

## **WHA76 Constituency Statement: Agenda Item 16.3 Social determinants of health**

Lead:

World Heart Federation

Supporters:

1. Amref Health Africa
2. International Society of Nephrology
3. NCD Alliance
4. Union for International Cancer Control
5. World Stroke Organization

We applaud Member States for their recognition of pollution as a health risk factor and for seeking to take decisive action through this proposed resolution. Unfortunately, recognition of fossil fuels among the pollutants referenced in the text is conspicuous by its absence.

Fossil fuels are a major driver of outdoor air pollution, which causes approximately 3.6 million deaths annually. Other estimates place the burden still higher: up to 8 million, or 1 in 7 of all deaths annually. WHO estimates some 37% of outdoor air pollution-related premature deaths are due to ischaemic heart disease and stroke, 18% and 23% due to chronic obstructive pulmonary disease and acute lower respiratory infections respectively, and 11% due to cancer within the respiratory tract. Moreover, research suggests that ambient air pollution translates to around 765 000 new cases of chronic kidney disease and nearly 30 000 new cases of end-stage kidney disease each year in the USA alone<sup>1</sup>.

But the health impacts of fossil fuels begin long before combustion. Fossil fuel extraction and processing cause air, water, and soil pollution, severely impacting local communities. Living in proximity to extraction sites has been associated with a wide array of noncommunicable diseases, as well as poor birth outcomes and developmental defects<sup>2</sup>. Waste from fossil fuel extraction and processing contains carcinogens and other harmful chemicals and toxic metals, which can leach into surrounding water and soil.

WHO and over 300 other health organizations have signed a letter calling for a fossil fuel non-proliferation treaty, on account of the health, polluting, *and* longer-term climate impacts of fossil fuel dependence. The rapid and just phase out of fossil fuels is a public health imperative. This must be supported by measures which have been implemented for other unhealthy commodities, including fiscal policies commensurate with the true cost of fossil fuels; regulation of fossil fuel advertising; and exclusion of the fossil fuel industry from policy processes in which they have clear vested interests.

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<sup>1</sup> [https://www.thelancet.com/journals/lanph/article/PIIS2542-5196\(17\)30120-1/fulltext](https://www.thelancet.com/journals/lanph/article/PIIS2542-5196(17)30120-1/fulltext)

<sup>2</sup> <https://climateandhealthalliance.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/07/Cradle-To-Grave-Fossil-Fuels-Brief.pdf>

We hope this resolution serves as an initial step to tackle the Triple Planetary Crisis of pollution, climate change and biodiversity loss. We stand ready to support you in these endeavors and thank you for your attention.

