

Recommendations for the 2023 G7 Hiroshima Summit:

Advance Measures for Planetary Health That Is in Line with Global Progress

Health and Global Institute (HGPI) Planetary Health Promotion Project

Background to these recommendations

As demonstrated by record-breaking floods that submerged one-third of Pakistan in June 2022 or the heat waves that have repeatedly struck Europe, climate change has started to result in severe impacts on human health. On October 25, 2022, the Lancet Countdown on Health and Climate Change reported that the health effects of climate change are growing more severe around the world and if we maintain our dependence on fossil fuels, we increase our chances of experiencing food insecurity, infectious diseases, heat stroke, and other health risks. Discussions on climate change and health have also taken place at the G7 Summits held in Germany and the U.K., the G20 Summits held in Italy and Indonesia, and the 26th Session of the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (COP26).

There are also plans to further discuss climate change and health at COP27 in Sharm El Sheikh, Egypt (which will be held from November 6 to 18) as well as at side events that will be hosted by the World Health Organization (WHO). Looking to COP27, Health and Global Policy Institute (HGPI) has voiced its support for the basic concepts behind letters compiled by the Global Climate and Health Alliance (GCHA) and other global health and environmental organizations, namely the “COP27 Health Community Recommendations” and “Health professionals call for Fossil Fuel Non-Proliferation Treaty to protect lives of current and future generations,” and has presented Japanese translations of both documents.

A number of individual initiatives have also been kicked off in Japan. The Ministry of the Environment’s “Assessment Report on Climate Change Impacts in Japan” released in December 2020 and the “Global Health Strategy” adopted by the Government’s Headquarters for Health and Medical Strategy Promotion in May 2022 both mention the need to take action for climate change and health, while Nagasaki University launched the Interfaculty Initiative in Planetary Health. In October 2020, the Government of Japan set a goal of reducing its total greenhouse gas emissions to zero and achieving carbon neutrality by 2050, and is currently advancing economic policies and other measures to that end. However, only limited efforts have been made to address issues facing social security – which accounts for about one-third of the national budget – particularly, to organize issues facing healthcare and indicate a direction forward.

Within these developments, HGPI launched its Planetary Health Promotion Project in 2022. In this project, we will collaborate with multi-stakeholders with our sights set on identifying actions Japan should take for planetary health, deepening understanding toward planetary health, disseminating information in Japan and around the world, and creating opportunities to take the next steps. As part of this project, we held opinion exchanges with a number of experts to compile the three discussion points described below.

Various events are will be held in 2023, including the G7 Hiroshima Summit that will take place from May 19 to May 21; the G7 Ministers’ Meeting on Climate, Energy and Environment which will be held in Sapporo on April 15 and 16; and the G7 Health Ministers’ Meeting which will be held in Nagasaki on May 13 and 14. We hope that the Japanese government can lead the discussions in Japan and overseas while keeping in line with the global community, as signs of social and economic recovery from the COVID-19 (Coronavirus Disease 2019) pandemic begin to emerge.

Discussion Point 1: There is no room for doubt that the climate crisis and climate change will impact health. Starting with health professionals, all citizens must recognize that environmental problems are health problems and take comprehensive and inclusive actions to address them.

In the scenario which assumes no effective measures are taken to mitigate climate change, it is projected there will be approximately 250,000 excess global deaths every year from 2030 to 2050. If we continue at our current rate, it is likely that we will consume our carbon budget in just eight years and reach the tipping point of climate change. Some have reported that this will cause climate change to spiral out of control. While the people who are most vulnerable to climate change are poor people in developing countries, climate change is expected to worsen the damage done by heat stroke and infectious disease outbreaks and significantly impact well-being, mental health, housing, property, and means of livelihood for people in Japan, as well. For health professionals, it is a must to promote measures to address environmental issues and heighten public awareness as one of the interventions to prevent chronic and acute diseases.

Discussion Point 2: Health resilience to the climate crisis and climate change must be strengthened. We must promote prevention, preparedness, and response for events like floods, heat waves, and infectious disease outbreaks, as well as build environmentally friendly health systems.

Regarding the anticipated effects of climate change, projections indicate that global warming will lead to greater frequency and intensity of extreme weather events, such as torrential rains and heat waves. It is also predicted there will be an increase in zoonotic disease outbreaks due to climate change and disruptions in ecosystems. We must build health systems that are resilient to the effects of such health crises. Measures that are considered a co-benefit approach are expected to protect human health as well as the health of the earth, such as shifting the entire healthcare system, including the supply chain, to renewable energy and switching to medical waste with less environmental impact. In Japan, it is necessary for all parties involved in the healthcare sector to cooperate and take the initiative in setting goals toward carbon neutrality as they are involved in people's lives and health. The climate crisis also poses a threat to Universal Health Coverage (UHC). While transitioning to sustainable health systems, we must also ensure those systems are friendly to the environment.

Discussion Point 3: Good examples of initiatives for planetary health have emerged on the prefectural or regional basis in the form of actions taken for the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Expectations are high for efforts to share said practices, to expand them horizontally, and to disseminate them on the global level.

The devoted efforts of related parties who have shared their past experiences with pollution and our actions for the SDGs mean that good examples and lessons for the environment and health are beginning to accumulate in each region. Many innovative initiatives such as those for “SDGs Future Cities” go beyond environmental problems and link their activities to health. Through budgetary measures and similar actions, each related organization, starting with the Government, should work to actively promote the horizontal expansion of such good practices and lessons throughout Japan and to disseminate them on a global level.

■ **Acknowledgments:**

When formulating these recommendations, we received opinions from the experts listed below who participated on our Advisory Board. We express our deepest gratitude for their input. These recommendations were compiled by HGPI in its capacity as an independent health policy think tank, and should not be taken to represent the opinions of any organization or group to which Advisory Board members or related parties are affiliated.

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■ **About Health and Global Policy Institute (HGPI)**

Health and Global Policy Institute (HGPI) is a non-profit, independent, non-partisan health policy think tank established in 2004. In its capacity as a neutral think-tank, HGPI involves stakeholders from wide-ranging fields of expertise to provide policy options to the public to successfully create citizen-focused healthcare policies. Looking to the future, HGPI produces novel ideas and values from a standpoint that offers a wide perspective. It aims to realize a healthy and fair society while holding fast to its independence to avoid being bound to the specific interests of political parties and other organizations. HGPI intends for its policy options to be effective not only in Japan, but also in the wider world, and in this vein the institute will continue to be very active in creating policies for resolving global health challenges.