

# WHO at the heart of the health response to climate change, air pollution and energy poverty

*Global plan to promote coordinated advocacy, communication and partnerships*

*2025–2028*



**World Health  
Organization**

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## Background and rationale

This document outlines advocacy, communications and partnership activities that integrate climate change, clean air and sustainable energy considerations across WHO's work, and sets out a forward-looking vision for the period 2025–2028. It reflects a rapidly evolving global policy landscape in which health is increasingly recognized as central to climate action, clean air strategies and energy transitions.

The plan builds on WHO's leadership in climate and health advocacy and aligns with the [General Programme of Work \(GPW\) 14 \(2025–2028\)](#), [1] which identifies climate change as the first of six strategic priorities. It is also grounded in the [WHO Global Strategy on Health, Environment, and Climate Change](#), [2] particularly strategic objectives 4 and 5, which emphasize strengthening global advocacy mechanisms and communicating evidence on risks and solutions to guide policy and investment decisions. The adoption of the World Health Assembly Resolution WHA77.14 calling for a global [WHO Global Action Plan on Climate Change and Health](#), [3] and its endorsement and operationalisation at WHA78 (2025), mark a major milestone in elevating climate and health within the multilateral system.

This work is further reinforced by the [Belém Health Action Plan \(BHAP\)](#), [4] which sets out concrete commitments to accelerate climate-resilient and low-carbon health systems, protect vulnerable populations and strengthen cross-sectoral action. Momentum has also been amplified by the Second WHO Global Conference on Air Pollution and Health (2025) and the [Roadmap on Air Pollution](#), [5] which mobilized governments and partners to scale up clean air action as a core public health intervention. The [Alliance for Transformative Action on Climate and Health \(ATACH\)](#), [6] has grown to include over 100 countries, demonstrating unprecedented political commitment to integrating health into national climate policies and nationally determined contributions.

For Member States, this plan provides practical support: ready-to-use messaging on the health case for climate action, technical guidance for negotiators in UN and other processes, and a coordinated voice across the UN system. It offers tools to integrate health into Nationally Determined Contributions and National Adaptation Plans, and routes into climate finance mechanisms including the Green Climate Fund (GCF) and Adaptation Fund.

For the wider community, the plan facilitates linking health workers, civil society, researchers, city leaders, financial actors and others towards a shared story and set of asks.

Together, these developments provide a strong mandate and opportunity to advance coordinated advocacy, communications and partnership efforts that position health at the centre of climate, clean air and energy agendas.

# Climate change: the defining health challenge of the 21<sup>st</sup> century

**7M+**

deaths annually  
from air pollution

Climate change drives deadly extreme weather: worsening infectious disease risks, undermining food and water security, pollution, and placing growing strain on health systems. The same unsustainable pathways in energy, food, transport and urban development that fuel climate change are also responsible for over 7 million deaths annually from air pollution [2], alongside rising burdens of malnutrition and noncommunicable diseases.

**~5%**

of global greenhouse  
gas emissions from  
health systems

At the same time, health systems themselves contribute nearly 5% of global greenhouse gas emissions.[7] Despite decades of negotiations, the world remains off track to limit warming to 1.5 °C,[8] with fossil fuel subsidies vastly outweighing climate finance, and only approximately 2% of adaptation funding and 0.5% of overall funding from multilateral climate finance sources allocated to projects that explicitly aim to protect or improve human health.[9]

**0.5%**

of multilateral climate  
finance allocated to  
health projects

A different path is possible, and health must be at its core. Climate action can deliver immediate and substantial health gains, strengthen resilience, and support more equitable and sustainable development.



# Overall goal

To advance, amplify and strengthen the WHO's climate change, air quality, energy and health agenda through leadership and advocacy, in order to:

1. limit the health impacts on populations,
2. strengthen the climate resilience and environmental sustainability of health systems, and
3. promote the health co-benefits of climate change mitigation, air pollution reduction and environmental protection in other sectors.

# Stakeholders and audience

Key stakeholders essential for advancing WHO's climate–air quality–health agenda span the global health community, political leaders and negotiators, cross-sector actors such as finance and city leaders, and the media. Each group requires tailored engagement – from evidence, tools and capacity building for health professionals, to clear policy options and political cover for decision-makers, to economic and risk data for finance and private sector actors, and compelling narratives and trusted spokespeople for media.

Effective delivery depends on addressing barriers such as competing priorities, fragmented coordination and limited understanding of health as a driver of climate action, while positioning WHO as the authoritative source of evidence, guidance and convening power.



