

The danger of climate change for human health

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By María Josefina Arce

Climate change is a potential danger to the health and well-being of humanity. This is reaffirmed by research released at the 28th Conference of the Parties to the UN Framework Convention on Climate

Change, which is being held in Dubai, United Arab Emirates.

Heat waves, droughts, extreme storms and rising sea levels, associated with this problem, are already having a negative effect on the health of millions of people in the world.

According to studies, among the impacts already recorded are an increase in respiratory and vector-borne diseases, food and water insecurity and malnutrition.

Vanessa Kerry, first special envoy of the director general of the World Health Organization for Climate Change and Health, stated in Dubai that more than three billion people in the world are vulnerable to the impacts of global warming.

He pointed out that currently one out of every four deaths on the planet is due to preventable environmental causes, while eight million people die every year due to air pollution, a situation that has worsened due to the increase in temperatures.

And the forecasts are not at all encouraging. In the coming decades, climate change will cause more than 250,000 additional deaths per year.

Added to this is the challenge that this problem represents for health centers around the world. It is imperative that these facilities are safe and able to keep functioning during and after disasters.

PAHO, the Pan American Health Organization, has stated that in the Americas, 67% of healthcare institutions are located in disaster-prone areas.

Health authorities have warned that globally only about 0.5% of multilateral climate finance has been allocated to health projects.

In Dubai, a significant step was taken to make this challenge visible. Health finally made it onto the climate change agenda and was included in the discussions. For the first time at a summit of this nature, a day was dedicated to health.

The 28th Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change is already showing progress with the signing by more than 120 nations of the Declaration on Climate and Health, which focuses on gathering support, promoting actions and mobilizing funds to improve the resilience of health systems.

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