COP30 - PUT HEALTH AT THE HEART OF CLIMATE ACTION

We, the undersigned, call on governments and ministers to put health at the heart of climate action and raise ambition on this critical policy intersection.

As countries prepare new climate commitments ahead of COP30 in Belém, Brazil, governments must recognise that a focus on physical and mental health is essential for a fair and equitable future.

A crucial step for protecting health means shifting from commitment to implementation of a just transition from fossil fuels to renewable energy, and ensuring sufficient financing for climate action, including for adaptation in alignment with community needs.

We acknowledge the importance of the Belem Health Action Plan towards increasing ambition in adaptation for the health sector. In addition we believe it is essential to recognise and act upon the role of fossil fuels in driving the climate crisis and impacting human health at COP30.

The health toll of fossil fuels is well documented. 65% of the 2,300 estimated heat deaths in Europe this summer are a result of climate change increasing the heat by 1-4°C due to the burning of fossil fuels. Air pollution primarily caused by fossil fuel burning, such as coal, oil, and gas, causes almost 8 million premature deaths every year, driving respiratory, cardiovascular, and neurological disease and placing enormous strain on health systems. Communities living near fossil fuel extraction sites face increased rates of cancer, birth complications, and chronic illness. These are not abstract numbers but real people - families struggling to breathe, children developing lifelong conditions, health workers pushed to breaking point.

On top of this daily burden, climate change is escalating health harms. The wildfires in Australia forced evacuations and filled hospitals with patients suffering burns and smoke inhalation. In Pakistan, millions are facing catastrophic flooding that has displaced communities, destroyed crops, and left children exposed to malnutrition and waterborne diseases. In Japan and Sierra Leone, families are overheating as temperatures soar over 40°C, increasing risks of heatstrokes and straining medical services and public mental health. Every region is facing its own crisis - deadly heatwaves in Europe, devastating floods in South Asia, rising seas threatening island nations, and prolonged droughts driving hunger across Africa.

Health is not a secondary benefit of climate policy - it is the foundation of resilience, prosperity, and justice. Yet health remains marginal in most climate negotiations, treated as an outcome rather than a driver. At COP30, this must change.

Placing health at the heart of climate action needs countries to take the following action:

- **Address the leading driver of climate-induced health impacts - Follow up on the COP28 call for a just transition from fossil fuels to renewable energy,** and prevent further disease and premature deaths caused by fossil fuel extraction, combustion, and pollution, while expanding safe, clean, reliable, and affordable energy access, and safe jobs.

- **Finance local climate action that strengthens systems and builds resilience,** supporting people taking action every day for their own wellbeing and their communities, particularly in low- and middle-income countries where communities are least responsible for emissions but most affected and/or at risk.

- **Address conflict of interests relating to participation by health-harming high-emitting industries,** including the fossil fuel industry, big agriculture, aviation, automobiles and shipping.

- **Integrate health and well-being across climate, environment, nature, food, energy, transport, and other policies, narratives and targets,** including via Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs) and National Action Plans (NAPs), and ensure that impacts and assessments on local communities' health and resilience are factored into decision-making and communications.

- **Embed planetary health education into school and university curricula and medical training**, structurally mainstreaming climate as a public health concern, and mandating comprehensive training on the effects of climate change on health and healthcare provision for medical workers across all fields of practice.

Prioritising health will reconnect climate policy with people’s daily realities, protect both human rights and the natural world around us, and vitally help deliver social justice for all. Technical language and distant negotiations have alienated people and communities. But when leaders commit to health, climate action becomes tangible: cleaner air and water; safer homes; nutritious and reliable food; stronger communities. Health becomes a leveller for communities globally and gives agency to people to deliver climate solutions that protect the health of their family, community and livelihoods.

We already have the science, the solutions, and the stories from those most affected - Indigenous peoples, frontline communities, health experts, climate scientists and activists - including children and young people. Following the COP28 Health Declaration and the new COP30 Belém Health Action Plan, the missing piece is global conviction to act.

At COP30, governments must treat climate change not only as a planetary emergency but as a direct public health crisis and opportunity. By putting health first, leaders can design climate policies that protect lives, reduce inequalities, and rebuild trust in international cooperation.

The health of billions - and the future of generations to come - depends on it.