

*** Press release ***

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GLOBAL SIGHT ALLIANCE DECLARES CLIMATE EMERGENCY AND CALLS FOR URGENT ACTION

In recognition of Earth Day, on April 22, 2021, the International Agency for the Prevention of Blindness (IAPB) has declared a Climate Emergency and released a **Call to Action for Environmentally Sustainable Practices in the Eye Health Sector**.

The endorsement of a Climate Emergency was made by the IAPB board at a meeting on Monday and follows work by the IAPB Climate Action Working Group (CAWG). Alongside the call to action the group have also produced a **Guide for Environmentally Sustainable Practices in the Eye Health Sector**. The two key resources not only highlight the need for climate action within the eye health sector, but also show how the sector can take efforts to 'Restore our Earth' which is the theme of this year's Earth Day.

Marking the release of these two documents IAPB Chief Executive Officer, Peter Holland said *"Globally we are seeing the devastating impacts of climate change on our environment and health. There are more intense extreme weather events, rising temperatures and sea levels, spread of disease, devastation on habitats and increase in air pollution. Eye health is being affected through increase in trachoma infections, vitamin A deficiencies, cataracts, age-related macular degeneration, glaucoma, allergic and dry eye diseases.*

"Climate events will disrupt eye health service delivery by damaging medical facilities and affecting critical supplies. In addition to the effects of climate change on health, we recognise that healthcare is a massive consumer of resources and emitter of greenhouse gas emissions, responsible for 4.4% of global emissions.

"Climate change disproportionately impacts poor, marginalised and disadvantaged populations and may exacerbate existing or create new inequities in eye health. The Lancet Global Commission on Global Eye Health has stated that environmentally responsible eye health services are essential to achieving the UN Sustainable Development Goals including SDG 13 on Climate Action."

Mitasha Yu and Imran Khan, Co-chairs of the CAWG said *"On behalf of the group, we are pleased that the Call to Action and the Guide has been endorsed by IAPB. This endorsement shows the sight sector is committed and united to act on the climate emergency that is impacting access to critical, sight-saving eye health services.*



“The Call to Action highlights opportunities for the eye health sector to show leadership and accelerate efforts to mitigate the devastating effects of climate change through prioritising key actions.

“These 10 key areas of action include leadership, advocacy, sustainable procurement, facilities management, service delivery, education, research and collaboration. The accompanying Guide provides tools and resources to support organisations along this journey towards mitigating their own climate impacts.

“The CAWG will continue its efforts to bring awareness to the eye health sector and support stakeholders to take steps to become more environmentally sustainable.”

*****Ends*****

Notes to Editors:

- The International Agency for the Prevention of Blindness (IAPB) is the overarching alliance for the global eye care sector with 150 members worldwide drawn from NGOs and civil society, corporate organisations, professional bodies and research and eye care institutions.
- [The Call to Action and Guide for Environmentally Sustainable Practices in the Eye Health Sector are available from the IAPB Website.](#)
- The Climate Action Working Group works to provide leadership and advocacy for increased adoption and action on priority matters relating to climate action in eye health for IAPB Members and other stakeholders.
- Membership of the Climate Action Working Group is open to all IAPB members engaged in climate action.

For more information please contact:

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