



# ANNUAL MEETING

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## Session 2. Climate and environment: the No 1 challenge, but what can we as NPHIs do?

National Public Health Institutes (NPHIs) are involved in scientific activities related to the health impacts of climate and environment and encountered challenges in translating scientific evidence into policies. The objective of this session was *to look ahead at environmental public health challenges while questioning the role of NPHIs in addressing them*. This session was moderated by Dr. Marith Volp, Director of Public Health and Health Services of the Dutch National Institute for Public Health and the Environment (RIVM).

### The current situation on Climate Change and challenges ahead

By Dr. Diarmid Campbell-Lendrum, Head of the Climate Change and Health Unit, World Health Organization (WHO)

Since the end of the 19th century, the global average temperature has increased by at least 1.1 °C. Such rise is mainly linked to human activities and the carbon emissions they generate. Although the common denomination is "global warming", and rising temperatures are the most striking indicator of the current phenomenon, it is not just the temperature that is of concern, particularly from a public health point of view. In fact, health impacts are diverse and large. *Dr. D. Campbell-Lendrum* presented three main domains of work for a climate resilient health system. Firstly, it is necessary to strengthen climate resilience and environmental sustainability of healthcare systems as well as facilities by ensuring better health coverage while avoiding unnecessary carbon emissions. Additionally, it is essential to protect health from the many effects of climate change, including outside the formal health sectors, by strengthening NPHIs' core functions, surveillance, capacity-building for health workforce, integrating climate change into health programs and filling funding gaps. Finally, the health co-benefits of climate change mitigation in other sectors must be promoted. Levels of emission are different from one sector to another, but decisions taken in a specific sector can affect some of the most important disease burden as air pollution, nutrition and road traffic injuries. Using public health arguments, evidence and trusted voices from the health sector is paramount. This choice should not be difficult, since the benefits in terms of health economy would cover the costs of adaptation to climate change.

### The IANPHI Roadmap and Committee for Action on Climate Change and Public Health

By Dr. Mathilde Pascal, Epidemiologist and Climate change and health project manager, Santé Publique France

*Dr. M. Pascal* reminded the participants of the history of the IANPHI Thematic Committee on Climate Change and Public Health. Set up in 2021 to further the inclusion of climate change and public health in the Association's Strategy for 2021- 2025, this standing thematic committee has member institutions from 21 countries. It was initially created as a working group which undertook a survey in 2021 within the membership to better understand the role and activities of NPHIs. Results showed that many NPHIs were already engaged in climate change and health

activities but very few were identified as key climate actors. Moreover, these entities lack resources to address this challenge.

The working group established a Roadmap launched at COP26. Its key messages are that IANPHI recognizes climate action as a critical public health intervention and that public health interventions are essential drivers of climate adaptation and mitigation. NPHIs are in the front line of crisis as they are observing the impacts, managing crisis as during heat waves and are involved in promoting lifestyles.

*Dr. M. Pascal* then presented examples of futures actions planned by the IANPHI Thematic Committee for Climate Change and Public Health such as the submission of a workshop proposal at EUPHA 2023, and the drafting of a paper to showcase how NPHIs are already challenged by extreme weather events.

## Q&A Session

Speakers exchanged on how NPHIs could further emphasize the urgency of action to policy-makers and on the positive side of the action. Providing evidence of common gains from action for health and environment could generate more public support and help overcome political boundaries and polarization. The news about biodiversity loss and climate change are very worrying and can be despairing. It is necessary to keep hope by bringing people together and inspiring action.

Written by Philippine Colle, IANPHI Secretariat