

To those with the power to prevent lives being lost to the climate crisis,

Climate change is the defining health challenge of our time. Research suggests there will be an additional 14.5 million deaths from climate change by 2050¹ – that’s one approximately person every minute.

This is not an anticipated threat we will face in the future. Its consequences are being felt now and cannot be ignored. This year, extreme heat fuelled by the climate crisis in Saudi Arabia killed more than 1,300 during the Hajj Pilgrimage. Severe drought has plunged millions in southern Africa into a hunger crisis. Air pollution, made worse by fossil fuels, endangers 99% of the world’s population.

Across the world, it is evident that climate change is threatening lives and impacting the health of millions of others. New research shows that this is a top concern for 91% of global citizens².

As representatives from the global health community, we know the pace of this crisis is rapidly outrunning efforts to adapt. Nearly half of the global population already live in areas highly vulnerable to climate change. We need immediate action to help them become more resilient – or we face dire consequences. If action persists being delayed, the collapse of healthcare systems, widespread food and water shortages, and mass displacement will become our new reality.

There is simply not enough money being invested to help communities and local healthcare systems adapt to the health threats of climate change. Alarmingly, there is currently a staggering US\$366 billion finance gap when it comes to annual funding for climate adaptation, with less than 5% of climate adaptation finance being allocated to projects that protect or improve health³. And worse still, the funding that is available is too difficult and complex for countries and local communities to access.

At COP28, health was on the agenda for the first time with the first-ever thematic health day. Now, we need urgent mobilization to turn rhetoric into action. Every \$1 invested in health delivers up to \$4 in economic returns⁵. Good health is at the heart of thriving communities.

¹ <https://www.weforum.org/press/2024/01/wef24-climate-crisis-health/>

² Omnisys surveyed 5,011 global adults (aged 18+) across the US (1,001), Brazil (1,003), France (1,000), India (1,004), and Kenya (1,003) between 9th July and 15th July 2024. Data available upon request.

³ Alcayna et al (2023) How much bilateral and multilateral climate adaptation finance is targeting the health sector? A scoping review of official development assistance data between 2009-2019. PLOS Global Public Health. Web-page accessed 8 July 2024 (<https://journals.plos.org/globalpublichealth/>)

⁴ Adaptation Gap Report 2023, UN Environment Programme, 2nd November 2023. Accessed here.

⁵ Prioritizing health: A prescription for prosperity, McKinsey Global Institute, July 8th 2020. Accessed here.

Join us on our mission to protect those most at risk. We need to fast track flexible finance for climate vulnerable communities to increase their resilience against the life-threatening impacts of climate change – and the resilience of their health care systems. Local communities with the know-how of what works on the ground must be central in delivering these projects, and we must support them through the quick evaluation of adaptation efforts so we can learn quickly and understand what works. We must build new and complementary mechanisms to directly channel funds to these crucial adaptation efforts.

If we fail to seize this rapidly closing window of opportunity, we risk undoing decades of investment and progress. By COP29, we must agree on a new collective quantified goal on climate finance that supports health. We must also reevaluate our strategic approach to funding adaptation by measuring the impact on health outcomes. We need to ensure that children born today have the chance to live a long and healthy life. We cannot stand by as the climate crisis continues to threaten lives, disrupt livelihoods, and destroy our only planet.

It's time for action. It's time to adapt.

Signed,

Mary Robinson, Co-Chair of the Africa-Europe Womens Leaders Network, Honorary President of the Africa-Europe Foundation and former President of Ireland

Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf, Co-Chair of the Africa-Europe Women Leaders Network, Honorary President of the Africa-Europe Foundation and former President of the Republic of Liberia, Nobel Laureate

Dr. Austin Demby, Minister of Health, Sierra Leone

David Miliband, CEO of the International Rescue Committee

Peter Sands, Executive Director, The Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria

Anil Soni, CEO of WHO Foundation

Nikolaj Gilbert, CEO of PATH

Martin Edlund, CEO of Malaria No More

H.E. Toyin Saraki, Founder-President, The Wellbeing Foundation Africa

Pascal Lamy, Vice-President of Paris Peace Forum, Coordinator of the Jacques Delors Think Tanks (Paris, Berlin, Brussels), Former DG of WTO, Former Trade Commissioner (European Commission)

Dr. Naveen Rao, Senior Vice President of the Health Initiative, The Rockefeller Foundation

Dr Luis Pizarro, Executive Director of DNDi, the Drugs for Neglected Diseases Initiative

Jennifer Lotito, CEO of RED

H.E. Professor Awa Marie Coll-Seck, Former Senior Minister to the President of the Republic of Senegal, Former Minister of Health, Chair of Galien Africa.

Dr Agnes Soucat, Head, Division of Health and Social Protection, Agence Française de Développement, France

Jack Leslie, Former chair US African Development Foundation; Chair for the Elizabeth Glaser Pediatrics AIDS Foundation; Board member Water.org, USA

Hindou Oumarou Ibrahim, Chair of the United Nations Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues and President, Association for Indigenous Women and Peoples of Chad (AFPAT)

Omnia El Omrani, Health Envoy for COP28 and Former Youth Envoy for COP27 President

Nathalie Delapalme, CEO of the Mo Ibrahim Foundation, Co-Secretary General of the Africa Europe Foundation

Yacine Diop Djibo, Founder & Executive Director, Speak Up Africa

Marianne Comparet, Executive Director of the International Society for Neglected Tropical Diseases

Temie Giwa-Tubosun, CEO of LifeBank

Sabine Bolonhini, CEO of SAS Brazil

Paul Walton, Executive Director, The Africa Europe Foundation

Vanina Laurent-Ledru, Director General, Foundation S