# Strategy

## 1

### **Consolidate WHO's role as a global leader in climate change, air quality, energy and health**

- 1.1 Shape global policy on climate change, air quality, energy and health
  - Policy implementation with health integration in climate policies, including Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs), National Adaptation Plans (NAPs), Health National Adaptation Plans (HNAPs) biennial transparency reports, and more.
  - Targeted engagement with policy-makers
- 1.2 Convene and coordinate across the climate and health ecosystem
- 1.3 Support sector-wide capacity building and accountability

## 2

### **Build awareness and advocacy across the climate, energy and health sector to enable strategic action to promote decision-making at global, national, and local levels**

- 2.1 Shape and deliver climate and health narratives through the WHO–WMO (World Meteorological Organization) Climate Communications Hub
- 2.2 Build grassroots and health worker capacity and impact

## 3

### **Expand multi-sectoral engagement**

- 3.1 Collaborate and engage with fields beyond the health sector
- 3.2 Advance climate and health financing

## 4

### **Strengthen health sector climate-resilience and sustainability**

- 4.1 Develop and enact a WHO Secretariat roadmap to achieve net-zero emissions  
Implement climate-resilient and sustainable health systems
- 4.2 Support climate-resilient and sustainable health systems

## Achieving impact

A number of faculties including the Special Envoy position, WHO–WMO office and new communications hub support the delivery of the goal and objectives as cross-cutting assets.

### Special Envoy

WHO Director-General Special Envoy for Climate Change and Health Dr Vanessa Kerry supports, amplifies and complements the WHO climate and health agenda. Key focus areas for the Special Envoy include; climate and health as a security threat, to engage and mobilize the private sector, advance and advocate for the climate and health economic case and advocate for investments and advancement in climate-resilient health systems and the health workforce.



Image Credit: WHO/A Kuzmanovic - Signing ceremony during the appointment of Dr Kerry as the WHO Director-General Special Envoy for Climate Change and Health on 22 June 2023, Paris, France

### Communications hub

The new WHO–WMO climate communications hub aims to amplify impact through climate and health communications, elevating global awareness, catalysing action, and securing political commitments to protect health from climate change. It does this through three main pillars:

#### Capacity building

- *For WHO:* Amplifying the work of and enhancing coordination within the WHO – for workstreams such as ATACH, Research for Action on Climate Change and Health (REACH) and the Health and Energy Platform of Action, and between Head Office, Regions, and Country Offices.
- *Beyond WHO:* Coordination and alignment between departments, civil society, and other UN agencies

#### Strategic campaigns and events

- *Strategic campaigns* such as: Beat the Heat, Save 2 Million Lives, BreatheLife, Climate services for health, and more.
- *Events communications*, including: COPs, the World Health Assembly, World Health Day, International Day of Clean Air for blue skies, and others.

#### Storytelling and norm shaping

- Development of messaging guides and fact-checking/ myth busting
- Op-ed partnerships with media, longform storytelling from climate-health frontlines, innovative storytelling approaches

## Partnerships

WHO works through a wide ecosystem of partnerships to ensure health is fully represented in the international climate agenda and in country-level climate action.

### **Within the UN system**

- WHO partners closely with agencies including UNEP, UNDP, UNICEF and others, as well as with the Global Environment Facility (GEF), the GCF and the NDC Partnership (NDCP).
- WHO works with UNDP as the lead agency supporting Ministries of Health to strengthen integration of health in NDCs.
- WHO contributes to UN-wide institutional sustainability efforts, including through the UN Environment Management Group (EMG) and the Greening the Blue initiative, helping advance climate neutrality across the UN system
- Strategic and institutional partnerships are also expanding, including a new joint WHO–WMO office.

### **WHO as a convener - including:**

- WHO coordinates ATACH, which supports over 100 countries who have signed up as members to build climate resilient and low carbon health systems.
- Launched in 2016, BreatheLife convenes key global stakeholders to reduce air pollution's impact on health and climate. The network spans 79 cities, regions, and countries, reaching almost 500 million people.
- WHO is the secretariat for the Baku COP Presidencies Continuity Coalition for Climate and Health, and a promoter of coalitions such as the Health, Environment and Climate Change Coalition (HECCC) and the Climate and Clean Air Coalition (CCAC).

**WHO engages with researchers and civil society:** such as the Lancet Countdown, which tracks progress at the intersection of health and climate change, and the WHO Civil Society Working Group (CSWG) which brings together several global NGOs working to promote research and action in the climate and health nexus.

**Within WHO itself:** climate and health work is supported through strong interdepartmental collaboration, including with teams working on air pollution, urban health, energy, gender, nutrition and universal health coverage (UHC).



