



NEWS RELEASE

Environment and Health Experts Commit to Actions on Climate Change

MONTREAL, August 15, 2014 — More than 500 delegates to the EcoHealth 2014 conference have issued a call to action to urgently and collaboratively address the impacts of climate change on the health of humans, animals and the global environment in light of the lack of a truly collective response to date.

Working through the International Association for Ecology and Health (IAEH), the 500 delegates from 62 countries, and the larger ecohealth community they reflect, have developed a vision and commitment to action that will bring together what is already being done to address the challenge of climate change. With a unique approach and focus on the health of humans, animals and other species that crosses disciplines, the ecohealth community is well positioned to make innovative contributions that respond to the complex problems around climate change.

“Whether people acknowledge it or not, climate and other global environmental changes are already affecting our health through extreme weather events, newly emerging and re-emerging infectious diseases such as dengue and Ebola, and heart and respiratory problems linked to toxics in the environment,” said IAEH President Jakob Zinsstag. “These are exactly the problems that ecohealth experts have addressed at this conference by connecting health, ecosystems and society and working directly with communities where the relationships of people and their environment are out of balance.”

The call to action is in part a response to the poor track record of international efforts that tend to neglect the root causes driving dramatic changes on our planet. As such it calls for strategies to improve health that explicitly address the human drivers of climate change and challenge “business as usual” practices. Specifically, it calls for the ecohealth community and others to:

- Promote air quality through concrete actions such as planting trees, a response to keynote speaker Dr. François Reeves’ presentation linking air pollution to cardiovascular disease;
- Orient research to work directly with communities most affected by climate change, whether in small-island states or the Inuit communities that keynote speaker Minnie Gray supports through public health efforts in Northern Quebec;
- Address one of the major drivers of climate change through divesting from the fossil fuel industry, a topic much discussed by conference participants; and
- Work directly with the many organizations and communities, spanning environmental, indigenous, conservation, labour, social justice, public health and beyond, who are similarly committed to the health of all life on earth.

The full call to action—endorsed unanimously at the Biennial General Meeting of the IAEH—along with a growing list of actions that can or are already being undertaken, is available on the EcoHealth-Live.net website. The intent is to launch an ever-expanding network of collaborations and actions in conjunction with communities and institutions to expand on and pursue a new generation of coordinated efforts to address climate change and foster health and well-being.

EcoHealth 2014 brought together leading researchers in ecology, social sciences, human and veterinarian medicine, and professionals in public health, urban and rural planning and international development. Through presentations of new research and dynamic panel discussions, participants discussed advances in research techniques through bringing knowledge to action in the field with community participation, improving health and well-being in urban environments, communicating the complex issues at the intersection of health, ecosystems and society, exploring the role of global institutions and championing a new generation of ecohealth researchers.

The next biennial EcoHealth meeting will be held in Melbourne, Australia, in December 2016.

EcoHealth 2014

The EcoHealth 2014 conference was chaired by Johanne Saint-Charles, professor in the Department of Social Communications and director of the Center for Interdisciplinary Research on Well-Being, Health, Society and Environment (Cinbiose) at the Université du Québec à Montréal. Co-hosted by Cinbiose and the Canadian Community of Practice in Ecosystem Approaches to Health (CoPEH-Canada) with financial support from Canada's International Development Research Centre and several partners, the EcoHealth 2014 conference was designed to facilitate the exchange of knowledge and relationship building between these different disciplines and the groups that support them. Full details are available at: <http://ecohealth2014.uqam.ca>

About the International Association for Ecology and Health (IAEH)

The IAEH's mission is to strive for sustainable health of people, wildlife and ecosystems by promoting discovery, understanding and transdisciplinarity. It does this by serving a diverse international community including scientists, educators, policy makers, practitioners and the general public through its journal EcoHealth and its biennial conference. More at: <http://www.ecohealth.net>

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