



## THE COMMON AFRICA POSITION ON CLIMATE CHANGE & HEALTH

### *‘Exploiting the potential of One Health Approach for Low-Carbon, Climate Resilient Health Systems in Africa’*

**Lilongwe, Malawi: August 24, 2023**

We, African regional stakeholders on climate change and health, having met in Lilongwe, Malawi, from 22-24 August 2023 for the African Regional Conference on Climate Change and Health;

**Acknowledging** the recognition of the right to a clean, healthy and sustainable environment<sup>1</sup> as a universal human right;

**Recalling** the acknowledgment by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) in the seventh chapter of its Sixth Assessment Report (AR6) that there is a high level of confidence in understanding how climate change impact ecosystems and the health of human beings;

**Disturbed by** the complex interplay between global temperature rise and the worsening health indicators, growing episodes of loss and damages and the implications of the health of ecosystem and health systems, emerging disease geographies and the growing burden of care for people suffering from disease triggered by climate episodes and disasters

**Taking into account** the urgent need for the global north to cut on their emission levels in order to slow and eventually forestall global temperature rise with implications on future climate catastrophes;

**Fully aware** that response measures in building resilience in the health sector will not yield the much-desired results unless complemented by strong mitigation actions by the global north;

**Recognizing** the One Health concept as a comprehensive and interdisciplinary strategy that acknowledges the interdependence of human health, animal health, and environmental health, and viewing it as the optimal approach to tackle intricate climate-driven health challenges at the junction of humans, animals, and ecosystems and pivotal in achieving planetary health;

**Taking into consideration** the COP26 Health Programme which was agreed upon by Parties meeting at the twenty-sixth session of the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, convened in Glasgow in 2021, under which nations pledged to establish health systems that are both resilient to climate impacts and characterized by low carbon emissions;

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<sup>1</sup> the right to a clean, healthy, and sustainable environment (which includes the right to a safe climate) as a human right, recognized most recently in General Assembly resolution 76/300 of 29 July 2022.



**Recognizing** early evidence that indicate climate change is undermining gains in public health and human wellbeing, including progress towards universal health coverage; compound its impact on population dynamics; triggers climate induced migrations; and increasing loss and damage to human health in numerous developing regions, destruction of the ecosystems and exacerbating the vulnerability of the most disadvantaged and marginalized communities;

*Aware that to address these complex synergistic challenges in a holistic manner, there is a need for integrated planning and application of systems thinking at all policy, planning and programme execution levels.*

**Acknowledging** the increasing dialogues and convenings concerning climate change and health within Africa and globally, as well as the designation of a Health Day by the UNFCCC to facilitate extended and focused discussions during COP 28;

**Capitalizing on** the opportunities to foster momentum on climate and health in the Africa Climate Summit and Africa Climate Week, scheduled for Nairobi from September 4th to 8th, 2023, as well as the twenty-eighth Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, set to take place in Dubai between November 30th and December 12th, 2023.

**Taking into perspective** the growing momentum to develop/ pronounce a global goal on health and the need for a well-articulated African position on this goal

**Desire to advance a position on Health and Climate Change** for African Governments and People premised on five key principle considerations:

1. A position that promotes Africa's ecosystems health and functioning; improves access to preventive and promotive health services to all communities with a bias to underserved communities, and enhances capacity of health infrastructure to meet growing health challenges triggered by climate change
2. Adopt a holistic approach to health that promotes broad-based response measures to climate change modeled along the One Health Approach<sup>2</sup> and decentralized approaches to its implementation. This approach should be Africa-centric, pro adaptation and enhances the resilience of African health systems,
3. Assert the imperatives of just transition to underpin our collective strive, centering the role of decentralized, people controlled, just clean sources of energy in transforming delivery of health services to underserved populations
4. Gives priority to our collective call and advocacy actions targeting the developed countries to scale up their mitigation actions, with clear commitments on their targets for emission cuts.

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<sup>2</sup> The One Health approach is a holistic and interdisciplinary perspective that recognizes the interconnectedness of human health, animal health, and environmental health. It emphasizes the idea that the health of humans, animals, and ecosystems are closely interconnected and that the well-being of one component has a direct or indirect impact on the others.



5. Enhances African leadership in partnerships in health response measures including evidence generation and its application in strengthening climate response in health

***In advancement of these principle elements we call on parties to UNFCCC and other Key stakeholders to demonstrate leadership as detailed:***

#### **I. UNFCCC**

1. Adopt an overarching goal, targets and metrics, for reporting on matters of health, with the Global Goal on Adaptation which strengthen the world's resilience and adaptive capacity to safeguard and protect human health and wellbeing as an ideal entry point.
2. Mainstream the tracking of progress on health and related goals, including assessing progress in implementation of programmes within the decision on Global stocktake to be adopted at COP28
3. Structure and champion robust reforms within the UNFCCC funding mechanisms, including the GCF for accelerated direct access to climate finance to key governments and frontline responders to challenges presented by climate change in the health sector
4. Expedite the setting up the Loss and Damage Fund to address loss and damage to health infrastructure, and damage of ecosystems, which contribute to the introduction of new pandemics and climate change impacts on human health and lives.
5. Champion a dedicated funding facility for climate and health under UNFCCC

