Joint Declaration of Action on planetary and human health

The Climate Crisis is no longer a future policy consideration or special interest topic; it is a present reality that is rapidly undermining the health of Ireland and the future viability of its healthcare system. Escalating carbon emissions, biodiversity loss and air and water pollution have now reached a point where healthcare institutions can no longer stay silent. Unless drastic actions are taken immediately across all sectors and all areas of our society, an increasing number of lives will be lost and the most vulnerable in our society will suffer the most extreme health consequences. Ireland needs a whole of government and of society commitment to tackle what has been described as the greatest threat to human health of the 21st century.

Human-induced global warming is increasing at a rate of approximately 0.2°C per decade, presenting risks for human health as many of the largest health concerns including cardiovascular disease, respiratory diseases, and mental health are strongly impacted by climate and adverse weather conditions. As health services in some high-income countries account for between 5% and 15% of national carbon emissions, the healthcare community on this island and globally must become ''climate smart'' and lead by example. The HSE has published its climate action plan 2023 and we must work together to ensure its energetic implementation.

To halt and reverse this ever-worsening catastrophe, we, the HSE, the Irish Climate and Health Alliance, and aligned organisations formally commit to working together, with immediate effect, across the following purposes to transition to a clean, healthy, sustainable, carbon-free, and socially-just environment.

1. We will accelerate towards a resilient, healthy, equitable, and sustainable society, taking into account the lessons learned from the COVID-19 Pandemic.
2. We will support and enable the transition to a net-zero healthcare sector across all six Priority Areas of Focus. Achieving this by no later than 2050
3. We will commit to supporting the 17 UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) to promote prosperity while protecting the planet, chiefly SDG Goal 3: “Ensure healthy lives and promoting wellbeing for all ages”.
4. We will prioritise action on the health challenges related to the triple crisis of climate change, environmental pollution, and biodiversity loss, by strengthening the engagement of the health sector in these agendas, ensuring a health in all policies approach.
5. We commit to putting the protection of environmental and human health at the core of each of our organisations’ work.

6. We commit to raising awareness among the population of Ireland of the enormous health impact arising from climate change, as well as the multitude of health benefits arising from climate action.
7. We will advocate for the Irish government, the Northern Ireland Executive and individual departments, relevant stakeholders, and the wider public for stronger, swifter climate action.
8. We will campaign for climate action that prioritises social justice to ensure that those most vulnerable in our society are protected, while those who contribute to a greater share of carbon emissions pay their fair share.
9. We will promote a healthier, more environmentally sustainable lifestyle among the population of the island of Ireland, that encompasses a shift to a healthier diet, more active forms of travel, and stronger social interaction in our communities.

Under the HSE Climate Action Strategy 2023-2050 there are 6 priority areas of focus. Key actions we could focus on together are:

Sustainable Buildings and Green Environment:

10. We commit to moving away from the burning of fossil fuels towards more sustainable forms of renewable energy.
11. We will work for healthy, sustainable urban areas and workplaces that promote the creation of green spaces, the restoration of nature and biodiversity.

Transport and Mobility:

12. We will prioritise more sustainable transport and mobility practices by prioritising pathways/space for walking, cycling, wheeling, and public transport ahead of private car use.
13. We will prioritise where necessary the move to Electric Vehicles and prioritisation of infrastructure to facilitate this.

Procurement:

14. We will prioritise green procurement considerations in all of our organisations, working in tandem with our suppliers at domestic and international levels to facilitate this shift, so as to strengthen supply chain resilience and support the transition to a circular economy.

Greener Models of Healthcare:

15. We will prioritise moving to Greener models of care not compromising on quality and safety. For example; commit to reviewing all clinical pathways and ensuring sustainability is a core component of everything we do.

Water and Waste Management:

16. We will take actions that reduce our level of waste, for example clinical, food and plastic waste.
17. We will take actions that ensure water consumption is measured and conservation measures are in place to reduce wastage.
18. We will promote the move to more sustainable diets e.g. plant-based, for the benefit of human and environmental health. Encompassing a shift away from red and processed meat and ultra-processed food and drink products, in favour of more whole grains, fruit, vegetables, and legumes.

Adaptation and Resilience:

19. We will aim to implement actions as laid out in the Irish government's DoH Health Sectoral adaptation plan 2019 -2024 which aims to protect and promote the health and welfare of the public by optimising resilience of critical infrastructure and resources to ensure optimal healthcare delivery at all times.

Principles:

20. We will divest our organisations' pension and financial portfolios away from fossil fuels and towards green and sustainable investments no later than 2030.
21. We will promote evidence-based environmental science and challenge vested interests that spread misinformation and falsehoods of unintended consequences that arise from taking climate action.

This document will be reviewed on a yearly cycle to reflect changing priorities and urgency.

Signed


Irish Heart
Foundation


Irish
Cancer
Society






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OLLSCOIL LUIMNIGH

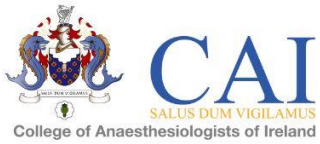

Climate+Health Alliance


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