



MEDIA STATEMENT

POST-COP26 WE NEED MORE DECISIVE ACTION AND COMMITMENT FROM SA GOVERNMENT

Johannesburg, 14 November 2021 – PHASA today calls on the government of South Africa to do more to meet the targets of the Paris Agreement and Glasgow Declaration. The agreement reached at COP26 in Glasgow is not yet enough to remain on a path to holding global warming to 1.5 degrees. The risks to health of increases above 1.5°C are now well established. In fact, no temperature rise is “safe”. The African continent, which is already vulnerable to climate extremes, malnutrition, disease, and civil conflict, is one of the global regions at greatest risk.

“This is urgent and it’s a defining moment for the South African government to lead. The COVID-19 pandemic has demonstrated the interconnectedness of health and the environment like never before”, says James Irlam, convener of PHASAs special interest group on climate, energy and health.

We therefore urge our government to put health at the heart of climate policy and action, to end fossil fuel subsidies, and to move rapidly towards a just energy transition, in consultation with all stakeholders and affected communities.

We also urge our government to build climate resilient and low carbon health services, informed by excellent health surveillance and early warning systems about growing climate-health impacts. These include respiratory conditions, heat-related illnesses, malnutrition and food-borne diseases, waterborne diseases, mental illness, and injury and mortality from extreme weather events.

We also call on our government to follow the essential prescriptions by the World Health Organisation for a healthy and just recovery from COVID-19, which include protecting and preserving the natural sources of human health; investing in essential basic services; and promoting healthy, sustainable food systems.

We cannot afford repeated disasters on the scale of COVID-19 from mounting environmental damage and climate change. Going back to “normal” is not good enough. Our public health, environmental, and climate crises present unprecedented opportunities to invest in a just and

healthy recovery for this generation, and a sustainable future for generations to come. Wise and bold leadership is required to seize them.

End

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For the editor:

Public Health Association of South Africa – PHASA

Our mission is to provide leadership and a collective voice to improve health, through knowledge sharing, capacity building and partnership and make health policy recommendations. PHASA also serves on the governing council of both the World Federation of Public Health Associations and the African Federation of Public Associations.

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