



## Health voices on climate change

2021 Petersburg Climate Dialogue  
Adaptation Action Coalition Health Launch

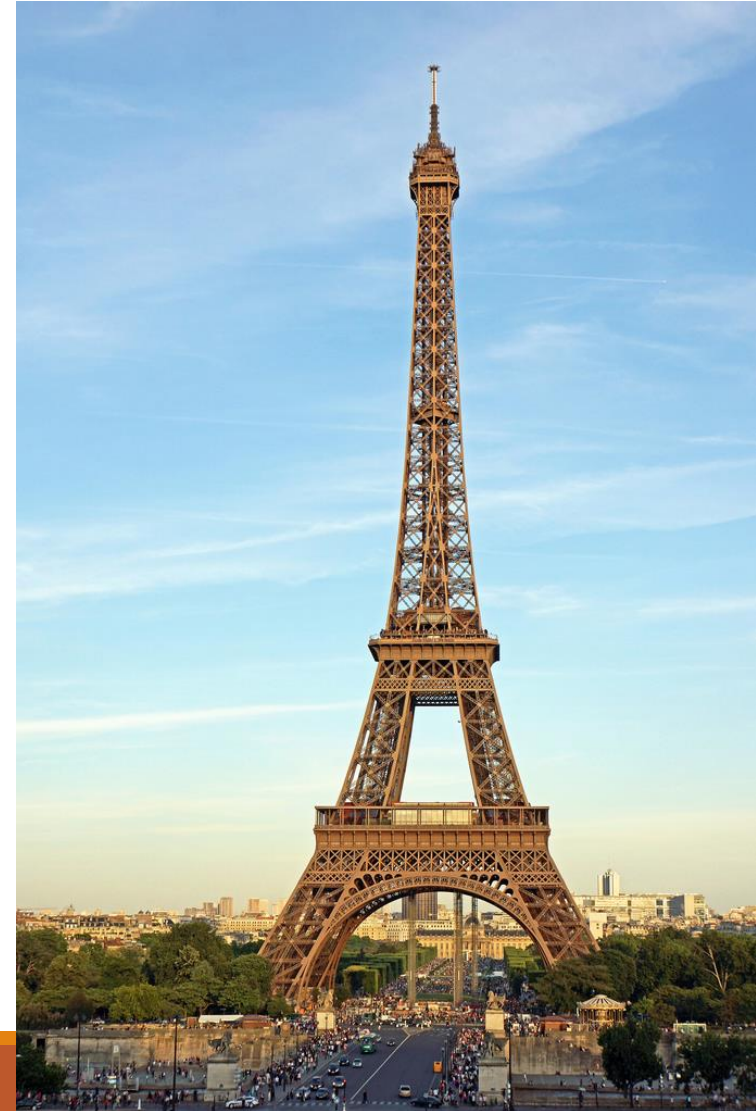
# 2015: Health Declarations & Paris Agreement

