Health Submission: COP30 Presidency Roadmap on the Transition Away from Fossil Fuels in a Just, Orderly and Equitable Manner

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We, the above-mentioned organizations, welcome the opportunity to make this submission on the COP30 Presidency Roadmap on the Transition Away from Fossil Fuels in a Just, Orderly, and Equitable Manner. The creation and dissemination of this roadmap are essential to implement the adopted decision of the first Global Stocktake (GST1) for Parties to "[transition] away from fossil fuels in energy systems in a just, orderly, and equitable manner, accelerating action in this critical decade to achieve net-zero emissions by 2050 in keeping with the science" (UNFCCC, 2023). It provides a foundation for implementation and allows for new barriers and innovative practices to be incorporated into future roadmaps and the second Global Stocktake (GST2). This roadmap is especially urgent for the most climate-vulnerable populations and those facing a high burden of health harms from fossil fuels. The roadmap must clearly signal a decisive shift toward renewable and health-centered systems.

Fossil fuels are health-harming products that drive an often understated public health crisis in addition to their grave energy and climate consequences. It is estimated that at least 463 million people, including 124 million children, live within a kilometer of the current 18,273 operating fossil fuel infrastructure sites globally (Amnesty International et al., 2025). Fossil fuel-driven air pollution alone is among the leading preventable causes of premature death and ill-health worldwide. Air pollution attributed to fossil fuels is estimated to cause between 2.5 and 5.13 million premature deaths every year, including over 1 million deaths linked to road transport (Lelieveld et al., 2023; Romanello et al., 2025). In 2022, the monetised value of anthropogenic, ambient air pollution-related mortality was estimated at $4.84 trillion, equivalent to 4.7% of global GDP from healthcare expenditures, lost labour productivity due to heat, and welfare losses (Romanello et al., 2025). These health impacts can be compounded by high population density, urban air pollution, and climate vulnerability, placing strain on health systems.

The extraction, production, and ongoing use of fossil fuels impact health across the life-course, from cradle to grave. Babies and children, from in utero, are particularly vulnerable to the health impacts of fossil fuels, often with lifelong health implications. Methane (the primary component of fossil gas and emitted in coal and oil extraction) has eighty times the greenhouse warming potential of CO_2 over a twenty year time frame, and is a precursor for health-harming ground level ozone (EDF, n.d.). Similarly, black carbon (emitted from fossil fuel combustion) has a high warming potential, and can cause premature death and harmful effects on the cardiovascular system (EDF, n.d.). The outcome of the GST1 underscores the importance of science-based climate action, and the scientific evidence is clear that the global dependence on fossil fuels is costing lives and livelihoods, polluting our air, water, and land, harming both people and the environment (Whitmee et al., 2024; Romanello et al., 2025). Health impacts of the full fossil fuel value chain include the following (GCHA, 2025):

- **Extraction** (e.g., fracking, coal mining, offshore drilling) releases harmful pollutants that increase the rates of respiratory disease, cardiovascular illness, cancers, adverse birth outcomes, and neurological disorders in frontline communities and nearby populations.
- **Refining and processing** facilities act as stationary "super-polluters" and emit sulfur dioxide and carcinogenic chemicals that pose serious risks (leukemia, cancers, and chronic skin and eye irritation) to fossil fuel workers themselves and nearby residents (Tavella et al., 2025).
- **Transport and storage** involve dangerous risks of pipeline ruptures, chemical fires and spills that contaminate the air, land, and water, which can trigger chronic health effects such as acute asthma attacks and long-term neurological damage.
- **Combustion** in power plants, vehicles, industry, homes, agriculture and water sectors generates harmful air pollutants, such as fine particulate matter, ozone, and nitrogen oxides, that penetrate deep into the bloodstream and significantly increase the risks of asthma, heart disease, stroke, cancer, dementia, and premature mortality.
- **Post-combustion waste** (e.g. coal ash and gas flaring) contains concentrated heavy waste, including lead, arsenic, and mercury, that can leach into the environment, contaminating drinking water, continuing to expose nearby communities, and causing long-term developmental delays in children and chronic disease in adults.
- **Legacy pollution** such as from tailing ponds, abandoned wells, and mine sites continue to leak methane and volatile organic compounds (VOCs) that can cause persistent health and climate harm decades later.