#### **II. Africa Group of Negotiators (AGN)**

1. The AGN, conscious of lost milestones on this agenda, in their subsequent convening reflect on the global negotiations landscape on how best to weave in health and climate change issues as we gear to COP28
2. Call for their unrelenting support in working with all relevant stakeholders to identify entry points across all agenda items in COP28 and beyond and to integrate key health policy recommendations in their processes;
3. To Identify health targets and metrics within the Global Goal on Adaptation (GGA), promote integration of health into Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs) and within the Global Stocktake process (GST), and provide Technical assistance from the Santiago Network to quantify health losses/a Loss and Damage Fund which is fit for purpose, i.e. which can support a response to health losses and damages
4. To call for the identification of opportunities to prioritize health within the positions of e.g. the African Group of Negotiators, the G77 and China, AOSIS, the Least Developed Countries
5. Advance for a position in the climate finance negotiation stream where finance for adaptation and mitigation across sectors should optimize the imperatives of One Health.

### III. Africa Union and Regional Economic Blocks

1. To establish a Pan African Research organization or mandate an organization under the auspice of the African Union and make funds available to this entity to play a leadership role in cross-sectoral research in climate change and related issues
2. To design capacity-building programmes to develop the capacity of African health and climate communities, institutions, practitioners, Governments, and negotiators to understand and integrate climate change and related health challenges into policy, socioeconomics, planning and programming;
3. Foster research collaborations among neighboring countries and international institutions to gather region-specific data on the intersection of climate change and health for informed policy decisions, resource allocation, and developing targeted interventions to mitigate health impacts.
4. That Regional Economic Commissions (RECs) mobilize the uptake of health-related considerations by member states in their departmental strategies and development plans
5. To urge the Intergovernmental Authority on Development Climate Prediction and Applications Centre (ICPAC) and other similar organizations active in the climate hotspots to establish and enhance early warning systems and surveillance networks for climate-sensitive health risks in the member states. This includes monitoring disease outbreaks, vector-borne diseases, and other health impacts related to climate change and using predictive modeling to anticipate and respond to these challenges.
6. Introduce Peer review platforms and organs for strengthening international cooperation and expertise to understand, reduce and compensate for loss and damage associated with the adverse effects of climate change, including impacts on, among other things, human health related to extreme weather events and slow onset events.
7. Introduce peer review mechanisms to demand for more accountability from governments on things not working well and strengthen implementation of resolutions across the board; including in planning, budgeting, coordination, and Monitoring & Evaluation.

### IV. National Governments

1. As a matter of priority calls on Heads of States in Africa and the Ministers with responsibility for climate change, in all build up convenings and in COP28 to mainstream the climate challenge on health in their key note speeches in order to elevate the significant importance of this issue in global discourse.
2. To ensure full participation of Ministries of Health in climate decision making processes, including the review and development of NDCs and NAPs, and sectoral policies at national level with implications for climate and health.



3. Mainstream Health and Climate Change considerations in the Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs) and programmes for their implementation, including building resilience to health infrastructures.
4. To invest in capacity building and training programs for healthcare managers and professionals to understand better and manage the health implications of climate change. This includes education on identifying climate-related health risks, treating climate-sensitive diseases, and providing psychosocial support to affected communities.
5. To foster research collaborations to gather region-specific data on the intersection of climate change and health. This information is vital for informed policy decisions, resource allocation, and developing targeted interventions to reduce health impacts.
6. To promote greater access to healthcare services to underserved populations through decentralized, people centered renewable energy systems.
7. To call for a global just transition from fossil fuels to renewable energy across sectors, aligned with the Paris Agreement, as a public health imperative. Renewable energy, including in the form of renewable energy grids, can also help to ensure safe and affordable electricity access for the 759 million people, primarily in the African region, who do not currently have access to electricity to light their homes, refrigerate their food, or keep cool in rising temperatures.
8. To recommend enhanced collaboration between the Ministries of Health and other relevant sectors, such as agriculture, environment, water resources, and urban planning in the spirit of implementing the One Health approach to address multiple climate-related challenges.
9. To mobilize alignment between national climate policies, health policies, and development agendas. The creation of multisectoral coordination platforms/commissions / mechanisms for climate change and health, involving relevant ministries and possibly also other nongovernment stakeholders.
10. To call for the integration of indigenous knowledge and practices in climate and health strategies. Indigenous communities often have valuable insights into managing local ecosystems and health challenges. Further, we recognize the critical contribution of traditional medicine and nature-based solutions in advancing climate health mitigation and adaptation.

#### **V. Developed Countries/Global North**

1. To urgently scale up their emission cuts through accelerated phase-out plans from the use of fossil fuels and adoption of renewables.
2. To call upon developed countries and other donors to increase their climate financing to support African climate-resilient health systems and infrastructure. This includes access to international climate funds to enhance healthcare facilities' preparedness for climate-related health risks for a smooth transition to Climate Justice for all.