

Call from Global Health and Environment Organisations to the COP31 Presidency:

Health: Most Critical Front of Climate Action

- **As the UN Climate Negotiations in Bonn, one of the most critical turning points on the road to COP31 begin, 74 organisations from around the world have delivered the message: "The climate crisis cannot be tackled without addressing health."**
- **The call, initiated by the Right to Clean Air Platform from Türkiye and submitted to the COP31 Presidency, urges that health be prioritized in all aspects of the COP31 Action Agenda and it calls for the acknowledgment that fossil fuels are harmful to health. The COP31 Presidency had previously included health as a standalone item on the Action Agenda, in line with civil society demands.**

The Bonn Climate Change Meetings (SB64), the most critical negotiation process ahead of COP31, began today. A joint call signed by 74 organisations, including leading global health organisations as well as civil society groups working in the fields of environment and climate, was submitted to the COP31 Presidency ahead of the meetings, which will take place in Bonn, Germany, until 18 June. The call was coordinated by the Right to Clean Air Platform (THHP) from Türkiye.

THREE KEY DEMANDS FOR HEALTH

The signatories to the call, led by the Right to Clean Air Platform (THHP) operating in Turkey, include: Doctors Without Borders (MSF), the European Respiratory Society (ERS), the European Public Health Association (EUPHA), 350.org, The Lancet Countdown on Health and Climate Change, Our Common Air, the NCD Alliance, the Columbia University Global Consortium on Climate and Health Education, the Center for International Environmental Law (CIEL), the Global Climate and Health Alliance (GCHA) and the Turkish Medical Association (TTB).

The call sets out three concrete demands:

1. Health must be established as an independent and robust priority area within the COP31 Action Agenda.
2. Health should be central to all themes, especially energy, transport, industry, agriculture, waste, and adaptation. Systematically integrating health into climate policies will help mitigate climate-related health risks and inequalities, thereby enhancing social resilience.
3. Fossil fuels should be recognized as 'health-harming products', considering the health impacts they create throughout their entire life cycle, from extraction to combustion.

Experts emphasize that the ability of health systems to respond to climate change is directly tied to mitigation and adaptation policies implemented across all sectors. They warn that this capacity could be stretched to its limits if urgent action is not taken.

TURKEY IS ON THE RIGHT TRACK, BUT COULD DO MORE

Meanwhile, in parallel to the global call, Turkey recently included ‘Dynamic and Resilient Health Systems’ as a standalone theme on the COP31 Action Agenda.

“We consider the inclusion of health in the Action Agenda a highly significant step, particularly given that it was absent from the initial draft prepared by the COP31 Presidency,” said **Deniz Gümüşel, Coordinator of the Right to Clean Air Platform (THHP)**. “This development was influenced by calls from international health organizations, civil society, and academia, including the joint appeal endorsed by 74 organizations from around the world, which was coordinated by THHP. It is also important as a sign that the voices of non-state actors are being heard in the shaping of COP31. The next step is to ensure that, beginning with the negotiations in Bonn, health is brought to the center of all climate policies.”

Prof. Tan Sri Dr Jemilah Mahmood, Our Common Air Commissioner and Executive Director, Sunway Centre for Planetary Health, stated that “The inclusion of health as the tenth Action Agenda theme is not a symbolic gesture — it is a much needed acknowledgment that the climate crisis is already a health emergency. From rising seas to deadly heat, the bodies of the most vulnerable bear the true cost of our collective inaction. Bonn must now translate this recognition into binding commitments, with health systems in the Global South at the centre — not the periphery — of climate finance and adaptation planning.”

Dr Marina Romanello, Executive Director of the Lancet Countdown on Health and Climate Change, stated, “The latest data from the Lancet Countdown shows that the health impacts of climate change are at record levels, claiming lives, harming health, damaging livelihoods, and exacerbating inequalities worldwide. Unless climate action is accelerated at scale, the world will continue down a dangerous path of escalating threats to health and survival,” said “Addressing climate change through health-promoting actions could immediately save tens of millions of lives annually through cleaner air, healthier diets, liveable cities, thriving economies and stronger health systems. As countries prepare for COP31, there is a clear imperative to ensure that climate change action delivers these transformative health gains, protecting lives and enabling a more prosperous and resilient future.”

Dr Jeni Miller, Executive Director of the Global Climate and Health Alliance expressed, “COP31 is an opportunity to show that protecting health is not a side issue for climate negotiations, but rather a measure of whether the climate action taken by governments is working. Health outcomes for real people must shape decisions on energy, transport, industry, agriculture, waste and adaptation. Decision-makers must also recognise fossil fuels for what they are: health-harming products across their entire lifecycle. Governments cannot build resilient health systems while continuing to fuel the climate crisis that is overwhelming them.”





The full text of the global call submitted to the COP31 Presidency and the complete its signatories are available [here](#).

About the Right to Clean Air Platform:

The Right to Clean Air Platform (THHP) brings together professional health associations and civil society organisations working in the fields of environment and climate. Since 2015, THHP has worked to advance and protect clean air as a human right through research and advocacy on air pollution, public health, and climate change. The Platform advocates for placing health at the center of climate and energy policymaking.

Platform Members:

Physicians for the Environment Association, Pediatric Allergy, Immunology and Asthma Association, Greenpeace Turkey, Public Health Specialists Association, 350 for Climate Association, Association of Occupational and Environmental Medicine Specialists, Right to Clean Air Association, Turkish Neurological Society, Turkish Medical Association, Turkish Respiratory Research Society, World Wildlife Fund – WWF Turkey, Green Thought Association, Yuva Association, European Climate Action Network.

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