

Interactive Policy Dialogue on the Environment-Health Nexus in Asia and the Pacific

Wednesday 14 September 2022

10:00 to 16:00 (GMT+7, Bangkok), Virtual

Background

It has been estimated that almost one quarter of the global environmental burden of disease comes from 14 Southeast and East Asian countries alone. Health risks arise from environmental factors, environmental degradation and climate change through the impacts of extreme weather events, poor air quality, changes in the spread of diseases, habitat encroachment, land use changes, biodiversity loss, unsafe and insecure food and water, among many others. The costs to regional health systems are both heavy and avoidable. The most-impacted groups are often marginalized, or vulnerable populations, including children, the elderly and those with pre-existing conditions, for whom environment-related health impacts can be both debilitating and impoverishing. Increased disease burden also negatively impacts livelihoods and food/nutrition security.

An integrated and unifying approach to the environment-health nexus can guide impactful, efficient national and regional policy responses to converging health and environmental risks. Action to work across the environment, health, and agriculture sectors (among others) and building coherent approaches that operationalize the environment-health nexus, can also advance delivery on the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

Given its importance, the environment-health nexus as a theme is rising in the political agenda of Asia and the Pacific. This includes initiatives from the Asia-Pacific One Health Quadripartite (FAO, WOA, WHO, and UNEP) which aim to address health risks at the human, animal, plant, and environment interfaces in the region. The Quadripartite is developing a regional action framework, drawing on the Global Plan of Action (GPA) for One Health, which seeks to provide guidance to stakeholder action. The 2016 *Manila Declaration on Health and Environment* identifies emerging Asia-Pacific policy priorities relevant to the SDGs. Multilateral environmental agreements such as the Convention on Biological Diversity and the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change also present important opportunities to strengthen action on human health. Subregional cooperation secretariats such as ASEAN have established relevant strategies and institutional mechanisms for coordination, while at the national level, some Asia-Pacific countries have moved ahead to capitalize on the policy synergies presented by the environment-health nexus.

However, there is substantial room to build awareness, share experiences and explore priority action and potential for strengthening collaboration at national and regional levels. In this context, ESCAP and

IISD, in collaboration with FAO, UNEP and WHO and with financial support from the Wellcome Trust will jointly organize a virtual Policy Dialogue on 14 September 2022. The Policy Dialogue will explore the following policy questions:

- Why is the environment-health nexus important and relevant in Asia and the Pacific? Is health a “blind spot” in policies, norms, institutions, governance and metrics related to the environment – and vice versa? Is environment a blind spot for health?
- How can the One Health approach contribute to achieving the Sustainable Development Goals?
- What are the relationships between climate change, biodiversity, food systems, and health in the Asia-Pacific region, and what are the priority issues to address in the environment-health nexus, and in support of the One Health approach?
- How are governments and other stakeholders coordinating and working across the human, livestock, wildlife, and environment sectors and applying and implementing the One Health approach in national and regional environmental and health policies and programmes? What are the priorities and gaps in the enabling environment and institutional frameworks and how can regional cooperation contribute?

Objectives

- Advance understanding and identify priorities for operationalizing the environment-health nexus in public policy, with a focus on the One Health approach;
- Discuss pathways to strengthen national and regional governance of interlinkages between health, climate, biodiversity, and food systems, including through multilateral processes;
- Promote collaboration between sectors, countries, development partners and stakeholders in the region.

Participants

Participants will include senior government representatives from ministries and agencies responsible for policy, strategy and research on environment, health and sustainable development in Asia and the Pacific. Also invited are experts from development partners, civil society, non-governmental organizations, academia, private sector and others working in the fields of climate change, human and animal health, agriculture, food, biodiversity, among other areas related to the environment-health nexus.

Modalities

- The Policy Dialogue will take place **virtually** on 14 September 2022. A background paper will be shared in advance to stimulate discussion.
- The Policy Dialogue is intended to be interactive, dynamic and transparent, allowing for inclusive participation, mutual learning and constructive exchanges and discussions, providing a space for enhanced understanding and learning on the environment-health nexus.
- The discussions at the Policy Dialogue will inform policy guidance and action planning and will provide input for the upcoming ESCAP 7th Committee on Environment and Development at ministerial level and other intergovernmental processes and activities.

Programme

Bangkok time	Agenda
10:00-10:10	<p><u>Opening and welcome remarks</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Katinka Weinberger, Chief of Environment and Development Policy Section, ESCAP - Richard Florizone, IISD President
10:10-10:20	<p><u>keynote address: Addressing the global health crises through environmental interventions</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Annika Reynolds, CEO of GreenLaw and an inaugural Youth Chair of Environment and Human Rights, Australian Lawyers for Human Rights
10:20-11:30	<p><u>Session 1: High-level dialogue on opportunities to operationalize the environment-health nexus</u></p> <p><u>Setting the scene (8 min)</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Scott Newman, One health Asia-Pacific Regional Program Priority Lead, FAO (presentation) <p><u>High-level dialogue (50 min)</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Alexander O'Connor, Assistant Minister for Health and Medical Services, Fiji - Anas Ma'ruf, Director of Environmental Health, Ministry of Health, Indonesia - Nitish C Debnath, National Coordinator, One Health Bangladesh - Catherine Machalaba, Principal Scientist for Health & Policy, EcoHealth Alliance - Pema Gyamtsho, Director General, International Centre for Integrated Mountain Development - Dechen Tsering, Director, UNEP Asia and the Pacific Office (moderator) <p><u>Wrap up and Q&A (10 min)</u></p>
12:30-15:05	<p><u>Session 2 Thematic discussion on climate, biodiversity, food systems, and health</u></p> <p><u>Plenary presentation on climate change-health nexus (5 min)</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Minal Pathak, IPCC Senior Scientist <p><u>Plenary presentation on biodiversity-health nexus (5 min)</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Serge Morand, One Health High-Level Expert Panel Member, Director of Research, CNRS-CIRAD <p><u>Plenary presentation on food systems-environment-health nexus (5 min)</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Sitaramachandra Machiraju, Senior Agriculture Economist, East Asia and Pacific Region, World Bank <p><u>Breakout session round 1 (55 min)</u> – experts in the rooms</p> <p><u>Breakout session round 2 (40 min)</u> – diverse participants in the rooms</p> <p><u>Break (15 min)</u></p> <p><u>Reporting back and summary (30 min)</u></p>
15:05-15:50	<p><u>Session 3: Open dialogue: strengthening governance and enabling environments</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Dindo Campilan, Regional Director for Asia, IUCN (presentation – 5 min) - Gerda Verburg, UN Assistant Secretary-General and Coordinator of the Scaling Up Nutrition (SUN) Movement (discussant) - Sangmin Nam, Director, Environment and Development Division, ESCAP (moderator)
15:50-16:00	<p><u>Closing remarks (10 min)</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Sangmin Nam, Director, Environment and Development Division, ESCAP

For more information

- **Website:**
<https://www.unescap.org/events/2022/interactive-policy-dialogue-environment-health-nexus-asia-and-pacific>
- **Registration:**
<https://indico.un.org/event/1002360/>
- **Contact:**
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