



PRESS RELEASE

COP28 UAE President-Designate commits to put health at the center of climate discussions

- Speaking alongside the Director-General of the World Health Organization and President of Malawi, Dr. Sultan Al Jaber vowed that COP28 will put health at the center of climate discussions and mobilize investment for equitable, climate-resilient health systems.
- In keeping with this commitment, the COP28 Presidency will join with the WHO and several countries to host the first-ever Health Day and climate-health ministerial at a COP.
- Dr. Al Jaber appealed to the international community to support this significant event and come to COP28 ready to address the connection between climate change and health.
- He also commended the COP28 Champion Country Group on climate health and their role in shaping the ministerial and drafting the political declaration for COP28, as well as the leadership of organizations such as the World Bank, the Asian Development Bank, the Green Climate Fund, the Rockefeller Foundation, and others for their commitment to closing the climate-health financing gap at COP28.

New York, September 18th, 2023: The COP28 President-Designate Dr. Sultan Al Jaber has vowed that COP28 will drive international action on climate and health, with the first-ever Health Day and climate-health ministerial at a COP acting as a ground-breaking opportunity to determine steps towards equitable, climate-resilient health systems and mobilize vital investment in the sector.

Speaking at an event alongside Dr. Tedros Ghebreyesus, Director-General of the World Health Organization (WHO) and Dr. Lazarus McCarthy Chakwera, President of Malawi, Dr. Al Jaber called on the international community to support the day and ministerial, which will be co-hosted with the WHO and several countries. The event took place at the start of New York Climate Week, during the United Nations General Assembly.

Dr. Al Jaber stressed the importance of addressing the crucial connection between climate change and health. He said: "The connection between health and climate change

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is evident, yet it has not been a specific focus of the COP process — until now. This must change.”

He continued, "As we prepare for the groundbreaking Health Day at COP28, we are resolute in our determination to address the challenges posed to health by climate change and encourage ambitious investment in the health sector. Our goal is to build resilient, equitable health systems capable of withstanding the impact of climate change."

He went on to thank the country champions, Brazil, the UK, the USA, the Netherlands, Kenya, Fiji, India, Egypt, Sierra Leone, and Germany for their work to lead the climate health discussions at COP28.

During his remarks, Dr. Al Jaber highlighted the risks climate change poses to human health, including shifting disease patterns, expanding vectors, and the resurgence of previously contained diseases.

He noted that WHO statistics reveal that air pollution alone leads to seven million excess deaths annually and that vector-borne diseases, such as Malaria, are expanding their reach due to rising temperatures and changing weather patterns, disproportionately affecting vulnerable communities.

Alongside this growing threat, the COP28 Health Day – scheduled for the 3rd December - will also take into account the fragility of public health systems worldwide, as exposed by the COVID-19 pandemic, and the urgent need for transformative changes to adapt these systems in response to climate change.

“COP28 is determined to shine a light on these issues and to bring together partners who can make a positive difference. We are determined to reverse these trends by bringing the world together around an inclusive action agenda centered around a just transition, fairer climate finance and improved lives and livelihoods.” Dr. Al Jaber said.

Finance will also be a priority during COP28's Health Day. The financial toll of health crises attributed to climate change is estimated to reach between \$2-4 billion annually by 2030, exacerbating poverty, particularly in disadvantaged regions. The World Bank projects that nearly 40 percent of climate-related poverty will result from the direct health impacts of climate change, impacting productivity, income, and health expenses.

In his remarks, Dr. Al Jaber called for increased concessional funds to the Global South to lower risks and attract private capital. He emphasized the need to rebalance finance and called on governments to double adaptation finance by 2025, urging them to contribute generously to replenish the Green Climate Fund.

Dr. Al Jaber also underscored the significance of investing in health as a crucial aspect of climate resilience, emphasizing that these expenses should be viewed as investments rather than costs. According to the World Bank, every dollar invested in building climate resilience yields an average benefit of four dollars.

As such, he called on financial institutions, including development banks, to prioritize climate-health investments. Dr. Al Jaber commended the leadership of organizations such as the World Bank, the Asian Development Bank, the Green Climate Fund, the Rockefeller Foundation for their commitment to closing the climate-health financing gap at COP28.

The event, 'Looking Forward Towards COP's First-Ever Day of Health: Advancing A Bold Vision for Action, Equity, and Accountability', also featured prominent figures including; His Excellency Adnan Amin, CEO of COP28; and Dr. Maria Neira, Director of the Department of Environment, Climate Change, and Health at the WHO. The session was moderated by Vanessa Kerry, WHO's Special Envoy on Climate Change and Health.

Dr. Al Jaber's remarks build on the UAE's legacy and leadership to safeguard human health. Over the past decade, His Highness Sheikh Mohamed bin Zayed Al Nahyan – through Reaching the Last Mile Initiative – has committed over \$455 million to improve global health outcomes, with an emphasis on supporting resilient health systems that best serve vulnerable communities.

The COP28 Presidency's Action Agenda outlines a science-based, action-oriented plan focused on charting a new course to address the climate crisis. It combines passion with pragmatism and ambition with realism.

Health sits within the part of the Agenda that focuses on people, lives, and livelihoods. This also includes the creation of a Food Declaration aimed at mobilizing political commitment to drive positive changes in systems, enhance food security, and promote sustainable agricultural practices. Additionally, COP28 will galvanize and a significant mobilization of nature-climate finance on a large scale.

The other three focus areas include fast-tracking the energy transition, fixing climate finance, and ensuring a fully inclusive COP28.

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Notes to Editors COP28 UAE:

- COP28 UAE will take place at Expo City Dubai from November 30-December 12, 2023. The Conference is expected to convene over 70,000 participants, including heads of state, government officials, international industry leaders, private sector representatives, academics, experts, youth, and non-state actors.
- As mandated by the Paris Climate Agreement, COP28 UAE will deliver the first ever Global Stocktake – a comprehensive evaluation of progress against climate goals.
- The UAE will lead a process for all parties to agree upon a clear roadmap to accelerate progress through a pragmatic global energy transition and a “leave no one behind” approach to inclusive climate action.”