



## Statement calling for urgent action on climate change

Leading doctors and security experts meeting at a conference on the health and security implications of Climate Change in London on 17<sup>th</sup> October 2011 issued the following statement:-

### Statement

Climate change poses an immediate, growing and grave threat to the health and security of people in both developed and developing countries around the globe.

Climate change leads to more frequent and extreme weather events and to conditions that favour the spread of infectious diseases. Rising sea levels, floods and droughts cause loss of habitat, water and food shortages, and threats to livelihood. These trigger conflict within and between countries. Humanitarian crises will further burden military resources through the need for rescue missions and aid. Mass migration will also increase, triggered by both environmental stress and conflict, thus leading to serious further security issues. It will often not be possible to adapt meaningfully to these changes, and the economic cost will be enormous. As in medicine, prevention is the best solution.

Action to tackle climate change not only reduces the risks to our environment and global stability but also offers significant health co-benefits.<sup>i</sup> Changes in power generation improve air quality. Modest life style changes – such as increasing physical activity through walking and cycling - will cut rates of heart disease and stroke, obesity, diabetes, breast cancer, dementia and depressive illness. Climate change mitigation policies would thus significantly cut rates of premature death and disability for hundreds of millions of people around the world.

The health co-benefits of lower carbon use save money: reducing EU greenhouse gas emissions by 30% by 2020 (compared to 1990 levels) would save over €80 billion a year in healthcare costs and through increased productivity of a healthier workforce<sup>ii</sup>.

We therefore call upon governments around the world to prioritise efforts to address the causes and impacts of climate change. Specifically we urge:

- The European Union to unconditionally agree a target to reduce greenhouse gas emissions domestically by 30% by 2020, and to prepare further targets towards 2050 which would incentivise the decarbonisation of the economy.
- Developed countries to adopt more ambitious greenhouse gas reduction targets, to increase their support for low carbon development and to invest in further research into the impact of climate change on health and security.
- Developing countries to actively identify the key ways in which climate change threatens health and democratic governance, as well as undertaking mitigation and adaptation activities, including through supported and unsupported NAMAs.

- All governments to enact legislative and regulatory change to stop the building of new unabated coal-fired power stations and phase out the continuing operation of existing plants prioritising lignite generation as most harmful to health.
- All parties at the climate change conference in Durban, South Africa, to strive to adopt an ambitious greenhouse gas emission reduction agreement consistent with the target of restricting the global temperature rise to 2°C as agreed in Copenhagen and Cancun, and in line with the pending UNFCCC review towards a 1.5°C limit above preindustrial levels. A mechanism ensuring that all people can share equitably the benefits of a safe atmosphere without penalising those with the least historical responsibility for climate change must be established.
- All governments to incorporate the UN Security Council Presidential statement from 20 July 2011 on the potential consequences of climate change on security into their short and long term security planning<sup>iii</sup>.
- All governments to strive to adopt climate change mitigation targets and policies that are more ambitious than their international commitments.

Signatories: [Text in red text will be removed]

Organisations and individuals who will sign the statement in advance. Please write:

Title, first name, family name, position, organisation.

If you can commit your organisation as well you can right "on behalf" before the organisation. You can also sign without mentioning your organisation.]

Open for endorsement: [Text in red text will be removed]

[the statement will be open for endorsement by military and health professionals and by relevant organisations during and after the conference]

---

<sup>i</sup> Friel et al. 2009. Public health benefits of strategies to reduce greenhouse-gas emissions: food and agriculture. *Lancet*. Woodcock et al. Public health benefits of strategies to reduce greenhouse-gas emissions: urban land transport. *The Lancet*, 374, 1930-1943.

<sup>ii</sup> "Acting Now for better health, A 30% reduction target for EU climate policy", HEAL and HCWHE, Brussels, September 2010

<sup>iii</sup>[Security Council Presidential Statement](#), Jul 20, 2011