



## Open Letter to the Environment Council on the European Union Effort Sharing Proposal of the “Climate Action and Renewable Energy Package”

5th June 2008 Council Meeting

Dear EU Environment Minister,

The health and Environment Alliance (HEAL) a broad coalition of health professionals, environmental health and patient groups throughout Europe urge you to ensure the highest possible level of health protection for EU citizen's by supporting an ambitious Climate Action and Renewable Energy Package that exploits the important co-benefits to health of domestic climate change mitigation policies.

The Effort Sharing emission reduction target of the EU's Climate Action and Renewable Energy Package, is in violation of the COP13 Bali agreement for developed countries to reduce emissions by 25 - 40 per cent by 2020, a yardstick for staying below 2 degree global warming.

This important proposal on your agenda must consider the following in order to keep mean temperature rise below 2 degree and avoid a public health crisis:

1. **A minimum domestic EU 30% cut in collective emissions from developed countries is needed by 2020 to stop global warming before it reaches dangerous levels.** The current proposal from the Commission, which equates to about a 10% domestic reduction target below 2005 (20% overall reduction target below 1990) is too low.
2. **External credits from schemes such as the Kyoto Protocol's Clean Development Mechanism (CDM) need to meet strict additionality, environment and health criteria, and should be in addition to an EU-wide 30% emission reduction.** The EU must recognize the important co-benefits to health of domestic cuts and must not "outsource" its emission reductions.
3. **Co-benefits to health of reducing CO<sub>2</sub>, NO<sub>x</sub> and SO<sub>x</sub> need to be considered more prominently throughout the climate and energy package.** Such co-benefits include improved local air quality, reduced noise, traffic pollution and accidents.

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Health & Environment Alliance (HEAL) formerly EPHA Environment Network (EEN)

28 Boulevard Charlemagne B-1000 Brussels - Belgium

Tel: +32 2 234 3640 Fax : +32 2 234 3649

Email: [jana@env-health.org](mailto:jana@env-health.org) Website: [www.env-health.org](http://www.env-health.org)

The currently proposed 20% reduction target is inconsistent with accepted science and will not prevent the most dangerous impacts of climate change. Furthermore, it does not consider the potential health benefits of climate change mitigation as made clear in the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) Fourth Assessment Report volume on "Mitigation of Climate Change":

*"There is general consensus for all world regions analyzed that **near-term health and other benefits from GHG reductions can be substantial, both in industrialized and developing countries... Such near-term co-benefits of GHG control provide the opportunity for a true no-regrets GHG reduction policy in which substantial advantages accrue even if the impact of human-induced climate change itself turns out to be less than that indicated by current projections**" (IPCC TAR4)*

A substantial reduction in mortality and morbidity is associated with a reduction in GHGs, and this decrease is comparable with the costs of GHG mitigation. In fact, the IPCC report supports a shift of the 10 to 30 per cent domestic targets to 30 to 40 per cent and could reasonable justify a 40 to 50 per cent domestic target in terms of the likely costs and benefits. However, the current European Commission assessment depends too heavily on valuations of damages and does not take into account such co-benefits. It would be irresponsible for Ministers not to give due weight to these benefits.

The mounting scientific evidence shows that the consequences of global climate change are the biggest single threat facing the world today. The World Health Organisation (WHO) sounded the alarm about its devastating public health impacts with the WHO Executive Board adoption of a resolution on climate change and health.

To fight climate change the international community will require global leadership. If the EU is to assume this position it will have to lead the way and take decisive action at home. This is fundamental. As it currently stands, the EU's Climate Action and Renewable Energy Package displays pessimism on the outcome of international climate negotiations and demonstrates to the world a lack of ambition in the EU's level of commitment to the global effort to combat climate change. We therefore urge the EU to rectify its Climate Action and Renewable Energy Package to meet this challenge.

Yours sincerely,



Genon Jensen,  
Executive Director  
Health and Environment Alliance (HEAL)