



IFEH Declaration on Climate Change

Declaration on Climate Change

- The expected impact of climate change on human health and nature itself is worrying, if the enhanced green house effect develops as current science predicts. It is crucial that action is taken now. The International Federation of Environmental Health (IFEH) emphasises prevention and mitigation strategies over adaptation.
 - IFEH believes that the impact of climate change on human health as well on nature itself should be central to any prevention or mitigation strategy developed by nations.
 - Therefore, IFEH calls upon every level of government, every governmental body, every company, enterprise and individual all over the world to pay serious attention to the causes, effects and impact of climate change, and to develop and implement strategies that minimize or cease the use or production of gasses that contribute to the green house effect.
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Background

At the 9th World Congress on Environmental Health, held in Trinity College Dublin in June 2006 the delegates from more than thirty five countries discussed the likely consequences of climate change on human health. They called for action in the form of a declaration on climate change. Subsequently the member organisations of IFEH considered the views expressed by the delegates and voted to adopt the declaration as official policy of IFEH.

There is now widespread agreement amongst climate scientists that the earth is warming. It is well-known that human activity such as burning fossil fuels causes emission of CO₂ and other gasses to the atmosphere. Other gasses such as Chlorofluorocarbons (mainly caused by industrial activities), Methane CH₄ (mainly caused by natural bacterial activity in wetlands, including rice fields, and by burning biomass) and N₂O (mainly caused by burning fossil fuels) are even more potent in terms of climate change, compared to CO₂.

According to the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), the Earth's surface temperature has increased some 0.4 °C from 1980 to 2000 and 0.8 °C from 1860 to 2000 on average. IPCC predicts that the rise in temperature may be as high as 5 °C over the next 50 to 75 years.

Human health is dependent on the sustainability of natural systems. There are clear indications that the natural environment will change as the climate changes. There is a range of serious potential implications of climate change for public health and the natural environment in the world. Some examples are:



IFEH Policy No 9 Climate Change

- Alteration of nature itself, leading to extermination of species and non-reversible changes in eco-systems.
- A rise in sea levels directly affecting the vast majority of the world's population who live along coastlines and on islands.
- Indirect effects on people's mental health by undermining their economic, social and ecological needs
- An increase in extreme weather events resulting in increased heavy rains, hurricanes, flooding and consequent deterioration in water quality and quantity.
- Increased risk of mosquito borne diseases such as dengue fever and malaria, becoming established in more areas and in incidence of waterborne diseases.
- Disproportionate effect on people with the fewest resources because of an unequal capacity to respond to adverse events such as weather extremes.
- There will also be geographical differences in the effects of climate change where regions with low average income may be further disadvantaged.
- Increased migration both planned and forced resulting in environmental refugees impacting on urban areas incapable of addressing their needs.
- Recovery of the ozone layer may be delayed due to the increased efficiency of ozone destroying reactions in a cooler stratosphere. This may lead to an increase in the adverse health effects of ultra-violet radiation, such as an increase in the occurrence of skin cancers

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