

Statement on Draft Strategy on health, environment and climate change

For over 60 years, FIGO has collaborated with the world's top health bodies to work towards the improvement of women's health globally.

FIGO is in official relations with the World Health Organization (WHO), and attending the [72nd World Health Assembly](#) in Geneva, Switzerland, 20th - 28th May, 2019.

Read our statement on the Director-General's [Draft Global Strategy on health, environment and climate change: the transformation needed to improve lives and well-being sustainable through healthy environments](#).

FIGO, having presented our [Statement during the WHO Executive Board Meeting in January 2019](#), are pleased to see that the further consultations have led to the development of a draft strategy which aims to provide a vision on how the world and its health community need to respond to environmental health risks and challenges.

Whether we are concerned with reproductive health, cancer, infertility, neonatal and childhood health – all priority areas for FIGO – we know that [toxic exposures are implicated](#).

The human reproductive system is particularly sensitive to environmental exposures because of crucial window of '[development](#)'. Preconception and prenatal time periods are important. We sincerely hope that WHO, in its new Global Strategy, will add reference to the link environmental exposures have on a number of key areas for women, including:

- Air pollution: posing a growing threat to health all over the world. [FIGO identifies the strong link between Air Pollution and fertility](#), from altered production of sperm and eggs to epigenetic changes and birth defects. Air pollution is also known to have an impact upon prematurity, with consequences for newborn survival.
- Climate change: increasingly affecting people's health and well-being. Increasing frequency of climate disaster is having long term consequences. Recently, [Cyclone Idai directly impacted more than 75,000 pregnant women](#) with 45,000 of these women due to give birth over the next six months. Ongoing risks also occur; population displacement is known to increase tensions - for women, tension are known to increase risk of exploitation and sexual violence when they are dislocated from their communities.
- The consequences of [poor water and sanitation \(WASH\) for maternal and newborn health can be devastating](#). Exposure to dirty, stagnant water during pregnancy may lead to malaria, typhoid, dysentery and amoebiasis, which can result in miscarriage, foetal death and maternal mortality.

FIGO appreciates the mention of electronic waste, some nanoparticles, microplastics and endocrine-disrupting chemicals. Exposure to chemicals needs to be held to a safety standard intended to improve global health.

Populations should not be exposed to chemicals until their safety is proven. We would therefore like to see the following areas included:

- Mining is a serious contamination globally: from the water waste, the pollution of water by lead, the impact of pollution on the food supply.
- Pesticides have a direct impact on health and should be identified in a category of their own. Research clearly shows the neurodevelopmental impact on the developing fetus,

and the effect on this and future generations. Pesticides have been shown to have an effect on reproductive health and cancer

FIGO support WHO's Strategic Objective 3, agreeing that the health sector needs to be equipped and empowered, with leadership and governance strengthened, to assume our obligation in shaping a healthy and sustainable future.

As a global society of women's health professionals, FIGO's membership from throughout 132 national societies, are in a unique position of trust, and ideally placed to implement environmental health interventions at national and international level, and to act as leaders and advocates for health and sustainable development.

FIGO will use our experience and expertise, and unified commitment to address the associated risks of health, environment and climate change, and collaborate with the WHO to help deliver the three strategic priorities outlined in the Thirteenth General Programme of Work, 2019 – 2023, notably supporting leadership and policies and evidence synthesis and advocacy.

About FIGO

FIGO is a professional organisation that brings together obstetrical and gynecological associations from all over the world.

FIGO's vision is that women of the world achieve the highest possible standards of physical, mental, reproductive and sexual health and wellbeing throughout their lives, we lead on global programme activities, with a particular focus on sub-Saharan Africa and South East Asia.

FIGO advocates on a global stage, especially in relation to the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) pertaining to reproductive, maternal, newborn, child and adolescent health and non-communicable diseases (SDG3). We also work to raise the status of women and enable their active participation to achieve their reproductive and sexual rights, including addressing FGM and gender based violence (SDG5).

We also provide education and training for our Member Societies and build capacities of those from low-resource countries through strengthening leadership, good practice and promotion of policy dialogues.

FIGO are in official relations with the World Health Organization (WHO) and a consultative status with the United Nations (UN).