

Agenda Item 5.6 Health, Environment and Climate Change

Global Health Council supported by the American Academy of Pediatrics and NCD Child welcomes the opportunity to comment on agenda item 5.6 “Health, environment and climate change.” Climate change poses threats to human health, safety, and security, and children are uniquely vulnerable to these threats. The effects of climate change on child health include: physical and psychological sequelae of weather disasters; increased heat stress; decreased air quality; altered disease patterns of some climate-sensitive infections; and food, water, and nutrient insecurity in vulnerable regions. The social foundations of children’s mental and physical health are threatened by the specter of far-reaching effects of unchecked climate change, including community and global instability, mass migrations, and increased conflict. With this in mind, we offer the following recommendations:

1. Seek ways to reduce the carbon and environmental footprint of health facilities, and promote energy efficiency and renewable energy production.
2. Fund research, surveillance, reporting, and tracking of climate-associated health effects. Invest in prudent and vital preparations for public health care systems, anticipating climate change effects.
3. Support education and public awareness of the threats from climate change for public and children’s health now and in the future.
4. Develop essential adaptation strategies and assist governments, public health agencies, and health professionals in implementation of these strategies. The specific needs of children should be addressed in disaster preparedness and response.
5. Include the health sector in national and international policy-making meetings that address the threats of climate change.
6. Fund public transportation systems and support urban planning designs that incorporate walkability, open space, green building design, reduced dependence on automobile transit, and climate change resilience.