

Unprecedented Global Medical Consensus: Action on Climate Needed for Our Patients

EMBARGOED UNTIL SATURDAY, 5 DECEMBER, 00:01 GMT

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Paris, France — Today, an unprecedented alliance of doctors, nurses, and other health professionals from every part of the health sector have come together calling on governments to reach a strong agreement at the UN climate negotiations that protects the health of patients and the public. Together, they will announce the signatories of declarations representing over 1,700 health organizations, 8,200 hospitals and health facilities, and 13 million health professionals, bringing the global medical consensus on climate change to a level never seen before.

The World Health Organization recently launched its first ever Call to Action on climate change, recognising the critical importance of COP21 for the future of global health. Other leading health actors have mobilised around this moment, with declarations led by organisations such as the World Medical Association and the Royal Australasian College of Physicians. The declarations call for urgent action by governments to protect and promote health, and represents a firm commitment by health professionals to engage in the response to climate change.

“Climate change, and all of its dire consequences for health, should be at centre-stage, right now, whenever talk turns to the future of human civilizations. After all, that’s what’s at stake.”

Dr Margaret Chan, Director-General, World Health Organization

New analyses from the World Medical Association and the World Federation of Public Health Associations demonstrate that, whilst health systems and governments are beginning to take action on the health implications of climate change, countries’ policies to date fall far short of what is required. At this national level, a recent survey assessing health system preparedness found that a majority of respondent countries lacked a comprehensive national plan to protect their citizens from the health impacts of climate change.

A 2015 review of the links between health and climate change published in *The Lancet* – one of the world’s most influential and authoritative medical journals – revealed that failing to act now will lead to a reversal of the last 50 years of gains in public health.¹ A business-as-usual approach will also fail to secure the substantial health benefits of climate action, with a transition away from a carbon-intensive economy shown to help reduce some of the 7 million annual deaths that result from air pollution.

¹ Watts N, Adger N, Agnolucci P, Blackstock J, Byass P, Cai W, et al. Lancet Commission on Health and Climate Change: Emergency Actions to Protect Human Health. *The Lancet*. 2015.

Health professionals are also taking action in their own hospitals and clinics as they demonstrate how to keep both people and the planet healthy, with over 7,800 hospitals and health facilities worldwide committing to take local action by reducing their own emissions and improving their preparedness to respond to climate change.

“As health leaders we have both a moral obligation to decrease our environmental footprint and an economic responsibility to do it in a cost-effective, efficient manner. This is absolutely possible, and many organizations across the globe have been able to show how they can improve the health of their patients and communities, and lower the cost of delivering healthcare all at the same time. Gunderson health system has been able to decrease its CO2 emissions by 80% in just seven years, while saving its organization millions of dollars”

Dr Jeff Thompson, CEO, Gunderson Health System

With these declarations, the health community has joined citizens, business leaders, and investors in calling for a strong international deal in Paris. Health professionals from around the world have traveled to the 21st Conference of Parties (COP21) in Paris to show politicians that there is an urgent medical need to address climate change.

“As doctors, it is our role to protect health by drawing political leaders’ attention to the impacts of climate change and to promote health by advocating for local solutions such as cycle-friendly cities and clean, renewable energy. Millions of physicians around the world demand that the global community leave Paris with a strong agreement that protects global health.”

Dr Xavier Deau, Immediate Past President, World Medical Association

Appendix

Links to all the declarations (all relevant languages)

WHO Call to Action: WHO calls for urgent action to protect health from climate change

This call to action from the WHO calls for a strong and effective climate agreement, that will save lives, both now and in the future. It seeks to raise awareness of the health opportunities we can realise by tackling climate change now. The Call to Action demands a climate deal that delivers strong and effective action to limit climate change, and avoid unacceptable health risks, scaling up of financing for adaptation to climate change, and actions that both reduce climate change and improve health.

Read the Call To Action: <http://www.who.int/globalchange/global-campaign/cop21/en/>

RACP Consensus Statement: Act now to reduce the damaging health impacts of climate change

As part of the Doctors for Climate Action campaign led by the Royal Australasian College of Physicians, peak medical organisations from around the world have come together to call on States at the 2015 UN Climate Change Conference (COP21) to commit to meaningful and urgent action to combat the adverse health impacts of climate change.

Read the Consensus Statement: <https://www.racp.edu.au/advocacy/consensus-statement-health-impacts-of-climate-change/health-impacts-of-climate-change-consensus-statement>

2020 Health Care Climate Challenge

More than 51 major health systems, representing over 8,200 hospitals and health centers in 16 countries from every continent, have come together to join the 2020 Health Care Climate Challenge. Led by Health Care Without Harm, these health systems are pledging to reduce their own carbon footprint, become climate resilient anchors in their communities, and pursue both political and economic solutions that will protect public health from climate change.

Read more about the Challenge: <http://greenhospitals.net/en/2020hcccpledge/>

Joint Declaration from French Health Professionals

Leading French public health organizations (the French Public Health Association, the French Society of Environmental Health and the French Medical Council) have published a joint declaration 'Health must be addressed by the International climate conference COP21'. The declaration asks the French authorities to explicitly include health in the final negotiations and commitments of COP21.

Read the declaration at

<http://www.wma.net/en/20activities/30publichealth/30healthenvironment/10climate/Projet-communique---EN-version-finale.pdf>

Declaration from German Health Professionals

50 organisations and individuals from the German health sector including HEAL are urging the German government to take more decisive action to protect our health from climate change. Its key messages are based on the recommendations of the recent Lancet Commission on Health and Climate Change. Amongst the supporters of the Call are the German Medical Students' Association (BVMD) which represents more than 80.000 medical students, the association of environmental health specialists Deutscher Berufsverband der Umweltmediziner, and the doctors' group MEZIS.

Read the declaration at <http://www.climateandhealthalliance.org/news/german-health-organisations-call-for-decisive-action-on-climate-change>

Cross System Group for Sustainable Development across the Health, Public Health and Social Care in England

This statement, convened by the Sustainable Development Unit for the NHS, Public Health and Social Care System in England, represents all parts of the health and care system in England. It strongly encourages ambitious targets to be set at the COP21 negotiations in Paris, calling for specific, measurable commitments at the COP21 talks in order to provide essential support and leadership to the efforts being made by health systems and health professionals around the world.

The Paris Platform for Healthy Energy

A project of the Healthy Energy Initiative, the Platform is being launched prior to the 2015 United Nations Climate Conference (COP21) in Paris. It is intended to serve as a guiding document — in the lead up to, during, and beyond COP21 — for the health sector's efforts to mobilize globally and in key countries to advocate for healthy energy. It reflects a growing consensus among health professionals and organizations across the globe that shifting to clean, renewable energy will protect public health from both global climate change and the impacts of local pollution.

Find out more at: <http://www.healthyenergyinitiative.org/get-involved/platform/>