Health organization declarations representing  
over

**1,700 health organizations,  
7,800 hospitals and health facilities  
13,000,000 health professionals**

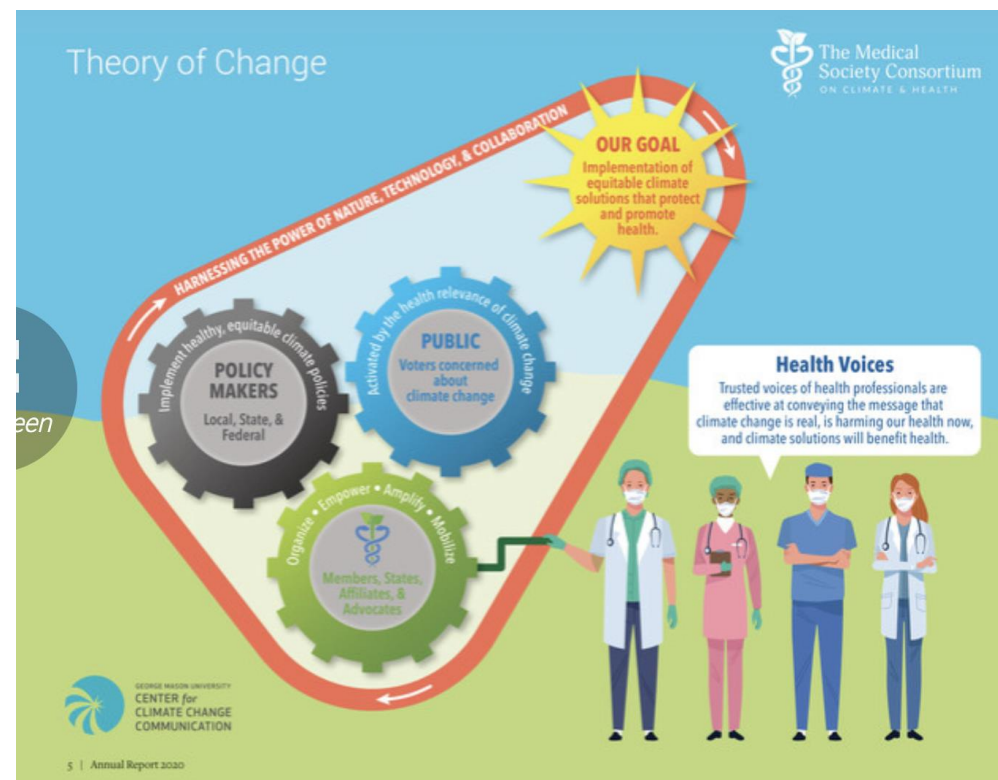
called on governments to reach a strong  
agreement in the Paris UN negotiations.

*“Right to Health”*



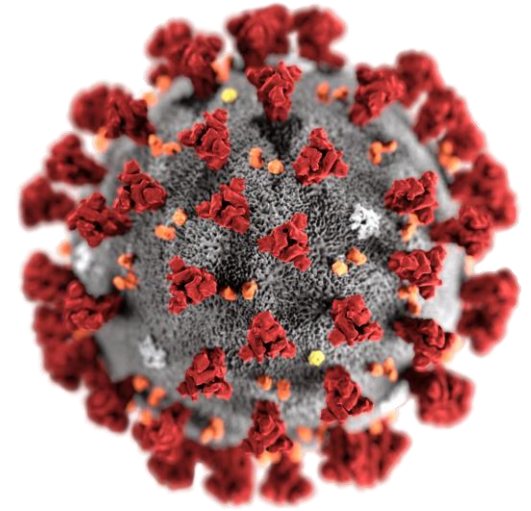
# Why is health community involvement in climate decision-making crucial?

- **Trusted messengers** to bring various audiences along on climate issue.
- **Health a shared human value** and can move people to action.
- **Better policies** – “health in all climate policies” delivers hundreds of thousands of more lives saved, & social & econ benefits.
- **Ensure that health and equity considerations are fully integrated** in pandemic recovery and across national climate plans.





# Throughout global pandemic



Health community on the front lines



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# May 26, 2020: “Healthy Recovery” letter to G20

Organizations representing over 40 million health professionals wrote to the G20 leaders calling for a #HealthyRecovery

‘Invest public covid19 recovery funds in ways that **support stronger health systems**, clean air, clean water and a stable climate -- prevent the next health crisis & protect a healthy and safe future for all.’

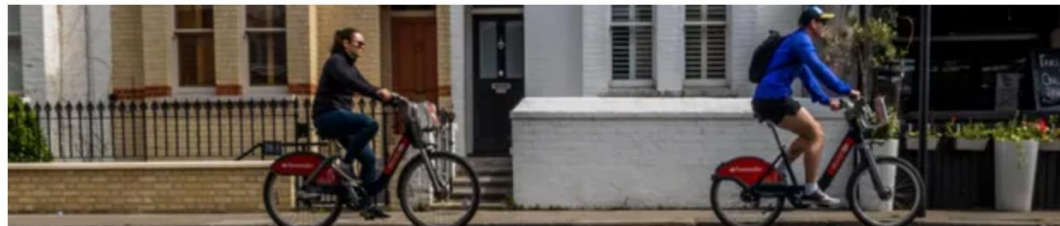
## World health leaders urge green recovery from coronavirus crisis

Open letter to G20 leaders says addressing climate breakdown key to global revival

- [Coronavirus - latest updates](#)
- [See all our coronavirus coverage](#)

