1. Convening health and environment sectors for planetary health

Established in 2004, the Regional Forum on Environment and Health has expanded to include ministries of health and environment from 48 Member States from the WHO South-East Asia and Western Pacific regions. Renamed the Asia-Pacific Regional Forum on Health and Environment, this meeting brings together the health and environment sectors to address common challenges, such as climate change, as well as subregional issues such as haze.

The October 2016 forum, hosted by the Government of the Philippines, was held at the WHO Regional Office for the Western Pacific. Chaired by the secretaries of health and environment of the Philippines, the forum brought together participants from 36 countries. In all, 74 health officials and 35 environment officials attended.

The outcome of the forum was encapsulated in the Manila Declaration on Health and the Environment. Member States committed:

- to take urgent action to combat climate change and its impacts, and orient development and public health systems to become more climate-resilient;
- to ensure availability and sustainable management of water and sanitation for all;
- to substantially reduce the number of deaths and illnesses from hazardous chemicals and air, water, and soil pollution and contamination through environmentally sound management of chemicals and all wastes; and
- to reduce the adverse environmental impact of cities by adopting sustainable urban design principles that promote healthy lifestyles and sound environmental management.

The declaration also pledged to support the work of WHO, the United Nations Environment Programme, and other international agencies and partners to address emerging policy priorities relevant to the SDGs, such as transboundary air pollution, including short-lived climate pollutants; illegal transboundary shipment and dumping of waste; destruction of coral reefs and marine pollution; antimicrobial resistance related to unsafe management of health-care waste and poor sanitation, hygiene and infection-prevention measures; promotion of environment and health impact assessments; and enhancing WHO’s access to key resources like the Global Environment Facility and Green Climate Fund.