



Press release

## Launch of "Prescription for a Healthy Planet" campaign

### Commissioner presented with health community's "Prescription" on climate change

**Brussels, 2 October 2009** - Two leading European health organisations will hand a giant "Prescription for a Healthy Planet" (1) to European Health Commissioner Androulla Vassiliou on Tuesday, 6 October. The health community is asking the EU to provide a better "treatment" for the ailing climate negotiations. (2)

The Health and Environment Alliance (HEAL) and Health Care Without Harm (HCWH) have launched a campaign to increase focus on the effects on human health and to bring the voice of the health sector in the crucial weeks leading up to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change meeting in Copenhagen, 7-18 December 2009. The organisations are joined by the Climate and Health Council whose high level pledge on climate change and health has already been signed by many thousands of doctors and health professionals.

The Health Commissioner is expected to welcome the initiative and to stress the importance of health being more prominent in the climate change debate and outcome.

Health groups will urge her to present the health arguments to representatives of the EU delegation to Copenhagen and to other EU commissioners, including Stavros Dimas, the Environment Commissioner as the EU sets to finalize its negotiating position.

"The arguments about the health impact should be used right now to help achieve a 40% target on carbon reductions compared to 1990 emission levels by 2020 and to counterbalance the debate on how much climate will cost us," says Génon Jensen, Executive Director of HEAL. "Higher targets on carbon emission reductions mean better air quality, less ill health, greater public health protection and healthcare savings."

Savings on health costs that can be achieved from a higher target on carbon emission reductions are estimated at up to 25 billion Euros per year from 2020 onwards. (3) These result from avoiding the costs of premature deaths, hospital admissions, days lost to ill health and extra medications that would be associated with higher levels of air pollution if strong action is not taken.

The Prescription campaign is driven by growing concern within the health and medical sector about the health impact of climate change, and how they can be more involved in crucial climate talks.

"It is disappointing that none of the climate change funding is explicitly directed at health. Experts consider global warming to be potentially the biggest health threat in the 21st century (4) yet the health arguments are not taken on board and acted upon," says Anja Leetz, Executive Director, Health Care Without Harm Europe.

Ms Leetz adds: "We are recommending that by 2020 the EU contribute at least 35 billion Euros per year to fund global action on climate change. A proportion of this should be allocated to the health sector."

Some hospitals are already engaged in installing solar panels and encouraging staff to walk or cycle to work rather than travelling in private cars. (5)

The European launch of the Prescription for a Healthy Planet sets the scene for the next stage in the campaign. A new website and publicity campaign is expected to draw support from dozens of major health and medical organisations and thousands of healthcare and public health individuals all over the world. They will be invited to endorse and send the Prescription to their own governments highlighting policy responses to climate change that would protect the health of our communities. At the UNFCCC pre-Copenhagen meeting in Barcelona in November a Global Network on Health and Climate Change will be launched, joining the European efforts to those of other regions to prepare for actions and policy responses beyond Copenhagen.

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Notes to journalists

1. The "Prescription of a Healthy Planet", an explanation of the campaign and a briefing document on the policy recommendations will be available from noon on 6 October at [www.env-health.org/r/93](http://www.env-health.org/r/93) The Prescription provides a simple set of policy recommendations for EU and global negotiators. It argues that health professionals have the moral authority to help push for a 40% target on carbon emission reductions. Specifically, it calls on European leaders to: Protect public health, Shift to clean energy, Reduce emissions, and Finance global action.
2. The reception is hosted by Health and Environment Alliance (HEAL) and Healthcare Without Harm Europe (HCWHE) at the start of HEAL's Annual General Meeting on Tuesday, 6 October 2009 at 12.00. Reception takes place 12.00-14.00 on Wednesday 6 October 2009 at 28 Bld. Charlemagne (opposite the Berlaymont building) followed by buffet, organic lunch.
3. The Commission's own research shows substantial public health savings from its announced 20% target on carbon emissions. NGO research, based on the Commission's findings, shows that the health costs avoided by increasing the target from 20% to 30% would increase the benefits by 48% (from up to 52 billion Euros to 76 billion Euros per year from 2020 onwards). See "The co-benefit to health of a strong EU climate change policy" published by HEAL, WWF and Climate Action Network Europe in December 2008 at [http://www.env-health.org/IMG/pdf/Co-benefits\\_to\\_health\\_report\\_-\\_september\\_2008.pdf](http://www.env-health.org/IMG/pdf/Co-benefits_to_health_report_-_september_2008.pdf). A target of 40% would push the total savings even higher.
4. Lancet Commission Report, 13 May 2009 <http://www.thelancet.com/climate-change>
5. Healthy Hospitals, Healthy Planet, Healthy People: Addressing climate change in health care settings, World Health Organization and Health Care Without Harm is available at [http://www.who.int/globalchange/publications/healthcare\\_settings/en/index.html](http://www.who.int/globalchange/publications/healthcare_settings/en/index.html).

**The Health and Environment Alliance (HEAL)** aims to raise awareness of how environmental protection improves health. It brings together more than 60 organizations working at the European level. Website: [www.env-health.org](http://www.env-health.org)

**Health Care Without Harm** is a global network of more than 470 organizations in 52 countries working to transform the health care sector so it is no longer a source of harm to people and the environment.

**Climate and Health Council**, UK aims to mobilise health professionals across the world to take action to limit climate change, a serious threat to human health.