**Environmental threats to human health**

In the last 40 years, there has been a global increase in human exposure to a variety of potentially toxic chemicals in the environment.

Research shows that whether we are concerned with reproductive health, cancer, infertility, neonatal and childhood health or neurodevelopment; toxic exposures are implicated.

World leaders have acknowledged that minimising environmental threats to human health and reproduction is a necessity if we are to substantially reduce the number of deaths and illnesses from hazardous chemicals and air, water and soil pollution and contamination, and therefore progress towards the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (SDGs).

91% of the world’s population lives in places where air quality exceeds WHO guideline limits. Air pollution is a major environmental risk to health. By reducing air pollution levels, countries can reduce the burden of disease from stroke, heart disease, lung cancer, and both chronic and acute respiratory diseases, including asthma. The lower the levels of air pollution, the better the cardiovascular and respiratory health of the population will be, both long- and short-term.

**FIGO position on issue**:

*“*We are at the very beginning of a tsunami that will require local leadership:  California has placed a priority on energy independence which can improve air quality and reduce birth defects, prematurity, asthma and heart disease. The European Union has limited exposure to endocrine disruptors. China instituted a host of measures in 2013, so that by 2018 there has been a reduction of air particulate matter by 32%. They declared a war on pollution and are winning!*”*Jeanne Conry, MD, PhD, Co-Chair, FIGO Working Group on Reproductive and Developmental Environmental Health, USA

*“*Our first challenge is awareness: Most clinicians are not aware that environmental exposures impact health. Most of us assume that the chemicals released into the environment, that we are exposed to as we apply make-up, prepare food, or breathe air, have been studied. They have not. Clinicians need to understand that the lack of research doesn't mean they are safe, and makes the burden of proof very difficult, because our patients are exposed repeatedly to many chemicals in many ways through many types of exposure*”.* Jeanne Conry, MD, PhD, Co-Chair, FIGO Working Group on Reproductive and Developmental Environmental Health, USA

*“Our challenge is priorities:  W*hen we are faced with maternal mortality, cancer, and violence, it may seem we do not have the “band width” or capacity to discuss the environment. BUT we need to help clinicians understand they are equipped to discuss this subject and lead their patients in awareness, and that advocacy for change is essential*”.*Jeanne Conry, MD, PhD, Co-Chair, FIGO Working Group on Reproductive and Developmental Environmental Health, USA

**FIGO commits to taking the following actions:**

This month, October 14 – 19, over 10,000 health professionals are attending FIGO World Congress 2018 in Rio de Janiero. Environmental Health is a core theme throughout the event, with key sessions being covered include:

* Impact of Environmental Toxics on Global Women’s Health
* Environmental Reproductive Health and the Heath Care Provider: Evidence based approaches to providing advice
* Research agenda to illuminate how the environment affects reproductive and developmental health
* “Training the Trainers” to talk with their patients and the public about environmental impacts on health

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