

300,000 health professionals call on G7 nations to phase out coal

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More than 300,000 doctors, nurses and public health professionals and advocates from 30 countries are calling on G7 nations to accelerate the transition away from coal to save lives, with NCD Alliance among 82 organisations signing a Global Health Statement outlining the huge benefits to both human health and economies.

Coal-powered electricity worsens respiratory and cardiovascular disease in local populations, and it is also one of the largest single contributors to climate change, which has been called the greatest threat to global health of the 21st century by the World Health Organization (WHO).

"Efforts to reduce the estimated 3.7 million deaths per year from outdoor air pollution will be substantially impacted by eliminating coal as a source of energy. Coal not only produces carbon, micro-pollutants and many other substances toxic to humans, but it is grossly inefficient when compared to renewable energy sources," said Dr James Orbinski, Professor and Research Chair in Global Health at the BSIA School of International Affairs, Wilfrid Laurier University Canada. "It would also harness synergies across the health and energy sectors, achieving better policy outcomes and, most importantly, better human and planetary health."

The G7 meeting will be one of the first major international gatherings since leaders committed to meaningful climate-action in Paris, and will include discussions on strengthening responses to public-health emergencies. To prevent the worst health effects of climate change, all G7 countries need to speed their efforts to phase out coal.

This is particularly important for Japan, host of this month's G7 meeting, given that it has put public health emergencies high on the agenda yet has 47 new coal plants on the drawing board.

"Doctors, nurses and other health workers are trained to respond in a timely manner to fast-moving diseases, and our actions save lives. In order to protect the health and lives of millions around the world, we need similarly timely and fast-moving actions from our leaders. Phasing out coal is a vital step toward a healthy future," said Catherine Thomasson, MD, Executive Director of Physicians for Social Responsibility.

Accelerating the transition away from coal will also create huge economic gains from avoided health impacts. As well as healthier people, Ontario's coal phase-out for example, will deliver health savings valued at approximately US\$3

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billion per year.

“As health professionals, we work to prevent chronic diseases, injuries and illnesses, and promote the health and well-being of all citizens. National energy choices can help or hinder this work, and one of the most pressing and powerful ways to help is to transition away from coal-fired electricity,” said Dr. Nick Watts, Coordinator of the Global Climate and Health Alliance.

“We urge G7 leaders to commit to an energy pathway that protects people and the planet.”

The Global Health Statement on Coal Plants is available [here](#) [1]

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