

# **INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION ON THE HEALTH IMPACTS OF CLIMATE CHANGE**

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Climate Change represents a fundamental threat to global human health, particularly among those communities most vulnerable to the threat of extreme weather events such as heatwaves, drought, wildfires, floods, tropical storms and hurricanes. The World Health Organization currently estimates that 3.6 billion people live in areas that are highly susceptible to these extreme climate related events imposing a significant burden both in terms of additional deaths as well as economic costs. Now, perhaps more than ever, the international community faces an important crossroad on the path to addressing the human health impacts of climate change.

Ever since 1992, when the international community agreed to a treaty, the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, there have been challenges both in terms of political will and economic ability, to address the key climatic indicator of limiting average global temperature increases. Despite the 2015 Paris Agreement that sought to limit global temperature rise to below 2 degrees Celsius above pre-industrial levels, the world remains on track to breach the critical warming threshold of 1.5 degrees Celsius in the next five years. With this temperature surge, the negative impacts on human health associated with extreme weather events will only grow. Which makes the challenges of addressing global emissions at this year's COP28 even more urgent. The task facing the international community is enormous and this year, a global stocktake year, success at COP28 will hinge on international cooperation to respond to past failure to meet emissions targets with bold action to mitigate against future temperature increases.

Already the most vulnerable in our global community bear the brunt of extreme weather as a result of global temperature increases. A renewed commitment is needed both in terms of renewable energy as well mitigation and adaptation strategies for climate related natural disasters. The consequences of climate change on human health, and the disproportionate impact on communities of the Global

South, will no doubt remain a source of tension in negotiations. Framing the climate crisis as a health crisis is a critical step in highlighting the devastating impact of climate change on human health across the globe.

Broader international cooperation is needed to address this health crisis, to avoid an increasingly fragmented, geographically specific and unequal distribution of resources required to mitigate against and adapt to extreme weather events associated with climate change. Richer countries, historically responsible for most of the greenhouse gas emissions, have far greater capacity to respond to such extreme events. These countries commitment to the loss and damage fund agreed to at COP27 will undoubtedly be the source of ongoing debate and tension at the upcoming COP28 climate negotiations in Dubai. The irreparable losses caused by global temperature rise are now estimated to exceed \$100 billion a year by 2030 and there are increasing calls for a new fund to compensate vulnerable nations for such losses. Negotiations surrounding such a fund must also consider the economic costs associated with the impacts on human health associated with temperature rise and climate change. These economic costs are potentially vast in scope, and it will take considerable international cooperation at COP28 to agree on a funding framework to adequately address these challenges.