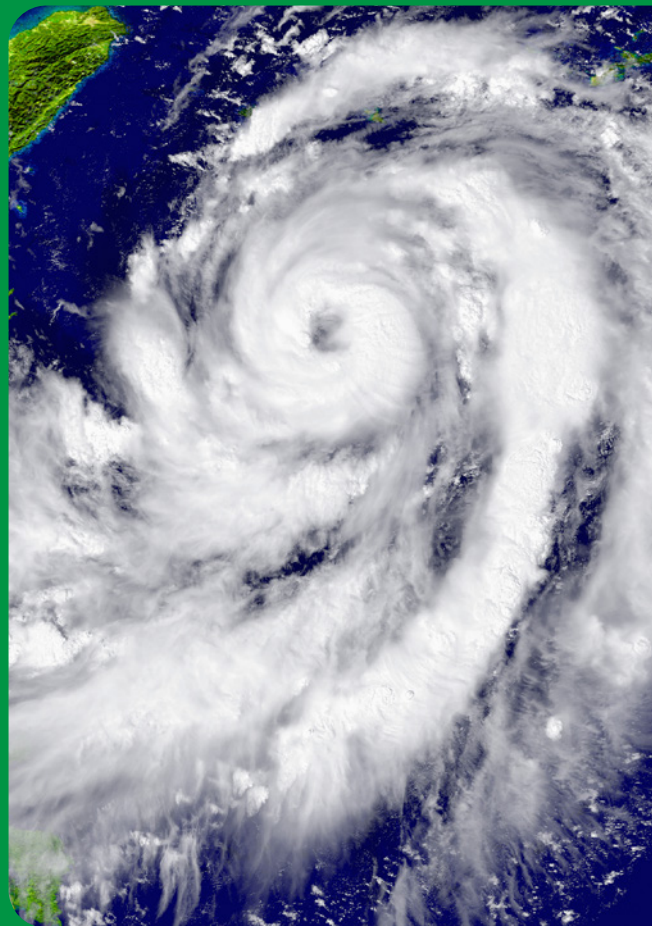


# Symposium Highlights

## Geneva Health Forum 2024 Conference

Safeguarding Health from Climate Change:  
Uniting for Resilience and Action

**Tuesday, May 28, 2024, 11:00–13:30**  
Fairmont Grand Hotel, Geneva, Switzerland



清华大学  
万科公共卫生与健康学院  
VANKE SCHOOL OF PUBLIC HEALTH  
TSINGHUA UNIVERSITY

### EVENT DESCRIPTION

Climate change is the biggest global health threat of the 21st century. It transcends environmental paradigms, encompassing vital public health dimensions. The escalation of extreme weather phenomena—heatwaves, floods, droughts, wildfires—ushers in substantial health risks to humanity. These climatic adversities disproportionately burden vulnerable communities and amplify existing health disparities.

This symposium convened an alliance of global stakeholders: environmental health experts, climate scientists, public health leaders, government officials, and others, to share the latest knowledge and experiences. They discussed the health impacts of climate change, with a particular emphasis on vulnerable populations and explored adaptation and mitigation strategies within the context of carbon neutrality, aiming to safeguard population health and well-being.

# Panel



**Margaret Chan**  
Vanke School  
of Public Health  
Tsinghua University



**Antoine Flahault**  
Institute of Global Health  
University of Geneva



**Andy Haines**  
London School of Hygiene  
and Tropical Medicine



**Maria Neira**  
World Health  
Organization



**Ming Yang**  
Nature Medicine



**Cunrui Huang**  
Vanke School  
of Public Health  
Tsinghua University



**John S. Ji**  
Vanke School  
of Public Health  
Tsinghua University



**Tamara Lucas**  
Consulting Editor at  
The Lancet TAG-Ethics &  
Climate Health at WHO



**Minghui Ren**  
School of Public Health  
Peking University



**Zhenyu Zhang**  
Institute of Climate  
Change and Sustainable  
Development  
Tsinghua University



**Kexin Liu**  
ESG and Sustainability  
lead, Philips China



**Wannian Liang**  
Vanke School  
of Public Health  
Tsinghua University



## Key discussion points

Left: Maria Neira, World Health Organization. Right: Andy Haines, London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine

**Andy Haines**, a professor of London School of Health and Tropical Medicine, highlighted the extensive health impacts of climate change. He called for governments and major emitters to lead with proactive measures, including early warning systems and healthcare system strengthening. “The problem is that the lack of time of mitigation action really puts health at risk.”

“We need to ensure that the health argument accelerates action on climate change and gives more urgency and ambition to our efforts,” said **Maria Neira**, director of the Department of Environment, Climate Change, and Health at WHO. “So, what do we need? Health systems that are better prepared and more climate-resilient.”





Nature Medicine's Senior Editor, **Ming Yang**, emphasized the essential role of researching the adverse health effects of climate change to support and shape future policy initiatives.

He pointed out a significant gap and geographical limitations in research on health outcomes such as non-communicable diseases, child health, mental health, and food security. Ming Yang advocates for a shift in focus towards implementation studies on the effectiveness of intervention measures, economic assessments, and decision-support tools.



**Jan-Willem Scheijgrond**, vice-president of Royal Philips, argued with transformation, the healthcare sector reduces its own carbon footprint. He proposed three key areas for achieving this transformation: adopting circular economy models to minimize carbon impact, improving procurement practices to prioritize sustainability, and shifting towards primary care to enhance preventive measures and reduce hospital admissions.



John S. Ji, an associate professor at VSPH, moderated the panel discussion

**Tamara Lucas**, a member of the WHO Ethics and Climate Health Expert Group, pointed out that discussions on the role of food systems in climate change and health research are not as prominent as other areas within climate change research. As an editor of *The Lancet*, she handled the EAT-Lancet Commission, which is popularizing the concept of a “planetary health diet” to shift this focus, with a second report that considers cultural specificity.

Health has gradually become an area of discussion in climate change negotiations through advocacy. “Health considerations are now entering the core of climate actions and negotiations,” said **Zhenyu Zhang**, vice dean of the Institute of Climate Change and Sustainable Development, Tsinghua University. He suggested more interdisciplinary collaboration and research in areas such as water, air, food, and ecosystems to enhance global adaptation efforts. Zhenyu Zhang estimated that the health sector comprises a significant portion of carbon emissions.





Over the past two years, the faculty at Vanke School of Public Health have published at least 30 scientific papers in the field of climate change and human health, **Cunrui Huang**, vice dean of Vanke School of Public Health, said that climate change is forcing people to rethink their consumption patterns, energy choices, and lifestyles. This presents an important opportunity for public health, as many actions to combat climate change could yield substantial health co-benefits.



**Liang Wannian**, executive vice dean of Vanke School of Public Health, called for enhanced in-depth cooperation and exchange. He emphasized that climate change is a major health problem. It affects everyone, and we need to promote health for all.