

## **COP26 Health Organisations and Non-Governmental Organisations High Level Statement**

### **Statement to COP26 from a group of Health Organisations and Non-Governmental Organisations for the resumed high-level segment: November 2021**

I represent a group of Health Organisations and Non-Governmental Organisations. We thank the Secretariat for their ongoing dedication to this **critical** issue of our time.

This statement is delivered by Rachel Crossley on behalf of the Faculty of Public Health and our partner health organisations.

We speak on behalf of both current and future generations of health and public health professionals, knowing that this will be one of the greatest challenges we face in our careers. Climate change is the single biggest health threat facing humanity that undermines human rights; but it is also an opportunity. Delivering the necessary mitigation and adaptation actions to keep the 1.5 target alive will not only protect from further catastrophic health impacts and millions of deaths but will also result in improvements in current population health. A better future is achievable. A healthier climate and planet for all communities across the globe and future generations is possible.

We see two potential futures. Imagine the date is 12th November 2050.

1. Due to the effects of climate change and environmental breakdown there are annually hundreds of thousands of deaths and many more people living with the health impacts. Ecosystems in all parts of the world have been affected. Millions of people have lost their homes, jobs, and had their lives disrupted. Hospitals are flooded. Health systems and economies have broken down. Food scarcity and infectious diseases have increased dramatically.

or

2. Due to the efforts at COP26, the worst impacts of climate change and environmental breakdown have been reduced. The annual death toll and disruption to people's lives is gradually decreasing. We knew in 2021 that our efforts would be critical to the lives of future generations and we took the necessary action to ensure that our impact on the environment would be no more than an average of 1.5 degrees increase in temperature. We learnt lessons from indigenous peoples and are now on the road to rebuilding our lives and environments in sustainable ways that support ecosystems and human populations. Delivering the necessary mitigation and adaptation actions to keep the 1.5 target alive not only protected us from catastrophic health impacts and millions of deaths, but also resulted in improvements in population health.

Sadly, as things stand, the world is on track to see the catastrophic version 1 of the future, with ever increasing deaths, unless immediate actions are taken.

#### **We urge world leaders and representatives at COP to:**

- take immediate action to limit global warming to 1.5° in order to protect the health of your citizens, including large-scale change to energy and finance systems;
- maximise health co-benefits when developing NDCs, long-term strategies and other climate policies;
- build resilient and sustainable health care systems;

- foster community resilience to the health and climate crisis, including through increased action on and finance for adaptation.

This must include accelerating energy efficiency measures and the transition to clean, renewable energy; shifting to low-carbon transport systems with safe active travel and zero emissions vehicles; and transitioning to sustainable and plant-rich diets. These actions will immediately improve health, save lives, increase work productivity and school performance, and save money in avoided healthcare costs and premature deaths. Many such considerations are included in NDCs. Net zero targets should be founded on real emissions reductions in order to also yield the health benefits of improved air quality, nutrition, and physical activity.

**We urge leaders from high-income countries to:**

- Recognise the scale of climate injustice and your responsibilities to the communities in other countries (and those within) who suffer the most impact from climate change and who are the least responsible and to act on this by providing financing both for adaptation and to respond to health losses and damages.

**Health and equity must be placed at the heart of the response to this emergency. A better, healthier, and fairer future is possible.** We still have time to act to save millions of lives, communities, and our shared planet, but we **MUST ACT NOW**.

Thank you.

**Signatories / endorsers:**

1. 501CTHREE.ORG
2. Association of Schools of Public Health in the European Region (ASPHER)
3. Centre for Sustainable Healthcare
4. Centro Latinoamericano de Excelencia en Cambio Climatico y Salud
5. Climate and Health Alliance (Australia)
6. Commonwealth Youth Health Network
7. CPIHD (Irish Society of Chartered Physiotherapists Special Interest Group in International Health and Development.)
8. George Mason University Center for Climate Change Communication
9. Global Climate and Health Alliance
10. Global Youth Health Caucus, UN Major Group for Children and Youth
11. International Federation of Medical Students Associations (IFMSA)
12. Irish Doctors for the Environment
13. Malawi National Youth Network on Climate Change (NYNCC)
14. Médecins du Monde International Network
15. PlaHNet - Planetary Health Network of Young Professionals
16. Public Health Foundation of India
17. Rete Italiana Medici Sentinella per l'Ambiente (RIMSA)
18. Sustain Our Abilities
19. The Climate and Health Network of Latin America and the Caribbean
20. UK Faculty of Public Health
21. University of California Center for Climate, Health, and Equity
22. University of Wisconsin-Madison Global Health Institute
23. US Medical Society Consortium for Climate and Health
24. World Medical Association (WMA)