African Ministers of Health and Environment Joint Statement on Climate Change and Health

Luanda, 26 November 2010

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African Ministers of health and environment joint statement on climate change and health

Luanda, 26 November 2010

We, Ministers of Health and Ministers of Environment of Africa gathered at Luanda, Angola, from 25 to 26 November 2010:

1. Recalling the Libreville Declaration on Health and Environment in Africa and our commitment to establish a strategic alliance between health and environment that provides the framework for plans of joint action ;

2. Considering the contribution of ecosystems to human health and well-being and the current and potential adverse impacts of climate change on these ecosystems, as well as the available options for responding, through mitigation and adaptation, to the challenges posed by climate change;

3. Having reviewed the first synthesis report on a situation analysis and needs assessment for implementation of the Libreville Declaration on Health and Environment in Africa, and being particularly concerned by the evidence demonstrating that African countries are insufficiently prepared to respond adequately to the threats posed by climate change;

4. Concerned by the conclusions of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) 4th Assessment Report (AR4) that global warming is unequivocal and that human activities are undoubtedly its cause;

5. Particularly concerned that Africa is already experiencing the effects of climate change, which are likely to be more severe than originally anticipated and may exacerbate the effects of traditional and emerging environmental risk factors on human health, thereby hampering Africa's efforts to attain the Millennium Development Goals;

6. Concerned that climate change is a serious threat to poverty reduction and could jeopardize decades of development gains, and that the adverse impacts of climate change are felt more severely by poor countries because of their high dependence on ecosystems and natural resources and their limited capacity to cope with climate variability and extremes;

7. Welcoming the work of the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) and the African Ministerial Conference on the Environment and their work on climate change, and the Bamako Declaration on the Environment for Sustainable Development that reiterates the commitment of ministers of environment to implement the Libreville Declaration;

8. Noting that the third meeting of the African High-Level Expert Panel on Climate Change held in Bamako on 20 June 2010 concluded that climate change presents an opportunity for a range of actions that can contribute positively to economic growth and sustainable development on the continent;

9. Recognizing that locally appropriate mitigation and adaptation actions in the context of sustainable development may bring about significant benefits for human health and well-being and that restoring and maintaining ecosystems can help communities in their adaptation efforts and support livelihoods that depend upon the services of these ecosystems;

10. Convinced that action towards low-carbon development can help to reduce greenhouse gas emission and improve human health and well-being;

11. Recognizing the commitment of Member States of the World Health Organization (WHO) to implement a global action plan on climate change and health.

12. Establishing national integrated environment- and health-surveillance system in order to implement the World Health Assembly Resolution 61.19 and welcoming, in this regard, the analysis made by WHO of health considerations in National Adaptation Programmes of Action (NAPAs) for Least Developed Countries under the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), and the proposed recommendations on essential actions to be taken;

13. Emphasizing the need to build upon the NAPAs through establishing comprehensive medium and longer term adaptation plans that would, inter alia, support resilience processes and protect public health from the adverse effects of climate change; and, to this end, paying special attention to Small Islands Developing States and coastal countries in relation to rise in sea level as well as the specific adaptation needs of countries of the Sahel;

14. Convinced that through the experience gained in the implementation of the Libreville Declaration, in particular through the creation of the "Health and Environment Strategic Alliance" (HESA), synergies can be found to support adaptation actions aimed at reducing vulnerability and building resilience in the health sector in developing countries, and particularly in countries in Africa, given that adaptation is an urgent and immediate need for these countries;

15. Commit our governments to:

(a) Accelerate the implementation of the Libreville Declaration on Health andEnvironment in Africa by completing the Situation Analyses and Needs Assessment (SANA) process as well as the preparation of National Plans of Joint Actions (NPJAs) through collaboration among the environment, health and other relevant sectors and within the aforementioned NPJAs by 2012 ;

(b) Give special attention to the management of the adverse effects of climate change on health with a view to :

(i) Making evidence-based, climate-informed and sound decisions to implement a set of preventive actions to reduce population vulnerability and mitigate the additional burden posed by the major climate-sensitive diseases according to their respective epidemiological circumstances;

(ii) Anticipating, preparing for and responding to the health consequences of extreme weather events, particularly by strengthening the functioning of health systems;

(iii) Developing applied research in order to better understand population vulnerability and the health implications of climate change at the local level;

(c) Coordinate and advocate sustainable development and cross-sectoral activities in all countries;

(d) Undertake a comprehensive health- and environment-climate change vulnerability assessment in all countries by the end of 2012;

(e) Develop an essential public health package to enhance the climate change resilience status of all of our countries by 2014;

(f) Reduce vulnerability and use ecosystems services to build natural adaptive resilience against the impact of climate change by:

(i) incorporating planning, financing and cost-effective ecosystems-based adaptation practices into national development processes;

(ii) quantifying the potential of specific ecosystem services under various climate change and human intervention scenarios;

(iii) assessing the vulnerability of ecosystems and the economic value of their services;

(iv) conducting integrated impact and vulnerability assessments for national adaptation policy settings and integrating ecosystem resilience building into national adaptation policies;

(v) harnessing indigenous knowledge to develop and implement locally appropriate adaptation measures;

16. To this end, we call upon:

(a) WHO and UNEP to work with other partners to develop standardized tools, in order to provide technical assistance to our countries in support of the above efforts;

(b) The developed countries that are Parties to the UNFCCC:

(i) to develop and use technologies that reduce emissions of greenhouse gases;

(ii) to establish mechanisms for capacity-building and transfer of technologies;

(iii) to provide new, additional, adequate, predictable and sustainable resources in order to facilitate the achievement of the above resilience and adaptation public-health objectives and targets;

(c) Multilateral partners to consider the significant co-benefits for environment integrity, population health and consequent economic development that can result from mitigation and adaptation policies in sectors such as environment, energy, transport and agriculture and to support African countries in gaining access to resources under the various climate-related funds;

17. We request the Government of the Republic of Angola, in accordance with the existing mechanism, to work with the Prime Minister of Ethiopia in order to present this Statement at the 16th Session of the Conference of the Parties to the UNFCCC in Cancun, Mexico, in December 2010.