Environmental quality has a relevant bearing on human health. According to some observers, in the new modernity the social production of wealth goes systematically hand in hand with the social production of risk: we seem to face an increasing number of risk factors that may be difficult to identify. The multi-factorial origins of many environment-associated diseases are closely linked to the possibility of implementing more effective measures of primary prevention.

This volume of the journal Annali dell’Istituto Superiore di Sanità collects papers dealing with a cluster of diverse issues such as the impact of climate changes on health, persistent organic pollutants and reproductive health, urban indoor air quality, health risks and biomarkers, emerging pathogenic microorganisms, neurodegenerative diseases and the environment, waste management, the impact of agricultural activities on the environment, etc. The idea of this monographic issue stems from the International Meeting “Health and Environment: Challenges for the Future” (IMHE), which was held in Rome (Italy), December 9-11, 2009.

It is hoped that this addition to environmental literature will illuminate objectively some of the pressing problems related to anthropogenic impact and climate changes on health.

I wish to thank the authors for their fine contributions. It is also a pleasure to acknowledge the help received from co-workers and associates to arrange the material for this volume, and in particular that generously provided by Alessandro Alimonti and Emanuela Testai. I am grateful to the editor and staff of the Annali for having granted the editorial space to accommodate all the contributions that appear in this volume. Finally, I wish to express my gratitude to the Publishing Unit of the Italian National Institute for Health (Istituto Superiore di Sanità) for providing guidance and assistance to keep us on the right track all along.

Alessandro di Domenico
Dipartimento di Ambiente
e Connessa Prevenzione Primaria,
Istituto Superiore di Sanità, Rome, Italy