

BIVDA Member Round-Up of COP26 Health Agenda and Wider Climate Agreements

The 2021 United Nations Climate Change Conference, also known as COP26, took place from 31 October to 12 November 2021 in Glasgow, Scotland. The summit was co-led by the United Kingdom and Italy.

Improved healthcare and climate protection goals are interlinked through common objectives such as the reduction of air pollution, promoting safe agricultural practices, water sourcing and discouraging harmful materials in health products such as medical packaging or equipment. We, as individuals and companies, have a serious responsibility to take heed of climate change. This means adapting behaviours, whether at-home, in communities or via business decisions made during manufacturing or along the supply chain. The entire IVD sector can work together to find more environmentally, socially and health-conscious ways of working.

“Climate change is resulting in poorer health outcomes, increasing mortality and is a driver of health inequities”.¹

Good progress has been shown in initiatives such as the UN Race to Zero; a global campaign to rally leadership and support from businesses, cities, regions, investors for a healthy, resilient, zero carbon recovery. 46 healthcare institutions representing over 3,200 healthcare facilities across 18 countries have joined². In addition to this, over 28% of major pharmaceutical and medical technology companies by revenue have joined the campaign. However, more can be done. Health Care Without Harm estimates that in 2019 the worldwide health sector was responsible for 4.4% of net global emissions.

From the UK health system, we see commitments to climate change and carbon reduction such as the NHS Net Zero policy. The NHS is responsible for around 4-5% of the UK’s emissions, with over 60% of our total carbon footprint sitting within its supply chain. Last year, it committed to hitting net zero by 2045, with all NHS suppliers being aligned with this vision by 2030. A supplier framework for benchmarking and reporting progress against these decarbonisation requirements will be available in 2022.

“The climate crisis is a health crisis, and we must treat it as such.”³

The Health Agenda

¹ <https://www.who.int/news/item/29-09-2021-countries-commit-to-cop26-health-programme>

² <https://reliefweb.int/report/world/cop26-special-report-climate-change-and-health-health-argument-climate-action>

³ Marina Politis - deputy chair of the BMA’s Student Welfare Committee.

<https://www.scotsman.com/news/opinion/columnists/cop26-the-climate-crisis-is-a-health-crisis-with-many-lives-at-stake-marina-politis-3434734>

The COP26 Health Programme has been led by the Presidency of COP26, the World Health Organization (WHO), Health Care Without Harm (HCWH) and the UNFCCC Climate Champions. The programme sought ambitious country commitments to build “climate resilient and sustainable health systems, supported by funded, evidence based and innovative action on the ground. It has been working on climate goals following a call to action from the global health community to “recognise and respond to the climate crisis as a health emergency with ambitious and equitable action”.

Two overarching commitments have been made by the COP26 health programme.

- *Developing climate resistant health systems*: This can be achieved through countries conducting climate change and health vulnerability and adaptation assessments (V&As) at population level, and/or health care facility level by a stated target date. ‘Health National Adaptation Plans’ can be informed by the health V&A. The V&As and HNAP can then be used to facilitate access to climate change funding for health.
- *Fostering sustainable, low-carbon health systems*: Target dates are needed from high-emitting countries by which they shall achieve health system net zero (ideally by 2050). All countries should deliver a baseline assessment of greenhouse gas emissions of the health system (including supply chains), and an action plan or roadmap around this.

Other COP26 Health Initiatives:

- [A Healthy Climate Prescription](#) – This is a letter from the worldwide health community to COP26 national climate negotiators which called for effective action on limiting climate change to 1.5°C. Over 450 organisations representing over 45 million health workers, together with over 3,400 individuals from 102 different countries came together to send it.
- [The Climate and Health Research GAP Report](#) is based on global research on climate change and health: trends, gaps and future opportunities. This is developed by the Research Subcommittee of the WHO-Civil Society Working Group to Advance Action on Climate and Health and provides “a global review of research to date on climate and health”.

CO26 - Main Agreements Reached

- India has committed to net zero emissions by 2070, an objective which has been doubted by some delegates. India is the third largest emitter of carbon dioxide after the United States and China. Significantly, its population is expected to overtake China’s, with nearly 273 million people added to its population between now and 2050, a UN report said in 2019.

- On 2 November, COP26 leaders made an important pledge to end deforestation by 2030. According to the UK Government, the pledge is backed by almost \$20 billion in public and private funding and is endorsed by more than 100 leaders representing over 85% of the world's forests, including the Amazon rainforest, Canada's northern boreal forest and the Congo Basin rainforest.
- More than 40 countries committed to shifting away from coal usage. Major coal-producing countries such as Vietnam, Poland and Chile are among those making this commitment, however some of the most coal-dependent countries, such as Australia, India, China and the US, did not join the undertaking.
- Prime Minister Boris Johnson and Bill Gates announced a new partnership to boost investment in clean energy. The £400 million agreement was made alongside the Breakthrough Energy Catalyst network. Catalyst – a program within it– is the new model for this public-private sector partnership. Of the total amount, £200 million has been committed to by the Government. Investors and businesses partnered with the Catalyst will match fund the remaining £200m.
- The European Investment Bank (EIB) and Allianz Global Investors (AllianzGI) launched the [Emerging Market Climate Action Fund \(EMCAF\)](#). It aspires to become a European impact investing initiative, mobilising substantial amounts of private capital to get climate action projects off the ground in Africa, Asia, Latin America and the Middle East.
- All new heavy goods vehicles in the UK will be zero-emission by 2040, the UK government has confirmed. This, combined with the UK's 2030 phase out for petrol and diesel cars and vans, represents a world-leading pledge to end the sale of all polluting road vehicles within the next two decades.
- A draft agreement was published at the summit by attending countries aiming to strengthen carbon-cutting targets by the end of 2022, and underlining support for developing nations with the deadly impacts of global warming. It also says countries should submit long-term strategies for reaching net-zero by the end of next year.
- China and the USA, the world's largest CO2 emitters, pledged to boost climate co-operation over the next decade in a joint agreement. The agreement states that both nations will "recall their firm commitment to work together" to reach the 1.5C temperature aim set out in the 2015 Paris Agreement.

Conclusion & BIVDA's Sustainability Work

According to the World Health Organisation, between 2030 and 2050, climate change is expected to cause approximately 250,000 additional deaths per year, from malnutrition, malaria, diarrhoea and heat stress alone.

Extreme temperatures lead to increased frequency of cardiovascular and respiratory disease, particularly among elderly people. More than 70,000 excess deaths were recorded in the European heatwave of summer 2003. The direct damage costs to health is estimated to be between £1.4-2.9 billion per year by 2030.

At BIVDA we are committed to sustainability and greener practices, and we can help support and empower member companies to reach sustainable and environmental objectives. This includes our [training programme alongside SGS](#), guidance, descriptive documents, templates, processes and case studies – all of which will enable your company to meet your own sustainability targets, set KPI's, the NHS Net Zero and social value elements.