

EMARGOED UNTIL 23:30 BST WEDNESDAY 20 OCTOBER 2021

However, the world is not on track to realising the health gains of the transition to a low-carbon economy. Current global decarbonisation commitments are insufficient to meet Paris Agreement ambitions and would lead to a roughly 2.4°C average global temperature increase by the end of the century. The current direction of post-COVID-19 spending is threatening to make this situation worse, with just 18% of all the funds committed for economic recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic by the end of 2020 expected to lead to a reduction of greenhouse gas emissions. Indeed, the economic recovery from the pandemic is already predicted to lead to an unprecedented 5% increase in greenhouse gas emissions in 2021, which will bring global anthropogenic emissions back to their peak amounts.

In addition, the current economic recession is threatening to undermine the target of mobilising US\$100 billion per year from 2020 onwards to promote low-carbon shifts and adaptation responses in the most underserved countries, even though this quantity is minute compared with the trillions allocated to COVID-19 recovery. The high amounts of borrowing that countries have had to resort to during the pandemic could erase their ability to deliver a green recovery and maximise the health gains to their population of a low-carbon transition.

An unprecedented opportunity to ensure a healthy future for all

The overshoot in emissions resulting from a carbon-intensive COVID-19 recovery would irreversibly prevent the world from meeting climate commitments and the Sustainable Development Goals and lock humanity into an increasingly extreme and unpredictable environment. Data in this report expose the health impacts and health inequities of the current world at 1.2°C of warming above pre-industrial levels and supports that, on the current trajectory, climate change will become the defining narrative of human health.

However, by directing the trillions of dollars that will be committed to COVID-19 recovery towards the WHO's prescriptions for a healthy, green recovery, the world could meet the Paris Agreement goals, protect the natural systems that support wellbeing, and minimise inequities through reduced health effects and maximised co-benefits of a universal low-carbon transition. Promoting equitable climate change mitigation and universal access to clean energies could prevent millions of deaths annually from reduced exposure to air pollution, healthier diets, and more active lifestyles, and contribute to reducing health inequities globally. This pivotal moment of economic stimulus represents a historical opportunity to secure the health of present and future generations.

There is a glimpse of positive change through several promising trends in this year's data: electricity generation from renewable wind and solar energy increased by an annual average of 17% between 2013 and 2018 (indicator 3.1); investment in new coal capacity decreased

by 10% in 2020 (indicator 4.2.1); and the global number of electric vehicles reached 7.2 million in 2019 (indicator 3.4). Additionally, the global pandemic has driven increased engagement in health and climate change across multiple domains in society, with 91 heads of state making the connection in the 2020 UN General Debate and newly widespread engagement among countries in the very high HDI group (indicator 5.4). Whether COVID-19 recovery supports, or reverses these trends, is yet to be seen.

Neither COVID-19 nor climate change respect national borders. Without widespread, accessible vaccination across all countries and societies, SARS-CoV-2 and its new variants will continue to put the health of everybody at risk. Likewise, tackling climate change requires all countries to deliver an urgent and coordinated response, with COVID-19 recovery funds allocated to support and ensure a just transition to a low-carbon future and climate change adaptation across the globe. Leaders of the world have an unprecedented opportunity to deliver a future of improved health, reduced inequity, and economic and environmental sustainability. However, this will only be possible if the world acts together to ensure that no person is left behind.