

Global call to action: The planetary crisis is a public health emergency

Language English



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It is time to treat climate change and biodiversity loss as one indivisible global health emergency.

This is the key message from a [statement](#) [1] published on 25 October in over 200 health journals with two clear objectives. Firstly, to advocate for tackling the public health impact of climate change and the loss of biodiversity as a single crisis. And second, to call on the World Health Organization (WHO) to officially designate this crisis as a Public Health Emergency of International Concern.

This all comes ahead of the 28th Conference of the Parties (COP28) on climate change to be held in Dubai, UAE in December 2023 and the 16th COP on biodiversity to be held in 2024. The fact that these two conferences are taking place separately reflects a grave mistake being made globally - addressing climate change and biodiversity loss as two separate issues, rather than one crisis stemming from shared causes.

The statement published notes that many commitments made at previous COPs have not been met, allowing ecosystems to be pushed further to the brink, greatly increasing the risk of arriving at tipping points and abrupt breakdowns in their functioning. The impacts on health and health systems would be globally catastrophic. This risk, combined with the severe impacts on health that are already occurring, means that WHO should declare the indivisible climate and biodiversity crisis as a global health emergency.

The three pre-conditions for WHO to declare a situation to be a Public Health Emergency of International Concern (PHEIC) are:

- It is serious, sudden, unusual, or unexpected;
- It carries implications for public health beyond the affected state's national border; and
- It may require immediate international action.

The planetary crisis fulfils all of these conditions. While the accelerating climate change and loss of biodiversity are not sudden or unexpected, they are certainly serious and unusual. This is why the statement calls for WHO to make this PHEIC declaration before or at the 77th World Health Assembly in May 2024.

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Join the Call to Action

To demonstrate public support for this call, **an online petition** has been posted on the [UK Health Alliance on Climate Change website](#) [2]e. Everybody is encouraged to sign this petition.

Post Date: Tuesday, 31 October, 2023

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[1] [https://www.thelancet.com/journals/lancet/article/PIIS0140-6736\(23\)02289-4/fulltext](https://www.thelancet.com/journals/lancet/article/PIIS0140-6736(23)02289-4/fulltext)

[2] <https://action.ukhealthalliance.org/page/134456/petition/1>

[3] <https://old.ncdalliance.org/taxonomy/term/1612>

[4] <https://old.ncdalliance.org/taxonomy/term/1159>

[5] <https://old.ncdalliance.org/taxonomy/term/957>