These impacts are felt unevenly and are unjustly distributed in communities and across nations, with those that contribute least to fossil fuel use and emissions being most impacted. Fossil fuel activities violate the health and rights of Indigenous peoples. Though representing less than 5% of the global population, at least 16.1% of the known fossil fuel infrastructure is sited on Indigenous territories (Amnesty International et al., 2025).

The phasing out of fossil fuels thus creates an opportunity to not only reach the Paris Agreement temperature goals but also vastly improve health and save trillions of dollars in health-care costs by midcentury (WHO, 2018). Embedding health in climate policies and actions across energy, agriculture, and transport in line with the Paris Agreement in just nine countries is estimated to reduce 1.18 million air-pollution related deaths, 5.86 million diet-related deaths, and 1.15 million physical activity-related deaths every year by 2040 (Hamilton, 2021). Recent evidence shows that reductions in fossil fuel use are delivering measurable health gains: declines in fossil fuel–related air pollution between 2010 and 2022 have avoided approximately 160,000 deaths annually, demonstrating the immediate and scalable health co-benefits of transitioning (Romanello et al., 2025). The reduction of short-lived climate pollutants (SLCPs) including methane and black carbon offers rapid gains for both human health and the climate (CCAC, n.d.). Environmental policies which reduce air pollution and other health risks have positive effects on the public health of populations, including the most vulnerable. The healthcare sector also has a

critical role to play: health systems, especially in higher emitting countries, should transition to low-carbon operations while strengthening resilience to climate impacts.

This public health crisis can be averted and replaced with the public health opportunity of our lifetime. It is possible to reverse course and prioritize health over profits, as was the case with the control of tobacco, another health-harming product. While every country has a different path towards phasing fossil fuels given their national circumstances and historical responsibility, the overall goal must be clear: we must transition away from fossil fuels in a just, equitable, and timely manner.

This submission focuses on the critical barriers preventing a transition away from fossil fuels and the potential levers to accelerate the implementation of this transition, as these relate to the intersection of climate change and health.

Critical Barriers Preventing a Transition Away from Fossil Fuels

1. Economic Dependence and Development Narratives

Many countries rely on fossil fuel extraction for revenue, exports, and employment. However, these economic and development-focused narratives overlook the disproportionate health burdens. These include rising healthcare costs, reduced labour productivity, and pollution exposure to workers and vulnerable communities, such as children, Indigenous people, pregnant people, people with pre-existing health conditions, and older people. (GCHA, 2025).

2. Infrastructure and Investment Lock-In

Existing fossil fuel infrastructure and new investments create long-term lock-in, particularly for large and expensive infrastructure, as governments and investors seek to recover sunk costs and avoid stranded assets. This further delays the phase-out in polluting systems and prolongs harmful exposure and health damages.

3. Fossil Fuel Subsidies

Global and national subsidies keep fossil fuels artificially cheap and slow the shift to clean energy. In 2023, it is estimated that G7 members' fossil fuel subsidies hit a record high of US$ 282 billion (Jones et al., 2025). These subsidies divert resources to health-harming energy generation instead of towards clean and healthy energy access, health systems, and pollution reduction (The Health and Environment Alliance, 2017). In 2023, countries issued $1063 billion in fossil fuel subsidies, nearly ten times the $107 billion raised from carbon price revenues, and generating a net fossil fuel subsidy of $956 billion. 83% of 87 countries had a net-negative carbon price in 2023, meaning their fossil fuel subsidies were larger than carbon price revenue. Of these, 15 countries allocated more funds to net fossil fuel subsidies than to their national health budget for the year (Romanello et al, 2025).

4. Fossil Fuel Industry and Adjacent Industries Lobbying and Disinformation

Fossil fuel industry lobbying and subsequent public relations campaigns delay implementation of energy transitions and regulation of fossil fuels. These campaigns and lobbying efforts obscure the real health harms people face. This is evident as regulatory measures for fossil fuels are far less stringent than for other health-harming products, such as tobacco and alcohol (WHO, 2005). These lobbying and public relations campaigns not only focus on explicit climate denial, but also use tactics that are more subtle in order to weaken climate policies and relevant institutions (Ekberg et al., 2023; Fünfgeld, 2025). This allows the fossil fuel industry to profit rather than protecting the health and wellbeing of populations. Other fossil fuel related industries also play a role in lobbying and disinformation to protect fossil fuel interests and halt climate action.

