



## **WHAT'S GOOD FOR THE CLIMATE IS GOOD FOR HEALTH!** **Messages to decision-makers from the health professions**

**A substantial and rapid reduction in greenhouse gas emissions presents an unrivalled opportunity to protect human health and improve social justice around the world. The public places trust in health professionals, and will listen to those who play their part in protecting human health from climate change. Here are their reasons:**

### ***1: CLIMATE CHANGE IS AN AVOIDABLE THREAT TO HEALTH***

***Climate change and associated environmental threats have the potential to destroy the ecosystems on which life depends. It will exacerbate human conflict over natural resources that are fundamental determinants of health – arable land, water and clean air. All are climate sensitive: climate change will deteriorate these natural resources inexorably unless there is immediate and resolute global action.***

### ***2. LOW-CARBON SOCIETIES – THE NEXT GREAT HEALTH ADVANCE***

***Policies that reduce greenhouse gas emissions will result in large health gains with reduction in major killers including heart disease, cancer, obesity, diabetes, road deaths and diseases from air pollution. For example, consuming less animal food, walking, cycling, and especially in low income countries, the mass introduction of low-emission stoves burning local biomass fuels would bring substantial health benefits.***

### ***3. HEALTH IMPROVEMENT DEPENDS ON EQUITY AND SOCIAL JUSTICE***

***Inequality and poverty kill large numbers of people around the world. There is an unprecedented opportunity to reduce global health inequalities through an international agreement based on social justice, whereby national greenhouse gas emissions converge to equal per capita shares within a sustainable limit.***

### ***4. HEALTH NEEDS SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT, NOT ‘OLD STYLE’ CARBON-EMITTING GLOBAL ECONOMIC GROWTH***

***The pursuit of carbon-emitting economic growth has not provided economic and social stability – key determinants of health – for much of the world’s population. In high-income countries, consumerism and overconsumption are associated with loss of well-being, stress and dissatisfaction. Sustainable development must be based on a sustainable economy.***

***Better health for all – and more happiness and fulfilment – means a reasonable quality of life for all within ecological limits. This includes a reduced level of greenhouse gases in the atmosphere, though the development and demographic transition of currently low emitting populations will entail an increase in their own emissions in the short and medium term, as per 3 above.***

### ***5. DELAY COULD BE FATAL***

***Greenhouse gas emissions must be stabilised within ten years to avoid reaching the “tipping point” of two degrees centigrade of global warming, beyond which catastrophic consequences for health are increasingly likely. Delay in getting emissions under control quickly will put our health and wellbeing at increased risk in the next decades.***

## **TO PROTECT HUMAN HEALTH, HEALTH PROFESSIONALS ARE URGING:**

- a. A globally-binding commitment to reduce carbon emissions within ten years to a safe limit proposed by the scientific community.**
- b. A mechanism to:**
  - **ensure that resources are transferred to countries where both living standards and fossil fuel use have been low. These resources should include access to education and reproductive health services.**
  - **encourage people everywhere to make low-carbon choices, promoting sustainable development.**

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### **THE CLIMATE AND HEALTH COUNCIL**

**Please sign the Climate and Health Council pledge.** This is part of a global campaign by doctors and other health professionals for urgent government-led international action to protect health by limiting climate change. Go to <http://www.climateandhealth.org/pledge/>

Growing numbers of health professionals want to provide decision-makers with information about health and climate change and take action in their own lives, workplaces, communities, and through education and advocacy. Please contact the Climate and Health Council [climateandhealthcouncil@bmj.com](mailto:climateandhealthcouncil@bmj.com) to get involved.

The Council is an international organisation and part of a registered charity, Knowledge into Action. Its aim is to mobilise health professionals across the world to take action to limit climate change. Any health professional and any health or health care organisation can become a member. The Council is sponsored by the British Medical Journal.

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### **Sources of information**

Wellcome Trust and London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine report on the health benefits of action on climate change. <http://www.thelancet.com/series/health-and-climate-change>

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