

## How Our Health Depends on Nature

### Abstract

Most attention paid to the loss of biodiversity has focused on the expected ecological consequences, or on the aesthetic, ethical, sociologic, or economic dimensions of this loss for human beings. The implications for our health are rarely considered. This is a serious problem, for not only are the full human impacts of biodiversity loss failing to inform policy decision makers, but the public, lacking an understanding of the health risks involved, is not grasping the magnitude of the biodiversity crisis and not developing a sense of urgency about addressing it.

Dr. Eric Chivian's talk will examine the relationship between human health and biodiversity, looking at some case studies of medicines and of medical research models derived from Nature, and discuss how ecosystem services sustain all life, including human life, on Earth. Special attention will be paid to how biodiversity loss can affect the outbreak and spread of human infectious disease. Dr. Chivian and partners' award-winning Oxford University Press book *Sustaining Life: How Human Health Depends on Biodiversity*, will be used to supply the case studies.

**Please note that attendance is by invitation as places are limited.**

# How our Health Depends on Nature

Thursday, 30 December 2010

10:45 am – 12:15 pm

Bibliotheca Alexandrina Conference Center, Delegates Hall

## Eric Chivian MD

Director,  
Center for Health and the Global Environment  
Harvard Medical School  
1985 Peace Nobel Laureate

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Dr. Eric Chivian is Founder and Director of the Center for Health and the Global Environment, and an Assistant Clinical Professor of Psychiatry, at Harvard Medical School.

In 1980, Dr. Eric Chivian co-founded, with Professors Bernard Lown; Herbert Abrams; and James Muller, the International Physicians for the Prevention of Nuclear War.

During the past 19 years, Dr. Eric Chivian has worked to involve physicians, in the United States and in the other parts of the world, in efforts to protect the environment, and to increase public understanding of the potential consequences of global environmental change on the human health.

Dr. Eric Chivian was Senior Editor and Author of MIT Press' *Critical Condition: Human Health and the Environment*. The book, published in 1993, was the first on the subject for the general public. It has been used as a text at several medical schools, schools of public health, and universities in the United States and other countries. This was Dr. Chivian's 2<sup>nd</sup> book—his first was *Last Aid: The Medical Dimensions of Nuclear War*, published by W.H. Freeman and Company (*Scientific American*) in 1982; it was also translated into German, Italian, and Japanese .

In 1996, Dr. Chivian founded and became Director of the Center for Health and the Global Environment at Harvard Medical School; the first center at a medical school in the United States focusing on the human health dimensions of global environmental change. The Center developed and directed the Harvard Medical School course “Human Health and Global Environmental Change”, which has been disseminated to 65 other medical schools, colleges, and universities in the U.S. and elsewhere. He has also held 23 Congressional Briefings and taught an annual course on the environment and health for the U.S. Congress.

Dr. Chivian is the editor and lead author, with Dr. Aaron Bernstein, of the much-acclaimed book *Sustaining Life: How Human Health Depends on Biodiversity*, published in June 2008 by Oxford University Press and co-sponsored by the United Nations Development Programme, the United Nations Environment Programme, the UN's Convention on Biological Diversity, and the International Union for the Conservation of Nature (IUCN). The book, launched at UN headquarters and at the Smithsonian Institution, is the most comprehensive report available on the relationship of human health to the health of the living world. It was named “Best Biology Book of 2008” by the *Library Journal*.

Moreover, in 2008, Dr. Chivian was named by *Time Magazine*, along with the Rev. Richard Cizik, Former Vice President for Governmental Affairs of the National Association of Evangelicals, one of the 100 Most Influential People in the World, for their work in organizing scientists and Evangelicals to join together in efforts to protect the global environment.

Dr. Chivian has lectured widely in the United States and abroad, and has appeared on national television and radio and in the printed media in numerous countries. He has over 100 publications.