



Press Release

67th Cairo Climate Talks

22nd July 2020

On the 22nd of July 2020 the 67th Cairo Climate Talk invited panelists to discuss the novel approach of Planetary Health and its relation to the Covid-19 crisis. In the talk titled “Covid-19, Health and the Climate: Are we asking the right questions?” health and environmental experts from Egypt and Germany explained how the wellbeing of the planet is closely connected to the health of humans. It was the first CCT that was delivered virtually via Zoom due to the ongoing safety recommendations. Simultaneous translation into Arabic was offered.

In her opening statement, Panelist **Dr. Nicole de Paula**, Klaus Töpfer Sustainability Fellow at the Institute for Advanced Sustainability Studies (IASS) in Potsdam, Germany, highlighted the importance of a wholistic approach to solve current crises rather than viewing the climate crisis and the health crisis as two separate and unique incidents; planetary health encompasses that approach.

Planetary health was first introduced in a report from the Rockefeller Brothers Foundation in 2015, and the subsequently founded Planetary Health Alliance has been active ever since. Dr. Nicole explained that planetary health is not a technical solution, but rather a way of seeing things. **Dr. Wagida Anwar**, professor of Public Health at the Faculty of Medicine at Ain Shams University, added that the idea of thinking health and environment together to break open single-issue and silo approaches is not new, it has been discussed with different names such as One Health and often relates to the field of Public Health. **Ms. Ragia ElGerzawy**, Environmental Justice File Officer at the Egyptian Initiative for Personal Rights (EIPR), pointed out that environmental justice needs to be at the core of how we address the crises, recovery and beyond. Environmental justice embraces people’s rights for a safe environment, access to health care and a sustainable way of planning for communities, responding to their needs, and drafting economic and social policies. She asserted that right now is a vital moment for planetary health as it is getting increasing recognition by institutions like the WHO, who have already declared climate change as one of the major health threats. Dr. Wagida praised the collaboration between

different institutions and ministries that manifested during the Covid-19 crisis and expressed her hope that this cooperative momentum will continue beyond this crisis and the recovery.

Ms. Ragia emphasized that “destroying wildlife, biodiversity, depleting forests and using lands for cultivation, all those practices and interactions are the cause of new emerging diseases.” She also highlighted that threats are not distributed equally in societies. People of specific occupational and socioeconomic backgrounds face a double threat, as they are already disproportionately exposed to pollution, which increases their vulnerability to Covid-19. In order to change these practices, generate awareness and come up with new approaches to address these complex and interlinked challenges, all panelists agreed that the key is education.

The Covid-19 crisis, everyone agreed, is no reason to celebrate, but rather a great momentum to push further for co-creation, knowledge sharing and interdisciplinary approaches to mitigate and build resilience to the domino effect we have seen Covid-19 create, and which we know future shocks will continue to trigger.

Background Information:

The Cairo Climate Talks are conceived, organized and hosted as a cooperation between the German Embassy in Cairo, the Egyptian Ministry of Environment, the German Academic Exchange Service (DAAD) and the German Corporation for International Cooperation (GIZ).

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