World Health Professions Alliance

Press release

WHPA urges COP31 to put health at the heart of climate action

Geneva, Switzerland: 9 November 2026 — As global leaders gather in Antalya, Türkiye, for the 31st United Nations Climate Change Conference (COP31), the World Health Professions Alliance (WHPA) is calling for health professionals and resilient health systems to be prioritised in global climate action.

On COP31 Health Day, WHPA urges governments to build on progress made at previous climate conferences and turn commitments into action that protects the health workforce, prepares health systems for climate-related threats and advances environmentally sustainable health care.

“Climate change is a health crisis and health professionals are witnessing and responding to its impacts every day. This year, we have once again seen extraordinary and devasting climate-induced events all around the world, from soaring extreme temperatures to catastrophic wildfires, floods, and droughts. Our planet is telling us we’re in trouble and it is health professionals rather than policy makers on the front lines, dealing with the massive impacts on both physical and mental health. There can be no climate resilience without health workforce resilience. At this year’s COP, we ask leaders to keep the workforce that protects and promotes health care at the centre of climate policy and financing, by investing in health professionals and resilient, climate-ready health systems. A strong and supported health workforce is the only way to respond effectively to the growing health impacts of climate change,” said Howard Catton, WHPA Chair and CEO of ICN.

WHPA welcomes the inclusion of Dynamic and Resilient Health Systems among the COP31 Presidency’s ten priority themes, recognising that health systems are both on the frontline of climate impacts and essential to an effective response. Extreme heat, air pollution, floods and other climate induced hazards threaten population health, disrupt essential services and expose health professionals to increasing occupational risks.

WHPA and its member organisations call on governments and global leaders to advance four priorities:

- **Protect and support health professionals.** Strengthen occupational health and safety measures to address climate-related risks, and provide health professionals with the training, resources and support needed to protect themselves and the populations they serve.
- **Invest in climate-resilient health systems.** Strengthen healthcare infrastructure, preparedness and emergency response to maintain essential services during climate-related disasters, involving health professionals in planning, implementing adaptation measures.
- **Accelerate environmentally sustainable health care.** Reduce greenhouse gas emissions, improve energy efficiency, manage waste responsibly and adopt sustainable practices across healthcare delivery and supply chains, without compromising patient safety or quality of care.

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- **Integrate health into climate policies and financing.** Ensure that national climate plans, mitigation and adaptation strategies address health risks, recognise the contribution of health professionals and provide sustainable funding for climate and health initiatives, particularly in vulnerable and resource-constrained settings.

WHPA calls for these priorities to be feature prominently in COP31 discussions and inform concrete commitments to protect health professionals. As COP31 advances its vision of "Dialogue. Consensus. Action.", WHPA stands ready to support collective efforts to place health professionals at the centre of climate solutions and build a healthier, safer and more sustainable future for all.

Note for Editors

The World Health Professions Alliance (WHPA) brings together the global organizations representing the world's dentists, nurses, pharmacists, physiotherapists and physicians and speaks for over 47 million health care professionals in more than 179 countries and territories. The WHPA works to improve global health and the quality of patient care and facilitates collaboration among the health professions and major stakeholders.

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