

7 April 2008

**PRESS STATEMENT  
ON  
WORLD HEALTH DAY 2008**

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Today is World Health's Day and the theme is "Protecting Health from Climate Change".

This theme is very appropriate for this year since global warming is creating havoc worldwide from extreme weather and temperature changes to the reemerging of diseases that were dormant for years now such as malaria, dengue, typhoid, etc. This is 'an inconvenient truth', which we have to face in today's world, i.e. world climate change or global warming is going to impact Mother Earth and the human race in a catastrophic way unless drastic steps are taken by nations worldwide especially the developed countries towards environmental care.

The main source of climate change is the emission of greenhouse gases in the industrialized countries. Gases such as carbon monoxide, carbon dioxide, chloro fluorocarbon (CFC), methane and nitrous oxide tend to increase the average temperature of the earth surface. CFC causes the thinning of the ozone layer, which acts to protect living beings on earth from dangerous radiation, such ultraviolet rays. When this happens, radiation will reach the earth and cause an increase in skin cancer and eye diseases.

A warmer climate and its more extreme weather patterns can bring about an increase in illnesses such as asthma and allergies, respiratory and cardiovascular stress - especially in people who are not in good health, who work outdoors or in hot environments, in the elderly, and in the young. Heat waves are linked to cardiovascular, respiratory and other diseases. Higher temperatures can also alter the geographical distribution of species that transmit diseases such as mosquitoes, rodents, etc. This attributes to the rising trend in diseases such as dengue, malaria, etc.

Flood has long become a part of life in Malaysia. Flash floods after heavy downpours are a common sight all over the country especially in the flood prone areas. Climate changes have been cited as one of the reason. Infectious diseases, e.g. gastrointestinal diseases, dermatitis, conjunctivitis, leptospirosis and cases of vector-borne diseases such as dengue and malaria are among the flood related diseases.

These are some of the consequences of climate change, which is already happening in our world today and more specifically in our country itself.

The Malaysian Medical Association would like to urge the public to be environment friendly in order to reduce the impact of climate change. Education and dissemination of information are two effective ways to help preserve the environment and change the mindset of our people. Practice RECYCLING – that is the first step towards caring for the environment.

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