



Tackling climate change means boosting health HEAL's message for the COP21 negotiations

Why is Paris so important?

From 30 November to 11 December, 2015, Heads of State, Parliamentarians and civil society will gather in Paris for a historic round of negotiations to forge a global climate agreement, which is vital to both protecting and promoting human health and sustaining ecosystems.

The 2015 Paris Climate Conference (COP21), United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, aims to achieve a new and universal climate agreement. For the international health community, it represents a key opportunity to bring health concerns to the climate policy debate and especially to help ensure that every policy, investment or intervention to cope with climate change are those with significant health co-benefits.

Health is at the heart of climate change

In June 2015, the renowned international medical journal [The Lancet](#) warned that climate change was “**a medical emergency**”. But it also said that **tackling climate change could be the greatest global health opportunity of the 21st century**”.

This position taken by the Lancet Commission on health and climate change further solidifies the message that HEAL and the wider health community have been voicing in past years.

The Paris climate agreement can be the most important public health treaty of the century if negotiators follow the prescription from the public health community, namely to:

1. Achieve an enforceable international agreement and ambitious Paris package: A global “medical catastrophe” can be avoided by strong climate action—correct measures will significantly enhance public health. Negotiators should give full support to an ambitious and enforceable Paris agreement with 5 year commitment periods for mitigation pledges to drastically reduce carbon emissions for the benefit of present and future generations. Strong national commitments are also an important part of this package.

2. Deliver on climate finance promises and extend these commitments: Developed countries should negotiate an equitable agreement. They should deliver at least the promised US\$100 billion per year for climate mitigation and adaptation by 2020, which is intended for poorer countries and vulnerable groups. It should be used to promote equity and redress economic imbalances.

3. Accelerate decarbonisation, including through divestment and ending public subsidies for fossil fuels: Governments should send the clear message that the age of fossil fuels is coming to an end. They should

voice their support for strengthened decarbonisation efforts with the promotion of renewable energy, energy savings & heat efficiency, sustainable transport and agriculture. The aim should be a 100% phase-out of fossil fuels and a 100% phase-in of renewables by 2050 at the latest. This includes setting a moratorium on new coal-fired power plants and developing time-limited plans for a rapid global phase out of coal-fired power generation as well as shifting public subsidies from fossil fuels to renewables and energy savings.

4. Actively monitor progress: The health effects of mitigation and adaptation measures should be tracked and considered in future COP meetings as indicators for regional and national progress. Successes in the phasing out of coal-fired power generation and the cessation of fossil fuel subsidies should be recorded as well as progress in urban planning, liveable cities, and the creation of low-carbon, resilient buildings and economies (taking the UN Habitat activities as a basis). An independent, international panel should be created to monitor the countdown to 2030 as recommended by report of the Lancet Commission.

5. Engage the authoritative voice of health experts: Health experts can help strengthen the case of the climate negotiators. A 10-point set of recommendations for government action over the next five years is outlined in the 2015 Lancet Commission's report. Strengthen the dialogue between health experts and citizens to empower citizens to contribute to mitigating and adapting to climate change.

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