5. Inadequate international finance and inequitable financial systems

To achieve a just and equitable transition away from fossil fuels, major investments in renewable energy, economic diversification, and just transition policies are required. However, international finance for these actions remains inadequate and difficult to access. While evidence on the health savings of ambitious climate action may provide some rationale for the investment of domestic resources, these transitions remain infeasible in many settings without strong global cooperation and support (Markandya, 2018). Global South countries spend five times more on debt repayments to external creditors than they do on addressing the climate emergency. Comprehensive debt cancellation as well as automatic debt standstills in the wake of climate disasters, as well as grant-based climate finance from wealthier countries as part of their ecological and climate debt under a reparations-based framework is required (Centre for Economic and Social Rights, 2025). In addition, a human rights-based reform of the Multilateral Development Banks is needed to ensure that climate finance is centred on people's needs, not private profit (Centre for Economic and Social Rights, 2025).

Potential Levers for Accelerating Implementation

While the outlined critical barriers create a system of fossil fuel dependence, there are concrete levers that can be utilized to accelerate the implementation of the transition away from fossil fuels. These levers specifically address the critical barriers outlined above.

1. Health Cost Accounting to Reduce Fiscal Dependence on Fossil Fuels

Fossil fuels are health-harming products that drive air pollution, climate change, and toxic exposures. The health damage from air pollution is estimated to cost the global economy over US$8.1 trillion annually, equivalent to 6.1% of global GDP (World Bank, 2021). Additionally, the costs of healthcare, environmental clean-ups, site remediation, and long-term pollution damage from the full fossil fuel value chain are frequently externalized to governments and the public. Thus, governments should **integrate the true health and economic costs of fossil fuel dependence** into national finance and planning.

Systematically incorporating these hidden health and environmental costs into public budgets, subsidy accounting, and energy investment decisions ensures governments can move toward a "polluter pays" principle (as outlined in principle 16 of the 1992 Rio Declaration) and more accurately assess the true economic burden of fossil fuel dependence (Rio Declaration, 1992). This can in turn reduce fiscal reliance on fossil fuels while strengthening the case for economic diversification, clean energy investment, fossil fuel phase-out, and just transition strategies, aligning public finance with the protection of public health and the environment.

2. Redirect Fossil Fuel Subsidies to Clean Energy and Public Health

Fossil fuel subsidies, as mentioned previously, are a critical barrier that entrenches fossil fuel dependence globally. The phase-out of these subsidies that are clear and time-bound should be done in conjunction with **redirecting public finance toward clean energy and public health**, such as renewable energy, energy efficiency, public transport, resilient infrastructure, social protections, green jobs, youth engagement and related transitions. Redirecting these funds can help accelerate the energy transition while delivering immediate public health benefits through reduced air pollution and toxic exposure. Further, directing a limited amount of finance to health and social care services, especially for low-income and vulnerable populations, may help to build public support and reduce other areas of spending (Pradiptyo et al., 2016). Public resources and subsidies should benefit the public instead of potentiating a public health crisis.

3. Ban Fossil Fuel Marketing, Sponsorships, and Advertising to Protect Public Health

Fossil fuel lobbying and public relations campaigns help to continue fossil fuel dependence and continue promoting fossil fuels. This strategy is similar to the tactics of the tobacco industry despite clear evidence

of the health-harming product. Taking lessons from the public health initiative to reduce tobacco use, **governments should prohibit fossil fuel advertising, marketing, and sponsorships** across media, cultural, educational, and sporting platforms, recognizing fossil fuels as health-harming products. These promotional activities normalize fossil fuel dependence, hide the severe health harms throughout the fossil fuel value chain, and delay the transition to clean energy. Evidence from tobacco control demonstrates how comprehensive marketing bans are essential to reduce demand and challenge industry influence. The MPOWER+ framework was adapted from the WHO MPOWER framework, which was used to help countries implement tobacco control, toward public health action against fossil fuel-related harms (Keller et al., 2025).

Fossil fuel companies currently use advertising and sponsorships to maintain their social license while continuing health-harming activities. Restricting these promotional activities can reduce misinformation, prevent greenwashing, and create space for accurate public communication about health risks and clean energy solutions. Advertising bans should extend to sponsorship of public institutions, sports, cultural events, and educational programs. This approach protects public health, aligns with the right to a healthy environment, and accelerates the transition away from fossil fuels.

