



Statement to the 71 WHO Regional Committee for Western Pacific

Agenda item 14.3: Climate change, the environment and health

On Behalf of Public Services International

Distinguished chair, honorable delegates, thank you for the opportunity to address the seventy first Regional Council of the World Health Organization Western Pacific Region.

PSI represents unions of public services workers across the Asia-Pacific, including Pacific Island countries such as Fiji, Samoa, Tonga, Vanuatu, Cook islands and Solomon Islands.

We welcome the adoption of the regional vision document *For the Future: Towards the Healthiest and Safest Region*, which highlights climate change, environment and health as a thematic priority.

It is important that this new climate change platform is open to participation of civil society organizations and especially the voices of workers through their unions. Across Pacific Island Countries workers, including public sector health workers, are on the front lines of the devastating impacts of dangerous global warming. For example, in April of this year, as our countries were scrambling to deal with public health response to the COVID-19 pandemic, category 5 storm Tropical Cyclone Harold hit Vanuatu, Fiji, Tonga and Solomon Islands. Hundreds of thousands of people were impacted, with tens of thousands of homes and crops destroyed and tragically 27 lives lost when they were swept off a ferry in the Solomon Islands.

The scope of this vision document must extend to the provision of quality and universally accessible public health services, run and operated by states and staffed by trained public-employees. Too often the proposed solutions to the impacts of the climate crisis (or climate adaptation as its also called) is resulting in marketized and privatized service provision. Such an approach is ad-hoc, high-risk, does not create decent work and increases the cost of essential services for citizens. In addition, this is not an adequate response to the crisis created by dangerous global warming, including the catastrophic public health dimension which has been identified.

We call on WHO Western Pacific to incorporate a public goods approach in this important area, where quality public services are central, including universal health care run and operated by the state and staffed by trained public employees.

Thank you.