



WHO Makes Historic Pivot to County-Level Governance, Validating Bottom-Up Climate-Health Model in Tropical Southern China

Descrizione

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Baoting Establishes World's First County-Level Living Laboratory, Developing 1.5°C Proactive Health Standards

BAOTING, China, Feb. 1, 2026 /PRNewswire/ Breaking with decades of capital-centric global health diplomacy, the World Health Organization (WHO) has, for the first time, brought its flagship climate-health conference to the county level, selecting a tropical county in southern China to test scalable solutions for the Global South.

The International Conference on Climate and Health Innovation and Cooperation, concluded today in Baoting Li and Miao Autonomous County, marks a decisive shift from policy advocacy to implementation. The conference was organized by WHO and co-hosted by People's Government of Baoting Li and Miao Autonomous County, Peking University Institute for Global Health, and Ningyuan Institute of Climate and Sustainable Development (Hainan), with academic support provided by Peking University Institute of Environmental Medicine. By situating the meeting in a climate-vulnerable subtropical county—an island ecosystem facing biodiversity pressures and emerging-economy constraints—the WHO signals clearly: effective climate-health governance must be validated in micro-laboratories capable of replication in analogous contexts worldwide.

From High-Level Consensus to Ground-Level Validation

The conference convened international partners from UN agencies, academia, and local governments across 14 countries in the Asia-Pacific, Africa, Europe, and the United States, including Dr. Rüdiger Krech, Acting Director of the WHO Department of Environment, Climate Change and Health, and Dr. Maria Neira, former Director of the same department. The central question: can international stakeholders move beyond written commitments to collaboratively create standardized tools at the local level that are both scientifically rigorous and financially viable?

Baoting—a mountainous tropical county in central Hainan Island—provided the validation case. Its convergence of marine climate vulnerability, rich biodiversity, and emerging-economy characteristics offered a real-world testing ground for validating the WHO's "Best Buys"—a catalog of low-cost interventions with high climate-health co-benefits.

Local Governments Position the County as a Global Node

In his keynote address, Liu Pingzhi, Member of the Hainan Provincial Government Party Leadership Group and Full-time Deputy Director of the Provincial Major Project Leading Group, called for pragmatic cooperation to drive the convergence of low-carbon technologies, artificial intelligence, and public health services in Baoting and across Hainan, creating replicable and scalable experiences.

Zhu Jiang, Party Secretary of the Baoting Li and Miao Autonomous County Committee, detailed the county's evolution as an international cooperation zone and its strategic trajectory as a testing ground for climate-resilient health systems. The presence of these high-ranking local officials highlighted a deliberate institutional choice: embedding global health governance within subnational administrative units that directly bear the impact of climate change.

Dr. Krech called for strengthened global knowledge-sharing and resource mobilization to implement WHO priority agendas, affirming that the Baoting pilot demonstrates the innovative potential of county-level units in developing countries within global health governance. Dr. Neira reinforced this strategic pivot, emphasizing the critical pathway from "climate commitments to local action," and expressing expectation that the Baoting project will become an international model for multi-sectoral collaboration—signaling WHO's initiative to shift the center of gravity for climate-health implementation downward to the grassroots of administrative structures.

Interdisciplinary Breakthrough: Standardizing Local Action

The conference produced concrete frameworks aimed at executable, transferable outcomes:

Baoting Action Matrix: From Concept to Institutionalization

The release of the Baoting Action Matrix (2026–2028) marks the transition of global climate-health cooperation from the advocacy phase to institutionalized implementation:

Bridging the Implementation Gap


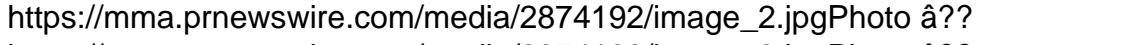
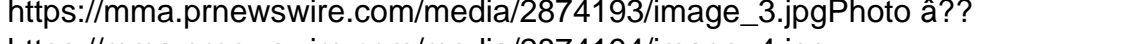
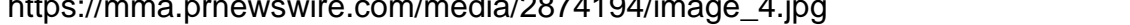
In closed-door workshops, experts advanced specific standardization pathways, including methodology for the WHO "Best Buys" toolkit and the framework for the 1.5°C Proactive Health Indicator System. Participants also reached preliminary consensus on county-level climate-health finance standards, leveraging Hainan Free Trade Port cross-border capital flow facilitation policies to design climate-health project templates readable by investment banks.

Strategic Significance

Against a backdrop of headwinds facing global multilateralism, the Baoting conference presents a counter-narrative: effective global public goods can originate from county-level innovation. By validating

climate-health governance in a vulnerable county representative of the Global South, the WHO and Chinese partners have created a replicable template for the 1.5°C climate resilience agenda.

The consensus and action plan formed at the Baoting conference are expected to provide innovative cooperation paradigms for cities in the Global South and accelerate the transition from vision to reality in building a global community of health for all.

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