4. Managing Conflicts of Interest and Safeguarding Policy

The fossil fuel industry has a strong impact on public policy, research, and public conversations by using lobbying, political donations, partnerships, and public relations strategies. This influence weakens evidence-based decisions and slows the transition away from fossil fuels, even though there is clear evidence of their harm to health. Like what happened with the tobacco industry, letting companies whose main business depends on producing and expanding a harmful product shape policy is a serious risk to public health.

Governments and public institutions **should establish robust conflict-of-interest regulatory safeguards** to prevent the fossil fuel industry from interfering in policy-making. This requires excluding fossil fuel industry representatives and related groups from health, climate, and environmental decisionmaking. Lobbying and financial ties must also be fully transparent, with clear rules for engagement that put the public interest first. Following examples like Article 5.3 of the WHO Framework Convention on Tobacco Control, these steps can help protect public policy free from these interests and make sure health, environmental protection, and human rights stay at the center of decisions (WHO, 2005).

Research bodies should adopt fossil fuel–free funding and partnership policies to prevent undue influence on research agendas and public narratives. Procurement standards should also be strengthened to exclude public relations and communications firms that represent fossil fuel interests, thereby addressing the role of disinformation and greenwashing in shaping public perception. Effectively managing conflicts of interest is essential to restoring trust, protecting the integrity of public institutions, and enabling a just, equitable, and health-centered transition away from fossil fuels.

5. Advance Legal Accountability and Corporate Liability to Protect Public Health

Fossil fuel companies have long externalised the significant health and environmental costs of their activities, despite clear and growing evidence of harm across the life course. Strengthening legal accountability is a critical lever to address this injustice. Governments, communities, and individuals should be supported to pursue litigation to **hold companies liable for the health damages caused by fossil fuel production and use**, including the recovery of substantial public healthcare costs. Grounded in the polluter pays principle, this approach ensures that those responsible for harm bear the financial burden, rather than shifting it onto affected communities and strained public systems. This follows the 2025 Advisory Opinion on the Obligations of States in respect of Climate Change from the International

Court of Justice (ICJ AO), concerning the obligations of states in respect of climate change (ICJ, 2025). The ICJ AO acknowledges the human right to a clean, healthy and sustainable environment. It guides necessary (inter-)national legislative and regulatory reform and informs judicial interpretation.

Legal action can also compel fossil fuel companies to take responsibility for the clean-up and remediation of contaminated sites, many of which continue to expose communities to toxic pollutants long after extraction or production has ceased. In addition, it can secure long-term healthcare, monitoring, and compensation for affected populations who continue to bear the burden of chronic illness and intergenerational health impacts. As international legal frameworks increasingly recognise the right to a clean, healthy, and sustainable environment, advancing corporate liability can help internalise these costs, deter harmful practices, and drive a just and health-centred transition away from fossil fuels.

6. Moratorium on New Extraction From Indigenous Territories

The roadmap must include an immediate moratorium on new extraction licenses in Indigenous lands as its first implementation step — not as a later equity footnote. This aligns with language already in the Fossil Fuel Non-Proliferation Treaty Initiative, which calls for governments to first end expansion and phasing out extraction in areas of Indigenous Sovereignty. Current extraction projects must be wound down, with appropriate compensation paid to communities for damage born, as well as alternative restorative livelihoods. *"Not a single drop of Amazonian oil has been extracted with the consent of Indigenous Peoples."* — Fany Kuiru, General Coordinator, Coordinating Body of Indigenous Organizations of the Amazon Basin (Barcas, 2024).

7. Indigenous peoples- and community-led transition based on local knowledge and wisdom

Just transitions must by definition serve the populations who are placed at risk by current practices and/or the interventions implemented to achieve the transitions. Programs designed solely by external entities fail to take into account the priorities and wisdom of Indigenous peoples and local communities to deliver solutions. There is an urgent need to shift to community-designed transitions.

Future Submissions and Opportunities

This roadmap presents a critical opportunity to move from ambition to action by prioritizing a fossil fuel–free future that safeguards health, particularly of the most impacted communities and regions, protects ecosystems, and ensures sustainable development for all. We look forward to future opportunities to submit research and concrete actions to transition away from fossil fuels in a just, orderly, and equitable manner. We are excited to see a welcoming, transparent, and inclusive process and welcome future opportunities.

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