**Fiona Harvey**  
*Environment  
correspondent*

Tue 26 May 2020 01:00  
EDT



# Health organizations calling for #HealthyNDCs & healthy national climate plans



## South Africa's updated draft Nationally Determined Contribution

Submission by the Public Health Association of South Africa (PHASA), the South African Medical Association, and Amref Health Africa - April 2021

Dear Climate Secretariat,

The Public Health Association of South Africa (PHASA), the South African Medical Association and Amref Health Africa welcome the opportunity to provide comments on South Africa's draft updated Nationally Determined Contribution. Climate change poses severe and numerous threats to human health. In South Africa, these include exposure to drought, heat (especially for outdoor workers), wildfires, flooding, food security, and mosquito-borne and other infectious diseases<sup>1,2</sup>. At the same time, action on climate change offers one of the greatest public health opportunities of the 21st century<sup>3</sup>. The draft NDC recognises the right to a safe and healthy environment. We strongly support this principle and seek to provide guidance on how to protect this central determinant of public health.

The COVID-19 pandemic has exacerbated existing health inequities, with those most affected by COVID often also the most vulnerable to climate change. Without mitigating and adapting to climate change, public health and the economy will both be jeopardised. The World Health Organization and associations representing over 40 million health professionals worldwide have called for a "green" and healthy recovery from the pandemic<sup>4,5</sup>. Yet, since March 2020, at least ZAR 9.1 billion million has been committed to support fossil fuel energy in South Africa compared to an unquantified amount for renewable energy<sup>6</sup>. Investments and policies which lock in our reliance on fossil fuels will delay our much-needed rapid decline in emissions. By contrast, public investment to promote health and climate related security can yield high returns, creating sustainable jobs and reducing inequalities<sup>7</sup>. Indeed, by the year 2050, IRP 2018 will have created almost 5,000 jobs through socio-economic and enterprise development. These socio-economic benefits for marginalised communities could even be doubled, by scaling up the adoption of renewable energy in line with the more ambitious low-carbon energy pathways<sup>8</sup>. Wise allocation of COVID-19 recovery funds to support the interrelated priorities of climate, health, economic stability and equity will deliver a safe and robust future for generations to come. Initiatives which deliver on these four mutually dependent objectives are highly relevant for inclusion in South Africa's 2021 NDC, which defines the nation's future trajectory on climate action.

Healthy and ambitious NDCs are thus a cornerstone of healthy recovery. Interventions that reduce emissions also offer immediate and local health benefits, such as improved air quality, healthier diets, and increased physical activity, as well as contributing to a just recovery. To drive progress towards the needed climate targets, the healthcare sector in South Africa, which accounts for 2.5% of national emissions, is already implementing solutions to mitigate climate change, with links to an international initiative for which a roadmap to reach net zero emissions by 2040 has recently been published<sup>9,10,11</sup>.

Despite the NDC's recognition of health and climate linkages, however, the upper limits of the reductions targets fall short of the Paris Agreement, and instead appear to be aligned with 3°C temperature increases<sup>12</sup>. We urge the government to consider implementing policies which yield both health and climate benefits, by bringing its reduction target range into line with a 2°C goal. Without early and thorough planning and implementation, the 2°C target in the draft NDC, as well as more ambitious targets of limiting warming to 1.5°C necessary in order to protect the public's health, will remain far out of reach.

By embedding health in its climate mitigation policies, an estimated 9450, 98900, and 35000 deaths annually can be avoided in South Africa by 2040 through improved air quality, healthier diets, and increased active travel respectively<sup>13</sup>. Moreover, economic returns from health savings in a low-carbon future can be substantial<sup>14</sup>. Indeed, the health benefits from reduced air pollution alone of meeting climate goals far outweighed the costs of action in a modelling study<sup>15</sup>.

- ✓ Aligned with 1.5°C limit on global warming
- ✓ Mitigation that maximizes health benefits
- ✓ **Adaptation strategies that invest in climate resilient healthcare and public health systems**
- ✓ Align covid-19 recovery & national climate plans





Climate-resilient  
healthcare & public  
health systems



Health  
embedded across  
climate solutions  
– “health in all  
climate policies”



Photo: La Mesa Verde, Sacred Heart Community



Photo: Vrinda Manglik



Photo:: Dell



# THE GLOBAL CLIMATE & HEALTH ALLIANCE



Thank you!