THE LIBREVILLE DECLARATION AND SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT IN AFRICA

SUMMARY

The Libreville Declaration on Health and Environment in Africa is a policy statement that provides a cohesive and integrated framework to address human health and environment linkages on the continent.

The Declaration was the main outcome of the first Inter-Ministerial Conference on Health and Environment (IMCHE) held in Libreville, Gabon in 2008. The historic meeting was organised by the World Health Organization (WHO) and the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) in partnership with the Government of Gabon, and attended by ministers of health and ministers of the environment from 52 African nations.

Signatories committed their countries to implementing 11 priority actions aimed at establishing an effective platform to address the environmental impacts on health.

In the decade since Libreville, international environmental health priorities have evolved considerably with the adoption of the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Addressing the adverse impact of environmental threats on health requires an up-to-date and integrated strategy, anchored in the Libreville Declaration and aligned with the SDGs.

A number of countries have now made significant progress towards securing the political commitment for catalysing the policy, institutional and investment changes required to reduce threats to health in support of sustainable development in Africa.

KEY OBJECTIVES OF THE 2008 LIBREVILLE CONFERENCE

1. To demonstrate the importance of recognising the interlinkages between the environment and human health to achieving sustainable development
2. To promote an integrated approach to policy-making in the health and environment sectors that values the services that ecosystems provide to human health
3. To agree on specific actions required to leverage the needed changes in institutional arrangements and investment frameworks for mitigating environmental threats to human health
The Libreville Declaration commits signatory nations to 11 priority actions for addressing Africa’s most pressing health and environment challenges through an integrated approach to policy-making in the health and environment sectors.

1. Establishing a health-and-environment strategic alliance, as the basis for plans of joint action

2. Developing or updating our national, sub-regional and regional frameworks in order to address more effectively the issue of environmental impacts of health, through integration of these links in policies, strategies, regulations and national development plans

3. Ensuring integration of agreed objectives in the areas of health and environment in national poverty reduction strategies by implementing priority inter-sectoral programmes at all levels, aimed at accelerating achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)

4. Building national, sub-regional and regional capacities to better prevent environment-related health problems, through the establishment or strengthening of health and environment institutions

5. Supporting knowledge acquisition and management in the area of health and environment, particularly through applied research at local, sub-regional and regional levels, while ensuring coordination of scientific and technical publications so as to identify knowledge gaps and research priorities and to support education and training at all levels

6. Establishing or strengthening systems for health and environment surveillance to allow measurement of interlinked health and environment impacts and to identify emerging risks, in order to manage them better

7. Effectively implementing, national, sub-regional and regional mechanisms for enforcing compliance with international conventions and national regulations to protect populations from health threats related to the environment

8. Setting up national monitoring and evaluation mechanisms to assess performance in implementing priority programmes and peer review mechanisms to learn from each other’s experience

9. Instituting the practice of systematic assessment of health and environment risks, in particular through the development of procedures to assess impacts on health, and to produce national environment outlook reports

10. Developing partnerships for targeted and specific advocacy on health and environment issues aimed at institutions and communities including youth, parliamentarians, local governments, education ministries, civil society and the private sector

11. Achieving a balance in the allocation of national budgetary resources for inter-sectoral health and environment programmes.
LIBREVILLE DECLARATION: FROM 2008 TO THE PRESENT DAY

1. 2008
   - First Inter-Ministerial Conference for Health and Environment in Africa takes place in Libreville, Gabon
   - The Libreville Declaration on Health and Environment in Africa is adopted
   - The WHO-UNEP Joint Task Team (JTT) is established to support countries in achieving a coordinated implementation of the Libreville Declaration

2. 2009
   - First Meeting of Partners for the Health and Environment Strategic Alliance (HESA), the coordination mechanism intended to support the implementation of the Libreville Declaration, takes place in Windhoek, Namibia
   - To facilitate the process of implementing the Declaration, the WHO-UNEP Joint Task Team develops the Situation Analysis and Needs Assessment (SANA) guide. The SANA process places ecosystems at its centre and assesses environment-related health factors and risks

3. 2010
   - Second Meeting of Partners for the Implementation of the Libreville Declaration takes place in Nairobi, Kenya
   - Second Inter-Ministerial Conference for Health and Environment in Africa opens in Luanda, Angola
   - The Luanda Commitment is signed for the implementation of the Libreville Declaration, focusing on specific priority areas
   - The SANA process is initiated in 17 countries and completed in 12 countries
   - The first SANA Synthesis Report is released

4. 2018
   - The third Inter-Ministerial Conference for Health and Environment is scheduled in Libreville, Gabon
   - The third Synthesis Report of SANA outcomes is released
HEALTH AND THE SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS

The second SANA report showed that 23% of all deaths in Africa are the result of avoidable environmental hazards, such as contaminated water, poor hygiene, inadequate sanitation, poor water resource management, use of unsafe fuels, atmospheric pollution, poor infrastructure.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Disease</th>
<th>% of global disease burden in DALYS</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Diarrhoea</td>
<td>6%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Lower respiratory infections</td>
<td>4%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Other unintentional injuries</td>
<td>3%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Malaria</td>
<td>2%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Road traffic injuries</td>
<td>2%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD)</td>
<td>2%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Perinatal conditions</td>
<td>2%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Ischaemic heart disease</td>
<td>2%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Childhood cluster</td>
<td>2%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Lead-caused MMR</td>
<td>1%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Drownings</td>
<td>1%</td>
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<tr>
<td>HIV/AIDS</td>
<td>1%</td>
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Source: WHO AFRO. 2015. Continental challenges and change: environmental determinants of health in Africa

Adhering to the 11 priority actions laid out in the Libreville Declaration is essential to meeting the Sustainable Development Goals in Africa, specifically the following goals:

3 GOOD HEALTH AND WELL-BEING
6 CLEAN WATER AND SANITATION
7 AFFORDABLE AND CLEAN ENERGY
9 INDUSTRY, INNOVATION AND INFRASTRUCTURE
15 LIFE ON LAND

11 SUSTAINABLE CITIES AND COMMUNITIES
12 RESPONSIBLE CONSUMPTION AND PRODUCTION
13 CLIMATE ACTION
14 LIFE BELOW WATER