

Written Statement by EuroHealthNet
73rd Session of the WHO Regional Committee for Europe

Provisional Agenda item 10 “Implementation of the European Environment and Health Process: Progress Report.” (EUR/RC73/14)

Dear Chair, Mr President, Regional Director, honourable ministers, representatives, and distinguished delegates of the WHO European Region Member States,

EuroHealthNet welcomes the progress report of the European Environment and Health Process, and the measures taken so far to act on the triple environmental crisis posed by climate change, pollution, and land degradation and biodiversity loss. We note that vulnerable communities across Europe have been the most exposed to and harmed by this crisis and we encourage WHO Europe and the European Centre for Environment and Health to retain a strong focus on promoting a green, healthy, and *just* transition.

Taking stock of the [progress report](#), and acknowledging the [Declaration of the 7th Ministerial Conference on Environment and Health](#) (‘the Budapest Declaration’), we recognise a lot has been done by WHO Europe, its Centre for Environment and Health and the European Task Force (EHTF). EuroHealthNet look forward to the accelerated alignment of the negotiated new EU Air quality standards law with the WHO Air Quality Guidelines. We now encourage WHO Europe and its Member States to move forward quickly, and in particular on:

- 1. Formulating clear, time-bound, and concrete milestones for further progress:** The ambitions of the Budapest Declaration are a welcome commitment. However, without concrete and time-bound initiatives to bridge the gap between commitment and action, the process will fall behind the needs prompted by accelerating climate degradation.
- 2. Empower health professionals to become sustainability champions:** The environmental impact of healthcare systems is huge. To support and not overburden healthcare professionals, policy makers must create enabling environments that facilitate new and sustainable ways of working without creating ‘climate fatigue’ in the healthcare workplace.
- 3. Recognise food as a central element for a just and green transition:** Food and nutritional security in Europe is under threat due to climate change, unsustainable

agriculture, commercial interests along food supply chains, and conflicts. Healthy diets have become increasingly unaffordable, contributing to a rising burden of diet-related non-communicable diseases and child obesity. Food policy ought to be included as part of the WHO health and environment process.

4. **Invite and involve Non-State Actors in every step of the implementation process:** Non-State Actors offer valuable insights and resources, foster open dialogue and provide guidance on integrating health and social fairness perspectives into climate adaptation and mitigation measures. The WHO Health and Environment process will only succeed through a participatory and inclusive process.

EuroHealthNet and its Partnership reaffirm our commitment to support the implementation of the European WHO Environment and Health process. We therefore call upon you and our other partners across Europe and the globe to take advantage of all opportunities to translate it into practice, notably in the context of the upcoming COP28 Health Day and beyond.

Astana, 25 October 2023