consists of 300 organisations that represent 45 million doctors and health professionals globally, and their aim is to call for national leaders and COP26 delegations to take further action.

The letter reads that *“wherever we deliver care, in our hospitals, clinics and communities around the world, we have already responded to the health harms caused by climate change.”*

“We call on the leaders of every country and their representatives at COP26 to reduce the ongoing health crisis by avoiding global warming to 1.5 degrees Celsius, and to make human health and equity forefront to all climate change severity and adaption actions.”

The communal efforts of the report and open letter have arisen as unprecedented weather events have taken their tolls on people's lives and health.

Heatwaves, storms, and floods may perish thousands and disrupt ways of living, but they can also put threat to healthcare facilities when they require the most priority.

Climate change has already threatened the drive of food-, water- and direct-borne diseases such as malaria, while the continuous change in climate has taken its toll on mental health.

The report states that "*climate change is the biggest health threat facing humanity*".

"While no-one feels safe from health impacts of climate change, the most vulnerable and disadvantaged also feel them."

The report sums up that if the protection of people's health takes top priority, then the same must be done for the energy, transport, nature, food, and financial sectors.

It further states that the implementation of climate action gives public health benefit while withstanding the costs.

Reaching the Paris Agreement's goals will save millions of lives each year due to the quality of air, diet, and physical exercises; but climate decision-making does not interpret the health benefits and how valuable they are to the economic front.

ENDS

(Mordani, 2021)

Bibliography

Mordani, S., 2021. *Air pollution causing 13 deaths per minute worldwide: WHO report*. [Online] Available at: <https://www.indiatoday.in/world/story/air-pollution-causing-13-deaths-per-minute-worldwide-who-report-1863664-2021-10-11> [Accessed 22 March 2022].