

International Society of Environmental Epidemiology

Meeting:

Seventy-first World Health Assembly

Agenda Item:

71/10Add1: Health, environment and climate change. Roadmap for an enhanced global response to the adverse health effects of air pollution.

Comment from International Society of Environmental Epidemiology (ISEE)

The International Society of Environmental Epidemiology (ISEE) acknowledges the progress made in the implementation of the “Road map for an enhanced global response to the adverse health effects of air pollution” presented in the document A71/10 Add.1.

Much of the current knowledge on health effects of air pollution is the result of intensive research conducted by the members of ISEE. The newest studies confirm and strengthen the evidence on health risks posed to all human populations by air pollution exposure by providing better estimates of the risks due to this exposure, including identifying additional diseases caused by air pollution. They also enable more accurate quantification of the burden of disease attributable to air pollution. However, most studies continue to be performed in high-income countries despite the fact that exposure to health-damaging air pollution and the burden of disease attributable to air pollution is greatest in low- and middle-income countries, where air pollution sources, exposure patterns, and personal vulnerability to air pollution may be different, as well as some of the solutions to limit air pollution exposure. For this reason, studies in low- and middle-income countries will be critical for informing policy action to reduce air pollution exposure and reduce the burden of disease in the places most severely affected by air pollution.

Therefore, ISEE considers development of professional and research capacities in low- and middle-income countries to be an important task of the “Road map”. ISEE contributes to it by launching a series of courses and webinars on environmental epidemiology methods, and facilitating participation of researchers from less affluent countries in annual conferences of ISEE. We would welcome support of the WHO Member States to these initiatives as well as their engagement in relevant research and surveillance initiatives fostering air pollution epidemiology around the globe.

Agenda Item:

A71/14 Preparation for the third High-level Meeting of the General Assembly on the Prevention and Control of Non-Communicable Diseases, to be held in 2018

Statement:

The third article of report A71/14 on the Preparation for the third High-level Meeting of the General Assembly on the Prevention and Control of Non-communicable Diseases mentions that the global epidemic of premature deaths from non-communicable diseases is driven by (i) poverty, (ii) the impact of the globalization of marketing and trade of products deleterious to health (leading to tobacco use, harmful use of alcohol and unhealthy diets); (iii) rapid urbanization (leading to physical inactivity) and (iv) population ageing.

ISEE, the International Society of Environmental Epidemiology, agrees that the burden of non-communicable diseases entailed by these four families of factors is huge, but it wishes to emphasize the importance of environmental factors beyond diet, physical activity, tobacco and alcohol consumption, as determinants of non-communicable diseases.

Air pollution, at levels commonly observed in all parts of the world, causes lung cancers, cardiovascular and respiratory diseases, and affects child development. It creates burden to health comparable with other major well-established causes of non-communicable disease. Exposure to lead, still used in various consumer products, causes intellectual disability in children and cardiovascular diseases in adults. Numerous widespread chemicals are carcinogenic, cause inflammation, oxidative stress, or affect the endocrine function, leading to the occurrence of non-communicable diseases such as cardiovascular or metabolic diseases or cancers. The role of these factors is well-known by the international scientific community, and many reports and statements from WHO have in particular acknowledged the very large impact of atmospheric pollutants on non-communicable diseases. This should not be forgotten in the third high level meeting of the General Assembly on the prevention and control of non-communicable diseases and in its discussion on the actions to curb NCDs in the next decade.