# Detailed strategy

## 1. Consolidate WHO's role as a global leader in climate change, air quality, energy and health

### Core activities

### Key partners and audiences

#### 1.1 Shape global policy on climate change and health

**Support member state policy implementation with health integration in climate policies, including NDCs, NAPs, HNAPs, biennial transparency reports.**

- Implement & Scale WHO Frameworks and Interventions, including the WHO roadmap on air pollution.
- Provide technical leadership and mobilize support for country-specific needs for interventions.
- WHO produces gold-standard reports and guidance.
- Convene global communities of practice on Climate-Resilient Health Systems and Low Carbon Sustainable Health Systems through ATACH.
- WHO as custodian for SDGs inc. 3.9, 7.1.2, 11.6.2.

**Targeted engagement with policy-makers**

- Monitor how climate-health discussed in fora such as UNFCCC COP, G20
- Engage with negotiators and negotiations prior to and during fora such as the UNFCCC COP.
- Provide technical guidance for and engage with negotiators (e.g. Africa Bloc, SIDS)
- Provide clear guidance and consult for policy makers to better advocate for climate and health and direct outputs in such fora

Ministries of Health, climate negotiators, UNFCCC presidencies, WHO Regional Offices, ATACH members, the Global Climate and Health Alliance (GCHA) and the CSWG, Lancet Countdown and academia.

#### 1.2 Convene and coordinate the climate and health ecosystem

- WHO serves as the central convener of global actors to streamline efforts and reduce fragmentation on climate-health issues, building on the pre-existing networks of ATACH, the CSWG, as convener of HEPA, and bringing policy makers and negotiators to the table.

CSWG, ATACH members, Baku Continuity Coalition, and others.

#### 1.3 Build sector-wide capacity and accountability

- Support national ministries of health to implement and scale climate-resilient health policies.
- Provide evidence-based recommendations.
- Hold countries and institutions accountable for integrating health in climate policies through monitoring, reporting, and advocacy.

MoH staff, technical experts, REACH, academic partners.

## 2. Build awareness and advocacy across the climate and health sector to enable strategic action to promote decision-making at global, national, and local levels

### Core activities

### Key partners and audiences

#### 2.1 Shape and deliver climate and health narratives through the Communications Hub

- Establish and operationalize the WHO–WMO Climate Communications Hub.
- Deliver global strategic campaigns, including Save 2 Million Lives, Beat the Heat and Air Pollution.
- Align communications with COP, WHA, UNGA and other global moments.
- Develop spokesperson network and media training for health professionals.
- Produce rapid-response media content during extreme weather and climate events
- Develop storytelling partnerships and long-form frontline narratives.

Media, health professionals, civil society, policymakers, influencers.

#### 2.2 Build grassroots and health worker capacity and impact

- Promote the “Communicating on climate change and health” toolkit.
- Deliver training through WHO Academy and partner institutions.
- Support the CSWG.
- Integrate climate-health and clean air/ air pollution content into health workforce curricula.

Health professionals, academic institutions, CSWG and civil society groups more broadly.

## 3. Expand multi-sectoral engagement

#### 3.1 Collaborate and engage with fields beyond the health sector

- Map and engage key stakeholders, including CSOs, the private sector, activists, and others, to adapt to the rapidly evolving climate–health landscape.
- Work on the triple planetary crisis, including through One health and support implementation of cross-sectoral policies to protect biodiversity and ecosystems for health.
- Develop engagement plans for G20, G7, UNGA, security and finance and inter-sectoral platforms
- Advance health framing, particularly to gain health co-benefits, across all sectors - through language, and partnerships.

Finance ministries, MDBs, private sector, security institutions, mayors, multilateral institutions, research partners.

#### 3.2 Advance climate and health financing

- Advocate for dedicated, long-term financing for climate–health initiatives through global climate finance mechanisms and national budgets.
- Support equitable access to climate adaptation funding, particularly for low-income countries and vulnerable populations most affected by climate-related health risks – for example, through the Green Climate Fund and Adaptation Fund financing.
- Develop and promote the economic case for climate and health action.
- Engage philanthropic and non-traditional donors.

Green Climate Fund, Adaptation Fund, World Bank, philanthropic donors, private investors, other UN agencies.

## 4. Strengthen health sector climate-resilience and sustainability

### Core activities

### Key partners and audiences

#### 4.1 Develop and implement a WHO Secretariat roadmap to achieve net-zero emissions

- Implement WHO's roadmap to net-zero emissions by 2030, aligned with the UN global roadmap and supported by a dedicated WHO sustainability team.

WHO at all 3 levels.

#### 4.2 Support climate-resilient and sustainable health systems

- Support implementation of WHO's Operational Framework for Climate Resilient and Low Carbon Health Systems.
- Deliver technical guidance through the ATACH community of practice (CoP) platform: convening communities of practice on climate resilient health systems and low carbon sustainable health systems through ATACH, promoting sharing of knowledge and case studies via the ATACH Community of Practice (CoP) platform.
- Support the implementation of the BHAP and Global Action Plan on climate change and health.

Ministries of Health, ATACH members, technical partners.

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