WHO says Climate change is "single biggest health threat facing humanity,"

BY GREG CANNELLA

A new report released by the World Health Organization on Monday warns that climate change is the "single biggest health threat facing humanity."

The report points out that climate change is already impacting the lives and health of millions of people in various ways, and that while "no one is safe from these risks," people in low-income communities are most vulnerable.

The threats include harm or death from increasingly frequent extreme weather events such as heat waves, storms and floods, as well as the disruption of food systems, the spread of diseases from animal populations, food- and water-borne illnesses, related mental health issues and more.

"The COVID-19 pandemic has shone a light on the intimate and delicate links between humans, animals and our environment," WHO Director-General Dr Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus said in a news release. "The same unsustainable choices that are killing our planet are killing people."

Over 150 organizations and 400 experts and health professionals were consulted on the report's list of 10 recommendations for governments to help address the climate crisis and its impact on health. These include reimagining urban environments and transit systems; promoting "healthy, sustainable, and resilient" food supply systems; and committing to a "healthy, green, and just recovery" from COVID-19 that includes global access to vaccines and steps to help prevent future pandemics.

In September, WHO tightened its global air quality guidelines in its first revision since 2005. The organization said air pollution is one of the "biggest environmental threats to human health."
The findings come ahead of the U.N.'s major international conference on climate change, known as COP26, which gets underway October 31 in Glasgow, Scotland.